

REPUBLIC OF NAURU
NAOERO CITIZENSHIP BILL 2017

SECOND READING SPEECH

Honourable David Adeang, MP

21 December 2017

Mr. Speaker Sir,

Today, I have the honour to present a Bill which embodies significant changes to our citizenship law. I am pleased to introduce to this House today a Bill for an Act to repeal the *Naoero Citizenship Act 2005*.

Mr Speaker, it makes sense to update our laws to reflect the times. While it is not compulsory to become a citizen, the act of becoming a citizen is a formal commitment to our country and the values that uniquely define us as Nauruans.

Why is citizenship seen as being so important? What is citizenship in the 21st century? Citizenship is quite simply the opportunity to be at our best. It provides the opportunity to participate in institutions that have been handed down to us by generations over generations. It is a balance between the responsibilities that go with participation on the one hand, and the obligations and rights on the other hand. Citizenship is sharing in the civic life of a country, in the full sense of the word, not just holding a passport.

This Bill replaces the current Act and it finds a more appropriate balance between fulfilling reasonable citizenship requirements on the one hand, and facilitating citizenship on the other, because evidence shows that citizenship is a facilitator of integration. It is our job to ensure that there is equality among citizens – equal rights, equal opportunities and if necessary, equal punishment.

The Bill has three key features. Firstly, it aims to reinforce the value of citizenship by strengthening that value and improving the efficiency of processing. It would also deter citizenships of convenience and the idea that the passport is all that it is about. It would deter the idea that Nauruan citizenship could be, for some, a flag of convenience without the full participation of Nauruan life that we know is so essential to our country.

Secondly, it is about maintaining the integrity of citizenship. It is about combatting fraud, which we have to do as the challenge of fraud becomes more sophisticated throughout modern life. Equally, on the integrity front, the Bill provides for the loss of citizenship as a result of fraud or engaging in crimes relating to terrorism and international financing of terrorist related activities; or a conviction for a sexual offence involving a child.

Finally, we want to honour those who serve Nauru. There are several measures in this Bill that would do so.

Mr Speaker, the Bill will deliver a better-structured, clearer, more accessible law, drafted in simple language.

The Bill is accompanied by an explanatory memorandum explaining the Bill in more detail.

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