



Nauru Bulletin

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23 December 2022

December parliament

Speaker of Parliament Marcus Stephen called the last sitting of the year to order and Members heard the tabling of Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No.3) 2022-23 and a special announcement of a Christmas bonus for public servants, pensioners and the disabled, 12 December.

In his opening address, President Russ Kun cautioned motorists about the dangers of drink driving over the festive season and that it will not be tolerated.

The President urged the public to respect road rules and the community for a safe Christmas.

Finance Minister Martin Hunt tabled the Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No.3) 2022-23 which recognises \$14 million in revenue and \$13.9 million to be appropriated, leaving a surplus balance of \$7,000.

One million is provided to the fiscal cash buffer; \$1.4M towards the Nauru Trust Fund as prepayment for next year's contribution; and \$3.4M for the Christmas bonus.



President Kun urges public safety over the festive period

Ministerial Statements

Nauru Media

Minister for Nauru Media Pyon Deiyee presented the latest developments and accomplishment of his department beginning with the changeover of the television analogue transmission system to digital and the back-back employee of the year wins

by television manager Kimmy Dabwido in 2021 and administration and finance manager Gaelyn Dake this year.

After almost 20 years of operating in analogue, Nauru Television switched to the digital system on 23 November enabling NTV to “broadcast video and audio content in high definition and quality feed, giving viewers a better experience.”

The switch enables the station to accommodate up to eight channels with the potential for more while also working on a third channel and a Pay TV service.

Minister Deiyee thanked the Australian government for funding which enabled contracting two media technical professionals from Australian company, N-Com to spearhead the project and train local staff.

Since the first publication in 2009, the department's news-mag Mwinen ko published its 100th edition, and the fourth

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President Kun hosts first Christmas banquet

His Excellency President Russ Kun hosted the annual president's Christmas banquet at the Meneñ Hotel, 14 December.

President Kun welcomed guests and acknowledged the presence of chief guests, India's Minister of State for External Affairs Dr Rajkumar Singh and his delegation.

“We join with everyone in embracing the sense of renewed hope and feeling of warmth this joyous season brings to our country and the world.”

Special guests in attendance were Taiwan's Ambassador Dean Wang, Australian Acting High Commissioner Andrew Hodges, Speaker of Parliament Marcus Stephen, Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament.

President Kun thanked the Republic of China (Taiwan) and Australia for their “continued assistance” and constant support for Nauru. Of particular note was the “gracious welcome and generous hospitality” accorded to him and his delegation during the state visit to Taiwan in November and later Australia.

MoC Cramer Cain steered the program filled with entertainment, feast and a karaoke competition •



President Kun hosts VIP guests at the annual Christmas banquet

digitally, on 2 December.

The move overcomes printing issues that has beset efforts to publish over many months.

Education

Education Minister Richard Menke reiterated the obstacles COVID-19 has had on the education system and learning but says the extended school closures presented new aspirations for the department.

Providing education during the school closures and doing school work remotely were the main issues, and the support of parents and caregivers towards children's learning was a crucial component, the minister says.

Disruption to student learning at the end of 2022 ranged from 15 to 75 instruction days, and attendance rates was also disrupted. Both will be a focus in the department's next steps.

Five of nine key performance indicators (KPI) were achieved and the rest unmet due to COVID restrictions.

To accelerate the department's efforts towards KPIs, the minister says Nauru TVET is negotiating with TAFE Queensland on a two-year extension of its current agreement.

"This extension will rectify gaps identified in the current arrangement and will provide for literacy and numeracy support, increased efficiency in program delivery and regular work shadow opportunities for trainers."

This extension will rectify gaps identified in the current arrangement, provide support for literacy, numeracy, and program delivery as well as assist students' achievement standards and increase their employability skills and readiness.

Minister Menke congratulated the 20 year eight students who were awarded a Nauru Government scholarship, and the nine graduates from the University of New England; three graduated with a Bachelor of Education degree and seven with an Associate Degree in Teaching.

This takes the number of UNE graduates to one masters degree, three bachelors degrees and 40 associate degrees.

The teacher deficit remains a global issue but a teaching retention incentive for local teachers will be disbursed this month to those who have completed two consecutive years of teaching.

"This initiative closes the remuneration gap between local and expatriate teachers. Continuation of this scheme will be underpinned by teacher performance and standards in the next two years."

Results for our graduating students in Nauru, Australia and Fiji are yet to be received; however, the Minister confirms nine students completed studies in Australia, four from Fiji and 61 from Nauru.

Universal issues like COVID-19 and climate change have highlighted the need for a flexible, resilient, and sustainable education system.

