

**REPUBLIC OF NAURU**  
**ELECTORAL (AMENDMENT) BILL 2020**  
**SECOND READING SPEECH**

**Honourable Lionel Rouwen Aingimea, MP**

**28 January 2020**

Mr. Speaker Sir,

I introduce to the House today the *Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2020*.

Mr Speaker, the issue of vote transfer has been the subject of contention in the 2016 general election and again in 2019. As you are aware, the categories for transfer was substantially broadened in the *Electoral Act 2016*. This has been amended in 2018 to narrow the scope of these categories. However, the number of transfers in the last general election was 1889.

In the Parliament Election Report 2019, one of the findings noted by the Electoral Commission is as follows and I quote:

*“In the 6 months prior to the close of roll there were 1889 transfers. Of these transfers:*

- *1620 were paid transfers. Each transfer cost \$150.00;*
- *269 were unpaid transfers from auto registrations since the last election;*
- *741 auto registrations since the last election;*
- *987 females and 902 males completed transfers.*

*It is estimated from the data that more than 2000 voters are not living in the District in which they reside. This ability to move to any District is a severe concern to the integrity of the electoral roll and the ability for the roll to be manipulated.*

*22% of the voter population transferred districts in 2019. Besides creating a large amount of work to process these it also raises the question of whether the current constituencies really work for modern Nauru. MPs are elected to represent a constituency yet is clear that many*

*people do not feel that the candidate that best represents them lives in their constituency.”*

Mr Speaker, increasing the transfer fee is one way of addressing the concerns of the Electoral Commission. No doubt this will also address the issue of the integrity of the electoral roll. One of the most fundamental concerns which would be addressed by this is as noted by the Electoral Commission that is, many people do not feel that the candidate that best represent them lives in the constituency. The electoral system is based on districts. The elected members are to represent the district. However, due to numerous transfers, the elected members are more focused in looking after the interests of their voters rather than the constituency from which they were elected. The people of each district need their members of Parliament to address the concerns of that constituency and not the voters imported from all other districts. This also results in the uneven distribution of wealth and service of the Republic where the elected members are allowed to use public funds to serve the constituencies and not selected voters. If voter preference overrides the constituencies, the districts with the least voters will be left behind.

The candidates or elected members or the voters are responsible for paying the transfer fee if they genuinely intend to do so.

It is time that the Republic took steps to rectify this. The community itself must have pride in the district in which they live in as such they should be voting in that district. In stating that, I am aware that under the democratic principle, a person is eligible to vote wherever he or she wishes. However, our electoral system under the *Constitution* and the *Electoral Act* is divided into districts to allow for fair representation therefore those with financial capacity should not be allowed to disrupt the electoral system.

Mr Speaker, the explanatory memorandum details the provisions of the Bill. Sir, I request that the explanatory memorandum be read and recorded in the Hansard Reports.

I commend the Bill to the House.