

REPUBLIC OF NAURU
TOBACCO CONTROL (AMENDMENT) BILL 2023

SECOND READING SPEECH

Honourable Timothy Ika, MP

6 June 2023

Mr. Speaker Sir,

I have the responsibility to introduce to the House today the *Tobacco Control (Amendment) Bill 2023*.

We have made a lot of progress in terms of fulfilling our obligations to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Unfortunately, smoking prevalence rates in our beloved nation is still among one of the highest in the Pacific. In a survey conducted and completed in 2016 in collaboration with the World Health Organization, it was found that 47% among adult men and 45% among adult women smoke. Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer, which are the leading causes of death in Nauru.

The proposed Bill aims to strengthen the *Tobacco Control Act 2009* to further protect the people of Nauru from the dangerous impacts of tobacco use. Tobacco use is fought on several fronts and is no longer the sole responsibility of the Department of Health and Medical Services. We urge parents, church leaders, community leaders and our Government leaders to be involved. Tobacco use by our people continues to be one of the single largest avoidable health risks. While a person is free to decide whether or not to smoke, we should also think about other people who are affected by the environment which is filled with smoke. Smoking has been found to be a major risk factor in many forms of cancer.

While the *Tobacco Control Act 2009* contains measures which aim to protect young people from accessing tobacco, protects the public from dangerous passive smoke, warns the public about the dangers of tobacco use by requiring health warning labels on tobacco packaging, and more, several gaps still exist.

The proposed Bill aims to fill these gaps by:

- (a) prohibiting all forms of tobacco advertising which entice tobacco use and therefore increase the burden of disease on families, communities and the health system;
- (b) protecting Nauru's public policy from tobacco industry interference;
- (c) holding tobacco manufacturers and importers accountable for not fully disclosing the dangers of tobacco products;
- (d) requiring licensing for importation, distribution and retail sale to strengthen enforcement;
- (e) clarifying designated smoking areas to further protect the public from the dangers of passive smoking;
- (f) strengthening protection of minors by increasing the minimum smoking age from 18 years to 20 years;
- (g) regulating emerging tobacco products such as electronic cigarettes and vapes because they too contain dangerous chemicals or ingredients and prolong addiction to nicotine; and
- (h) implementing a 'fixed penalty' or 'on-the-spot fine' mechanism for tobacco control to facilitate administrative enforcement of violations.

Further, the Bill will prohibit misleading terms and expiry dates, which often provide a false impression of safety or reduced harm, but in fact all tobacco is dangerous. The taste differences are only a result of the variation in the composition of the dangerous chemicals the tobacco manufacturers use to make the different products.

Additionally, the proposed amendments are supported by the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and are known to help protect the public from being misled about the dangers of tobacco.

The proposed licensing measures may cause importers and retailers to pass on the cost to the consumer. However, any increase in the price of tobacco products is a positive indirect effect because monetary measures motivate reduction in tobacco use, particularly among our vulnerable population such as young people.

The proposed amendments will also benefit Nauru by way of revenue generation. Additional revenue will be generated from the licensing requirements to import, distribute and sell tobacco products. The fines collected through the on-the-spot fine mechanism will potentially deter violations and be a source of funds to strengthen tobacco control awareness and enforcement.

Not only do tobacco products destroy our lives now, it can also destroy the lives of our children in the future.

Mr Speaker, the explanatory memorandum details the provisions of the Bill.

I request that the explanatory memorandum be read and recorded in the Hansard Reports.

I commend the Bill to the House.