

REPUBLIC OF NAURU

ELECTORAL BILL 2016

SECOND READING SPEECH

Honorable Baron Divavesi Waqa MP

10th March 2016

Mr. Speaker Sir,

I have the pleasure of introducing to the House today a Bill for the *Electoral Act 2016*.

Mr. Speaker and Honorable members of the House, this Bill is a step toward adapting our electoral system in Nauru to better reflect new political realities. This is a critical task for every democracy, whether they are established or emerging democracies. The systems therefore will vary according to the state of that particular democracy but the goal is the same, to develop institutions that are strong enough to promote a stable democracy while at the same time being flexible enough to react to changing circumstances.

It is important that we learn from the experiences of our past and the novel provisions in this legislation are what I hope will promote better representation, transparency and inclusiveness in our electoral system. Electoral systems are never a “one size fits all” concept and therefore with this law, we have taken the better concepts from across jurisdictions and tailored them to meet our own particular needs.

A major inclusion in this legislation is the Electoral Commission and the Office of the Electoral Commissioner. This office is an independent and impartial body that will go a long way in giving confidence and credibility to the electoral process in our beloved Nauru.

Changes have also been made to the registration process in Nauru where citizens who attain the age of twenty are automatically registered in the electoral roll rather than an individual voter coming to register. This ensures a more streamlined process involving greater cooperation between the Electoral Commissioner and the Registrar for Births, Deaths and Marriages. Our customary links are also given great

consideration and there is now included additional criteria that a voter can rely on if they are transferring registration between Districts.

The Bill also consolidates offences which previously were spread out over several other legislation.

Mr. Speaker, there is a very detailed explanatory memorandum accompanying this Bill and it explains the provisions in more detail.

Mr. Speaker and Honorable Members, this Bill when it becomes law, will ensure that our election process is workable and sustainable and it is a signal to the international community that we as a people recognize that a sound electoral system is one of the most influential of all political institutions and of crucial importance to issues of governance and democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.