

**REPUBLIC OF NAURU**  
**DEPUTY MINISTERS BILL 2023**  
**SECOND READING SPEECH**  
**HE. Hon. David W.R. Adeang, M.P**  
**12 December 2023**

Mr Speaker Sir,

I have the privilege of introducing to the House today the *Deputy Ministers Bill 2023* (**‘Bill’**).

The proposed Bill clearly outlines the functions and powers of Deputy Ministers. In this way, Ministers and especially Deputy Ministers will know exactly what they are responsible for, the powers that they have in order to perform their functions and who they are responsible and accountable to.

Under the Bill, Deputy Ministers will be responsible for assisting the responsible Minister in the administration of any government business that has been assigned to the Minister. Deputy Ministers will also be responsible for making recommendations to the responsible Minister for any efficiency or enhancements in the administration of any government business. They will also be able to prepare and sign Cabinet submissions under their own name, on issues or matters which are associated with or related to their assigned portfolios, but only if they have been directed or approved to do so by the responsible Minister.

Currently, the assignment to a Deputy Minister is for the whole department. This practice may be confusing because the Deputy Minister may not necessarily be required to look after the entire department. For that purpose, the President defines the specific part or portion of the department which the Deputy Minister may look after. For instance, if a responsibility is assigned to the Department of Justice and Border Control, it may just be limited to Border Control, that is Passport, Immigration and Quarantine. That will leave out other sections of the department such as those under Justice – the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the

Office of the Public Legal Defender, the Office of Human Rights and so forth. For that purpose, now a specific assignment of responsibilities is prescribed in a schedule which is intended to replace the existing template used by my office.

When assigning functions and powers to a Deputy Minister, the President can determine the functions and powers on his or her own and directly assign such functions and powers, or the President can invite the Minister responsible and Deputy Minister to make recommendations to him or her after they have both discussed the specific businesses under the portfolio which will be overseen and administered by either individual. This will encourage Ministers and Deputy Ministers to work together, instead of Deputy Ministers acting as a check and balance against Ministers and complaining to the President.

Deputy Ministers will be responsible for delivering ministerial statements in the Parliament and for answering questions raised in the Parliament upon the direction or approval of the responsible Minister. Deputy Ministers will also be able to attend official meetings, ceremonies and events on behalf of, or together with, the responsible Minister. They will also be responsible for executing instruments and may give lawful directions to the Secretary responsible for their assigned portfolios or to any employee of the relevant department, as well as to any member or director of the Board or any employee of an instrumentality or public enterprise that falls within the ambit of their assigned portfolios.

Under the proposed Bill, a Minister, in consultation with the President, may amend or alter a decision by the Deputy Minister. This is to ensure that Deputy Ministers are given due respect by the Ministers. Also, for the purpose of maintaining the majority numbers, it is important that the President, as the Chairperson of the Cabinet, shall be able to deal with any difference between a Minister and Deputy Minister. At the end of the day, it is the President who is responsible for ensuring that both Ministers and Deputy Ministers owe their allegiance to the President and ensure that they maintain the majority in the Parliament in order for there to be a stable government. Additionally, this allows the Minister who has responsibility under the Constitution to ensure that the actions of Deputy Ministers are controlled,

supervised and managed by the Minister so that the Cabinet's collective responsibilities are maintained at all times.

The proposed Bill confers on Deputy Ministers all the powers necessary to enable them to perform their functions.

The proposed Bill also ensures that the Cabinet has the power to amend the abovementioned functions and powers of Deputy Ministers. This means that the functions and powers of Deputy Ministers are not set in stone. Any change in the functions and powers of Deputy Ministers will not require parliamentary approval. It will only require Cabinet approval. If the Cabinet decides that there needs to be a change in the functions and powers of Deputy Ministers, then the Cabinet can always introduce regulations to amend such functions and powers.

The proposed Bill also empowers the President to invite a Deputy Minister to attend to and participate in a Cabinet meeting. This invitation to the Deputy Minister can be a general invitation for all Cabinet meetings, with the exception of any Cabinet meeting that the President advises a Deputy Minister not to attend. Deputy Ministers will have the discretion of deciding whether or not they attend to and participate at the Cabinet meetings.

The proposed Bill also empowers the President to withdraw an invitation that he or she has already issued to a Deputy Minister as he or she deems necessary. This allows the President, who is the Chairperson of the Cabinet, to only meet with his or her Cabinet Ministers if he or she wishes to. This is important as it ensures that the President and the Cabinet will be able to discuss matters which may not necessarily require the involvement of Deputy Ministers. The reason for not inviting a Deputy Minister to a Cabinet meeting will remain with the President and he or she is not required to provide any reasons.

It is important to note though that while Deputy Ministers can attend to and participate in Cabinet meetings upon receipt of an invitation by the President, they

do not have the right to vote on any matter that is before the Cabinet for its decision. This provision is not a new one.

In terms of accountability, Deputy Ministers are responsible and accountable at all times to their line Ministers for the performance of their functions. This is because line Ministers have overall responsibility over the portfolio. In addition, given that Deputy Ministers are being compensated with monetary allowances and benefits for the performance of their functions, it is imperative that they too are held accountable to the Parliament in the same way that Ministers are held accountable to the Parliament. Thus, they will be accountable for the ministerial statements that they deliver in the Parliament and also for the answers that they provide in response to questions raised in the Parliament.

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.