"In this regard, Nauru joined other Ministries of Education in the Asia-Pacific Region affirming its commitment to working towards an effective learning recovery for all in the region in June of this year."

The ministry is also committed to the Action for Transforming Early Childhood Care and Education and with met with other member states in November.

Fisheries

Minister for Nauru Fisheries and Marine Resources Authority Wawani Dowiyogo led a delegation to Brisbane to meet in person



Nauru celebrates another cohort of UNE graduates

with five bilateral partners and two virtually, in October.

The concluding MOUs were valued between \$250,000 and \$9 million and of the seven meetings approximately \$30 million was secured for revenue for the 2023 fishing year.

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission held its 19th annual session in Da Nang, Vietnam from 27 November to 3 October, and member agreed to appoint Ms Rhea Moss-Christian from the Marshall Islands to be the next executive director replacing Sir Feleti Teo of Tuvalu who has been at the helm since 2014.

Nauru Rehabilitation Corporation

Minister for NRC Pyon Deiye says work on the higher ground initiative (HGI) project at portion 230 in Meneñ/Anibare is steadily progressing with one of the four sections completely reclaimed and a second section nearing completion.

Reclamation work has reached 46 per cent completion, equivalent to 4.5 hectares of portion 230.

The first part of the Menen seawall development behind the Jose-Grundler residence is completed while the Boe seawall project is being revisited to include an extension further west.

The Minister says more seawall projects are anticipated with the NRC working with the Department of Infrastructure to ensure further seawall construction designs and operational conditions are compliant with the Environmental Management & Climate Change Act.

While NRC continues to supply aggregate for the port redevelopment project, the purchase of aggregate and hiring of land clearing equipment are available to the public.

In line with the Natinal Sustainable Urban Development Plan (NSUDP) the NRC is working with New Zealand-based environment consulting agency, BECA, to develop a site plan for the land fill site and to develop much needed infrastructure to cater for future waste management including a waste recycling facility.

The NRC has also taken steps in conditioning the land fill site to accept recyclable material, commencing with compostable materials such as cardboard waste that's turned into cardboard mulching, resulting in reduced waste piles.

Measures are also being taken to reduce fire hazard occurrences at the dump site by making clear access for fire trucks and compacting of incoming waste at different sections of the site.

Minister Deiye underscored the competition of attracting and retaining a highly qualified and skilled labour force coupled with the challenge

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of competing with better salary rates offered by government and other state-owned enterprises.

The Minister informed the House that as of pay period ending 15 November 2022 all NRC staff were paid a new salary rate inclusive of back pay from July 2022; aligning NRC with government and other SOE current rates for fiscal year 2022-23.

Minister Deiye said all possible financial implications were considered in deciding to increase staff salaries and concluded there would be minimal impact on the corporation's finances.

Taiwan State Visit, Australia meeting

President Kun updated the House of his inaugural state visit to Taiwan from 14 to 19 November under the theme 'Sustainable Partnership: Connectivity for Prosperity.'

"The visit was an opportunity to express gratitude for Taiwan's consistent support and assistance to Nauru's development efforts and to pursue sustainable partnerships with various sectors in Taiwan," the President said.

The alliance between Nauru and Taiwan was reaffirmed and commits to continue to advocate and stand in solidarity with Taiwan.

Onward travel to Canberra, Australia from 22 to 25 November, President Kun met with Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Penny Wong, and Minister for Pacific Affairs Pat Conroy to further discussions had during the recent visits to Nauru of Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles and Minister Wong.

President Kun acknowledged Australia's continued support for priority sectors in Nauru including the additional offer of \$2.5 million to address impacts of COVID-19 and bolster Nauru's recovery efforts post-pandemic.

The President also commended Australia for its commitment to building a stronger Pacific family evidenced through amplified and personalised engagement in the Pacific and upheld by the recent increase of Australia's Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding to the Pacific.

"Accelerating Nauru's engagement internationally, regionally, and sub-regionally provides government an opportunity to achieve national sustainability and prosperity.

"The current geopolitics, the unprecedented health crises triggered by COVID19, the existential threat of climate change and impact if the conflict in Europe necessitates that Nauru's accelerates its efforts to work with partners to advance our shared commitments and responsibilities as sovereign nations to uphold the universal values of peace, freedom, democracy and human rights," President Kun said.

Nauru Post

Nauru's \$3.31 million debt with the Universal Postal Union (UPU) has been set aside, sanctions lifted, and Nauru reinstated to full UPU membership with full voting rights.

