

REPUBLIC OF NAURU
NAOERO CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) BILL 2024

SECOND READING SPEECH

Hon. Lionel Rouwen Aingimea, M.P.

26 November 2024

Mr. Speaker Sir,

I have the privilege of introducing to the House today the *Naoero Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2024*.

Mr Speaker, this Bill seeks to amend the Naoero Citizenship Act 2017 by removing the unfair treatment of those persons who attained citizens under section 13 of the Naoero Citizenship Act 2017 or naturalized citizens.

Section 24 of the Naoero Citizenship Act 2017 currently provides that a person who is granted citizenship under Section 13 of the Naoero Citizenship Act 2017, that is a foreigner who marries a Nauruan, is deprived of his or her citizenship once a naturalised citizen re-marries a non-Nauruan or a foreigner.

The current provision of the Naoero Citizenship Act 2017 prohibits the re-marrying of a naturalised citizen to a foreign national. He or she can only re-marry a Nauruan citizen. As soon as a naturalised citizen remarries a foreign national the current law automatically deprives him or her of his or her Nauruan citizenship.

In many cases it is the children that suffer. The citizenship of the children of naturalised citizens are not affected if their naturalised parent is re-married or if the naturalised citizen remarries. That is because, the children become citizens by birth. However, once the naturalised citizen loses his or her citizenship, he or she has to depart Nauru, as he or she no longer has any legal basis to stay in Nauru, unless he or she applies for the appropriate visa. The immediate consequence of this, is the children, who will continue to hold their Nauruan citizenship, will either be left behind in Nauru or taken by their parent overseas. The impact on the children who are Nauruan citizens is that they will have issues in adapting to the new country.

Furthermore, the current Section 24 of the Naoero Citizenship Act 2017 will encourage the naturalised citizen to be in a de-facto relationship with a foreigner in fear of getting married and losing his or her Nauruan Citizenship.

Our Customs encourages a man and a woman to formally marry each other in accordance with the *Births, Death and Marriages Registration Act 2018*.

It is fair to note that the reason for having this provision in the past was to avoid abuse by naturalised citizens. However, since 2017, there have not been any such abuse. If there is any possibility of abuse, this will be addressed by the necessary due diligence and the vetting process carried out by the Registrar of Citizenship.

Mr Speaker, let me refer to the key provisions of the Bill.

Clause 4 amends Section 24 which now deletes or repeals this provision. As noted earlier in my speech, Section 24 currently prohibits a naturalised citizen to re-marry after divorce or on the death of his or her Nauruan spouse. The repealing of this provision will allow a naturalised citizen to re-marry. The issue that this repeal is addressing is in relation to the children of the naturalised citizen. Furthermore, the repeal will also allow the naturalised citizen to lawfully marry a foreigner.

Mr Speaker, the explanatory memorandum summarises the Bill's provisions. Sir, I respectfully request that the explanatory memorandum be read and incorporated into the Hansard Reports.

I commend the Bill to the House.