



# Nauru Bulletin

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## Fairness and transparency are paramount, electoral commissioner

The recent passing of the Electoral Act 2016 is a step toward in adapting the Nauru electoral system to better reflect new political realities.

In his second reading speech to parliament on 10 March, President Baron Waqa said the changes “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.”

One of the most significant changes to the Act is the Electoral Commission and the Office of the Electoral Commissioner.

The office is an independent and impartial body that will oversee and manage elections issues.

Other changes include the registration process where citizens that have reached 21 years are automatically registered in the electoral roll.

Meanwhile, the newly formed Electoral Commission swore in its first officers last month (21 March) as the country prepares for the general elections later in the year.

Justice Shafiullah Khan presided over the swearing in of Elections Commissioner Joseph Cain and deputy electoral commissioners Sylvanna Deireragea and Corinne Joram.

Mr Cain conveyed his appreciation to the government of Nauru on behalf of the new team for their appointment and promised a balanced and transparent process for this year’s coming elections.

“I am very pleased to have been appointed

and be able to serve his country in such an important role.



*Justice Khan (R) with Electoral Commissioner Joseph Cain (centre) and his deputies*

“The work is interesting and challenging. Even more challenging that the election can be held at an unknown date,” Mr Cain said.

Preparations are underway and made easier with the arrival of an elections consultant. A legal advisor is yet to join their team.

“We are reviewing our policies and procedures including supplies and refining our office structure so that I and my two deputies have a clear understanding of our responsibilities in the lead up to the election.”

The office will be recruiting administrative staff which Mr Cain hopes will be “people who are excited about delivering the election and the opportunities this will bring.”

The Elections Commission office opened registration for electoral transfers this week (4 April) but had to suspend it temporarily to ensure the processes according to the new Electoral Act are complied with. The enrolment program will recommence in the coming weeks.

The team has a number of tasks to address

prior to polling day including writing policies and procedures to form a basis for the conduct of the elections, as well as the purchase of materials for polling places, IT infrastructure for the new office, training for polling staff and public awareness and candidate information sessions.

“Nauru has a complex counting system and we are also developing training and electronic recording of results. There is much to do in such a short time and it is challenging, but I am confident we will achieve these tasks.”

The work of the commission is very important and conducts its work independently from government or any other authority.

“We are a neutral body that operates as the umpire in the election. We ensure that fairness and transparency are paramount in our work and that the members of Parliament will be elected according to the will of the people. There is nothing more important in a country as ours than open democracy,” Mr Cain said.

Section 9 (1) of the Electoral Act stipulates that “Subject to any decision of a Court, in the performance of its functions and in exercise of its powers, the Electoral Commissioner is not subject to the direction or control of any person or authority.”

However, the elections commissioner is required to report to Parliament after each election and annually and may consult with other persons or parties on any matter.

The office is currently working from a temporary office base at the government building until the relocation to its permanent location at the civic centre in Aiwo•

## French ambassador presents credentials to President Waqa

His Excellency President Baron Waqa received the Ambassador-designate of the French Republic to Nauru at the Presidential Office on 31 March for the presentation of credentials.

Upon arriving at the government office Mr Michel Djokovic presented copies of his letter of Credence to Secretary for Foreign Affairs & Trade Michael Aroi before being received by the Director of Police for the playing of the national anthems and inspection of the police Guard of Honour.



*President Baron Waqa receives French Ambassador Michel Djokovic at the presentation of credentials*

Mr Djokovic was later escorted to the Presidential Office for the presentation of credentials.

Ambassador Djokovich expressed his gratitude for the honour of being the ambassador to Nauru and looks forward to a close and fruitful relationship between the two countries.

President Waqa accepted the letter of Credence and congratulated Mr Djokovic on his appointment.

Following the presentation of credentials the Ambassador continued courtesy calls on Minister David Adeang and Minister Charmaine Scotty, Chief Secretary Bernard Grundler and operations manager at the Regional Processing Centre (RPC) Berilyn Jeremiah.

Prior to the Ambassador's departure on Friday 1 April, he made a brief visit to the three RPCs•

## *- News in brief -*

### **Transfers of registration for electoral roll**

The Office of the Elections Commission will re-commence registration of electoral roll transfers for eligible voters once it has finalised relevant procedures•

### **Taiwan technical mission offers cooking demonstration**

The Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan) through its Technical Mission held a public workshop on vegetable production and nutrition enhancement at the civic centre on 26 March.

The purpose of the workshop is to promote vegetable planting and to provide information about the nutritional value of vegetables. It is hoped that the information session will encourage attendees to include more vegetables in their diet.

Mr Bo-Kai Chen of the Taiwan Technical Mission demonstrated some vegetable cooking lessons and shared samples of his food and recipes with those that attended.

A second workshop is anticipated later in the year•

## Election consultant assist with preparation for general election

The newly formed Nauru Electoral Commission is receiving expert assistance from Melbourne-based election consultant Judy Birkenhead in the lead up to the 2016 general elections.

Ms Birkenhead said the elections commission and its officers are all new to the process but are preparing well for the elections by putting systems and policies in place to ensure the efficient running of the office and public assistance in the lead up to the elections.

Ms Birkenhead is retired from the Australian public service and now works independently. Her motto is "Elections with integrity".



*Election consultant Judy Birkenhead is assisting the elections office*

Her work has been associated with the delivery of a large number of electoral services over the past 21 years whereby the level of involvement increased to that of elections consultant managing the delivery of specialised electoral services for two state electoral authorities before joining the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) at the executive level.