This comes after the payment of \$36,000 and an appeal by the President to review Nauru's debt position with the UPU.

Minister for Nauru Post Richard Menke says the debt is "absurd as they represent nearly 450 years of payments at the current level of our mandatory annual UPU contributions," and the preference is to waive the debt.

Since the last sitting in August, Minister Menke was notified that the debt which accumulated since the late 1980s "arose from a flawed,



President Kun says accelerating Nauru's engagement abroad provides the government an opportunity to achieve national sustainability and prosperity

mandatory annual contribution system that took little account of Nauru's size, its population, or its fading economy."

In October 2022 at a meeting of the UPU's Council of Administration (CA), Nauru got approval to review the debts set aside be undertaken. The review will take place after the USP Extraordinary Congress in October 2023 and advance recommendations leading to the 2025 UPU Congress.

The debt set aside has potential to be reactivated should Nauru fall into sanctions again by not paying the mandatory annual contribution equivalent to \$7,400.

Minister Menke says Nauru will host the 2023 Executive Council meeting of the Asian-Pacific Postal Union (APPU) from 14 to 18 August 2023 where up to 100 delegates are expected.

The Minister also announced that Nauru Post has made arrangements with Toyota Japan and obtained direct procurement rights to order Toyota vehicles directly from manufacturers, with an estimated turnaround time of six months for orders.

The state-owned entity has also streamlined its payment gateway service where customers can now pay for online orders with any debit or credit card.

Nauru Post released a commemorative stamp for the 100th birthday of the late President Hammer DeRoburt on 26 October and participated in its first Public Service Day since it was established as a corporation in 2018.

Health – "Your health is your wealth"

Minister for Health Timothy Ika centred his presentation on the Overseas Medical Referral (OMR) scheme saying it is the "dominant challenge" of the department absorbing 47 per cent (\$12.6 million) of the total health budget of \$18.1 million.

During this financial year 53 OMR patients were processed, which equates to less than 0.5 per cent of the 12,000 population.

Minister Ika estimates that an equivalent of \$250,000 is spent per OMR patient while it costs around \$1,170 per patient in Nauru.

The Minister explains why OMR is the single most dominant challenge of the department.

The expenses are crippling the department and preventing any comprehensive work to improve local health services, and is taking staff away from more important matters to deal with OMR issues.

Minister Ika says there is a general misunderstanding of why the OMR exists stressing that people feel entitled for treatment overseas, belittling the capacity of the hospital and worse neglecting their health

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then “demand to be treated overseas.”

Another important factor, the Minister says, is the abuse hospital staff get from members of the public if they are not considered for OMR or they seek intervention from their local members of parliament.

“This is demoralising for my staff who deal with difficult cases under challenging circumstances, they are overworked and then throughout their daily workload, they are disrespected, are taken from granted and their importance is disregarded,” Minister Ika said.

Minister Ika estimates that \$11,560 a month is spent per patient and an escort treated in Brisbane before they even see a doctor. This includes expenses for visa fees, return airfares, daily subsistence allowance, and accommodation.

Estimated treatment costs including running costs are upwards of \$60,000 per patient for dialysis, ophthalmology, cardiology, orthopaedic, nephrology, and oncology.

Thirty five patients are still on OMR but it’s anticipated that 15 will complete their treatment by the end of December.

Minister Ika identified some strategies to address the situation would include bringing in specialised care, revising the OMR policy, and increase the public health campaign.

The OMR system treats one patient but improving and increasing the number of medical expertise on island will enable the entire population to access specialist care.

The second strategy is to revise the OMR policy which saw the abolition of the OMR committee. All medical cases are now screened by three layers of medical doctors.

The OMR is limited to extreme medical cases that cannot be treated on island or by the visiting medical specialists.

Effective on the day of the sitting, 12 December, patients will no longer be sent to Brisbane or Taiwan for treated but will be sent to Fiji and India instead.

Privately-funded overseas medical treatments will no longer be supported by reimbursements.

A review schedule will be introduced for OMR patients who have completed their treatments to monitor their wellness and ensure they comply with the conditions of their treatments. Non-compliance will prevent their chances for future OMR.

The third strategy is to move on the prevention of or delay the onset of disease which the public health division is tasked with and empowered to do more work to prevent disease and promote healthy living.

The recent Taiwan medical team reviewed 317 patients and conducted 41 surgeries in the areas of ophthalmology, plastic surgery, and cardiovascular.

“Given that the minimum cost of an OMR package is currently \$50,000, the Taiwan team probably saved us \$2 million on OMR and potentially more.”

