

FOI PASSES

31 August 2007
Cayman Island's Government Press Release

The Legislative Assembly today (31 August) passed the Freedom of Information Bill into law. The Cayman Islands is on its way to giving legislative backing to the public's right to access most records of government, including statutory authorities and government owned companies.

Leader of Government Business, the Hon. Kurt Tibbetts tabled in the House the Freedom of Information Bill, which Members debated and took through the various stages to eventual passage this afternoon.

The law becomes effective on 1 January 2009. This 14-month roll out period is aimed at ensuring that all government departments are prepared to respond to requests for information from the public.

"The timeline that has been set out is what is thought of, at this point and time, as a practical timeline," Mr Tibbetts said as he explained the reason for the 14-month span between passage of the bill and its coming into effect. "We don't want to simply rush the date for putting it into effect, and then we have a dissatisfied public."

Mr Tibbetts' tabling of the FOI bill today meant that the document had come full circle since he introduced it to the House in November 2005 as a paper for public discussion and consultation.

The document tabled in the House today reflected public input gathered at community meetings in all of Cayman's districts along with written and emailed comments from individuals locally and abroad.

"As a result of public input, greater emphasis has been placed on the general principles of maximum disclosure and releasing information in the public interest. These principles provide the foundation on which Government can begin building a new culture of openness," Mr Tibbetts said and added. "For example the scope of the bill ensures that Government ministries, portfolios, and statutory authorities are all defined as public authorities and even Cabinet is not excluded from a FOI request."

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