In her final role Ms Birkenhead was appointed as the Executive Secretary for the Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand.

Ms Birkenhead has worked in various other places such as the New South Wales Electoral Commission, the Canberra Office of the AEC and in 2006 was assigned to Fiji to be an electoral adviser on the electoral roll and general operational matters.

From her work in Fiji, she said she has become quite passionate about the need to provide other countries with unbiased assistance to ensure that governments are elected democratically and reflect the will of the majority of the people.

Ms Birkenhead has also worked in Tonga, Solomon Islands and Timor Leste•

## Taiwan pledges \$2M annually over four years into trust fund

The Nauru Government and the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan) signed the memorandum of understanding (MOU) this week forging Taiwan's commitment to contribute to the Nauru Trust Fund.

The Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) will make an annual contribution of USD\$2-million towards the Trust Fund over the next four years.

Speaking in the local language Minister for Finance David Adeang thanked Taiwan Ambassador Joseph Chow for presenting the agreement from the Government of Taiwan to join the new trust fund. He also thanked Taiwan for their partnership in contributing to and managing the fund.

Minister Adeang said Ambassador Chow and a representative from Australia will sit on the management committee of the Nauru Trust Fund to manage and build the trust.

By the end of the current financial year (June 2016) the NTF will have a starting value of over \$30-million, the bulk of which is from Nauru's own contribution of \$20.4-million. It is estimated the fund will have a value of over \$400-million after 15 years.

Minister Adeang reiterated that the fund is for the welfare of Nauru's future generation.

Ambassador Chow expressed his government's gratitude to the Nauru government as well as Minister Adeang for his efforts in setting up the fund.

The NTF is registered under the International Organisation-Privileges and Immunities Act and has tax exempt status.

Upon opening the account an initial deposit of \$20.4 million was made by the Nauru government followed by \$8.2 million by the Government of Australia and a one-off contribution by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

International fund manager Mercer Fund was selected as asset managers following extensive vetting•



*Finance Minister David Adeang and Taiwan Ambassador Joseph Chow sign MoU for Nauru Trust Fund*

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## Emergency services showcase their procedures

Last week (1 April) the National Emergency Services (NES) in conjunction with Nauru Rehabilitation Corporation (NRC) and Nauru Utilities Corporation (NUC) conducted a tour of the various NES divisions and the designated site where the NES Headquarters is to be built.

The purpose of the tour was to showcase the different roles of the emergency divisions and convey an appreciation for the Fire and Rescue and Nauru Lifeguard services.

The tour began at the Nauru Fire and Rescue headquarters in Yaren where the welcoming ceremony was held and guests welcomed by Secretary for NES Mr Roy Harris.

Chief firefighter Mr Celso Dageago led the fire drills which included the donning of fire safety suits and emergency dispatch procedures.

Following the fire demonstration, the official delegation was escorted to the Anibare community boat harbour for a surf and rescue demonstration by the lifeguard service.

Head Lifeguard Mr Simron Botelanga explained the difference of equipped and unequipped lifesaving drills. The lifeguards completed a set of lifesaving drills showcasing their abilities and knowledge of saving a life at sea.



*Fire fighters demonstrate a fire rescue mission*

Following the demonstrations, the official party was then escorted to Aiwo at the proposed site for the NES headquarters which is at the start of topside road•



# Japan and Nauru sign agreement to upgrade solar water pumps



*Acting Secretary for CIE Chitra Jeremiah and First Secretary for Japan Embassy Megumi Enya sign \$100K GGP agreement to upgrade community solar water pumps*

The governments of Nauru and Japan formalised an agreement last month (14 March) through the Grassroots human security project program (GGP) to upgrade existing community solar water pump systems.

Acting Secretary for Commerce, Industry and Environment Mrs Chitra Jeremiah and First Secretary of the Japan Embassy Ms Megumi Enya signed the agreement on behalf of the government of Nauru and Japan respectively. The signing ceremony was conducted at the cabinet meeting room.

The agreement will approve an annual injection of AUD\$100,000 into the GGP project to upgrade and maintain the existing solar water pump systems which have been installed around five communities on Nauru.

At the signing ceremony, Ms Enya said it was a privilege to have witnessed the formalisation of the agreement.

“It’s a privilege to witness the formalising of the project for upgrading of water supply system in five districts, eight communities of Nauru through Japan’s grant assistance for grassroot human security project program also known as GGP.

“This project will assist the five recipient districts of Aiwo, Anabar, Denig Location and Uaboe have access to adequate water supply,” Ms Enya said.

The water pump system comprises of submersible water pump that will be powered by a solar panel and a 6000 litre tank. The system will provide a continuous supply of water during the day and water can then be drawn from the tank during the night. The pump will automatically recharged the following day.

Director of Aid Mr Samuel Grundler highlighted that there have been issues in the previous project but both governments are negotiating to address these issues.

“Of course, there are some issues from the past project in regards to missing tap and all that, there’s been some negotiation with the government of Japan and Nauru on how we can address this,” Mr Grundler said.

Ms Enya is optimistic about the project.

“We hope that the provision of these solar water pumps and water tanks will empower the people and build their resilience to adversities brought about by health and environment related threats and the challenges that are faced by the communities in their daily life,” Ms Enya said.

Local construction company Ocean Construction will be awarded the contract to carry out the maintenance work under the GGP agreement•

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NAURU BULLETIN



**Republic of Nauru**

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