Minister Ika thanked Taiwan for extending their health services to the people of Nauru and conveyed gratitude to the Fred Hollows Foundation and the Pacific Eye Institute for including Nauru in their schedule for Pacific visits.

The public is urged to get a cardiovascular risk assessment done at the Public Health Centre.

“You need to understand your health risks and intervene early. Don’t
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OMR absorbs almost half of health budget, health minister announces restructure

wait until it is too late,” Minister Ika said.

He further urged a whole-of-government approach is needed to become a healthy nation.

Underscoring the contribution of the education department underscoring a World Health Organisation (WHO) study which found that obesity in Nauru starts at the age of five to adolescent.

“This can be attributed the school feeding program so we need to review what we are feeding our children.

“We also need to bring back physical education program into the school curriculum.”

He suggests the sports department can also do their part by reintroducing Olympic sports so students can find “their personal interests and development wholesome hobbies,” as well as sporting federations identifying talents early.

Minister Ika says the justice department needs to introduce legislation banning e-cigarettes or vapes and the finance department to increase sugar and sin tax as well as introduce a kava tax.

A sin tax is enforced on goods and services, which are perceived as harmful or costly to society. Examples include tobacco, gambling ventures, alcohol, cigarettes, and even sugary drinks.

As the Minister highlighted that leading an unhealthy life is much cheaper than a healthy one, he asked the government to consider subsidising fruits and vegetables so they are affordable.

Sports

Deputy Minister for Sport Jesse Jeremiah was pleased to announce Taiwan’s commitment to support Nauru in its preparation for the 2023 Micronesian Games.

Having met with Taiwan sports officials during President Kun’s state visit last month, the Taiwanese gave assurances of funding the building of sporting infrastructure as well as capacity building and training.

Recommendations of track and field options were also discussed at a meeting in Brisbane with Oceania Athletics and Pacific Games Association president.

DM Jeremiah also highlighted recent events including the visit to Nauru by Australia’s Minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong and the launch of the AFL Nauru Talent Academy which will support junior athletes’ training as well as offer coaching and referee programs.

Since the opening of borders the sports department is working on its budget in the hopes of assisting sporting federations compete at international events.

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Ronphos

Deputy Minister for Ronphos Delvin Thoma says the SOE has exported approximately 80,000 metric tonnes of phosphate in three shipments, since the new government administration assumed office in September, and aims to achieve 300,00 MT by the end of 2023.

Plans to improve Ronphos infrastructure to ensure swift processing and export of phosphate include the refurbishment of the north arm cantilever counter weight. This is expected to be completed by mid-2023.

Landowner royalties and rents are up to date with payments made for the quarter ending September 2022 paid in October, and the December quarter paid on Monday 19 December.

Public Service

President Russ Kun presented the final statement for Public Service Day 2022 stating 2022 marked another high point for displays as departments raised the bar higher from previous years with presentations and information showcased their efforts and hard work.

His Excellency congratulated Gaelyn Dake and the justice department for winning the employee and department of the year awards, respectively.

Two notable additions to the awards is the Student Intern Recognition Award recognising the hard work and dedication of Jesaja Temaki and Emo-Grace Dowiyogo and their contributions to the service of the public.

“Public servants are the stewards and stewardesses of a public good. For most Nauruan citizens and residents, the government and its public service is the only vehicle for where they pay fines and fees and where they choose who represents them in the political space,” President Kun said.

“But the fact is that public service has a lot of different roles, and understanding these and why we need them allows the government to do better.

“In this environment where Nauru faces economic challenges, global warming, social inequality, the rise of giant technological consortiums, and pandemic threats such as Covid19, we, the people of Nauru, need to understand better who our government is, what the public service can do, and should be doing, during times of happiness and especially in our darkest moments.”

President Kun concluded by extending a word of thanks to the state-owned enterprises (SOE) “who have partnered with the public service by turning policies and plans into reality through services we take for granted on a daily basis.”

“Their challenges are intertwined with the public services, and the government remains indebted and will continue to be at your service and call for duty,” President Kun said.

BILLS

Minister for Justice Pyon Deiye tabled the Law Revision and Consolidation (Amendment) Bill 2022 dealing with the composition of the Law Revision Commission and specifically to amend the organisational structure of the Legislative Drafting section.

The Minister explains that the section used to be headed by a Principal Legislative Drafter but is currently headed by a director.

Meanwhile, the Principal Legislative Drafter is a member of the Law Revision Commission and with the change in title of the head of the Section, the Minister says needs to be amended.

The Principal Legislative Drafter will be replaced by the Director Legislative Drafting and other

members of the Commission remain unchanged.

After the amendment the Law Revision Commission will consist of the following office holders: Clerk of Parliament; Secretary for Justice; Solicitor General; and Director Legislative Drafting.

Parliament ended with the adjournment debate and well wishes from members to each other and the Nauruan public.

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India visit strengthens relations

India’s Minister of State for External Affairs, Dr Rajkumar Ranjan Singh arrived on Nauru for a four-day visit, 12-15 December.

The visit aims to strengthen the diplomatic relations between the governments of Nauru and India and the Minister to tour key sights on the island.



Minister Singh visited infrastructure funded by the Indian government and officially handed over the hospital waste management system

Minister Singh and his delegation first visited the Anetan community seawall which was constructed and co-funded by Nauru and India in 2017 then went to inspect the progress of the Nauru Port Project in Aiwo.

The delegation also took a tour of the Nauru Parliament and were welcomed by the Speaker of Parliament Marcus Stephen.

On day two of the visit, Minister Singh called on His Excellency President Russ Kun, Finance Minister Martin Hunt, Fisheries Minister Wawani Dowiyogo, Health Minister Timothy Ika and Deputy Minister for Sports Jesse Jeremiah.

Minister Singh was later hosted to lunch by Nauru’s High Commissioner to India Marlene Moses, followed by visits to the Indian government-funded Mahatma Gandhi Centre of Excellence at Nauru Secondary School, the Nauru Museum and the War Memorial where Minister Singh paid his respects and laid a wreath. The day’s program ended with a visit to Buada lagoon.

Minister Singh and his delegation toured the phosphate mining operations and Higher Ground Initiative at topside on the third day (14 December). The next stop was at the RON Hospital where the waste management system was officially handed over by Minister Singh to Health Minister Ika followed by lunch and meetings with Deputy Ministers Maverick Eoe and Reagan Aliklik.

On the last day, Minister Singh met and held constructive dialogue with the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of Parliament to which he stated that he sees India and Nauru sharing a progressive and dynamic relationship in which both countries can always find support, extending mutual cooperation.

Deputy Minister for Sports Jesse Jeremiah bid farewell to Minister Singh and his delegation on behalf of the government upon their departure on 15 December •

ACJ Khan closes legal year

Acting Chief Justice Mohammed Khan officially closed the legal year for 2022 in a ceremony held at the Nauru court house, 16 December.

In his address, His Honour Khan spoke on national matters and the COVID-19 lockdown which caused the shutdown of the courts and the national election that was held differently this year “to mitigate the spread of COVID-19”.

The Acting CJ underscored matters relating to the judiciary and legal profession such as the lack of Court of Appeal sittings, suggestions to have an annual legal conference, Civil Procedure Rules, the Criminal Procedure Act, mandatory sentencing for sexual offences, refugee appeal cases, Continuing Legal Education (CLE), and the extension of the court registry.

Thirteen local matters [civil and criminal] and 14 refugee appeal cases were heard by the Nauru Court of Appeal from August to October.

“Apart from the 14 [refugee] appeals which have been heard and are awaiting judgment, five matters are yet to be assigned hearing dates,” Justice Khan said.

Although continuing legal education was not conducted locally this year, Justice Khan said he had arranged with the Bar Association of Queensland and South Pacific Regional Legal Education Committee to include Nauru in their workshops and continuing legal education.

He acknowledged the government of Nauru for their support of the courts and thanked staff for their “dedicated and committed service throughout the year.”

Acting Secretary for Justice Bhavna Narayan emphasised the importance of law practitioners familiarising themselves with



Acting CJ Khan presides over the closing of the courts

Election Petition Rules 2019 and the functions of the Court of Disputed Returns.

“I stress that the Election Petition Rules 2019 are a special creature of statute and also its interpretation is very important. I urge all the legal practitioners to learn the Rules,” Ms Narayan said.

She also acknowledged the students that had recently completed the pleaders course and will soon be graduating, and thanked Justice Khan and all those who contributed in the teaching of the course.

President of the Nauru Law Society Barina Duburiya highlighted outstanding issues such as long time vacancies, the absence of a substantive chief justice and the need to reform archaic laws, in particular land laws.

“Each sector bears its responsibility whether it be government or the legislature, we must work together to develop, [and] maintain the integrity of the rule of law,” Ms Duburiya said.

The courts will resume on 16 January •



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Republic of Nauru

Office contact:
Government Information Office
Government Offices
Yaren District, Republic of Nauru

Em: gio.nauru@gmail.com
Tel: +674 557-3009/3133 ext. 307
www.naurugov.nr