



Service NSW (One-stop Access to Government Services) Bill 2013

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Extract from NSW Legislative Council Hansard and Papers Tuesday 18 June 2013.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Minister for Roads and Ports) [3.54 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The New South Wales Government is one of the biggest customer service organisations in our State. While other governments in Australia and around the world took advantage of technology and reforms of innovative retailers, airlines and smart local businesses over the last decade, many of those opposite and their mates in Sussex Street were too busy using their positions to look after their own interests and not the interests of our customers—the citizens and taxpayers of our great State.

The Hon. Walt Secord: You didn't write this, Duncan, come on.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: But I am reading it well. Those days are over. I am pleased today to introduce a bill that gives effect to one of the New South Wales Government's key commitments, which is to put customer service at the heart of government decision-making. This bill will allow Service NSW to provide customer services to the people of our State on behalf of other agencies. The bill provides for a government agency to be able to delegate to and enter into agreements with the Chief Executive Officer of Service NSW in order for Service NSW to undertake customer service functions for the agency, and provides for the required information transfers between Service NSW and the relevant agency for this to occur. It is our responsibility to make sure that citizens, businesses and taxpayers get the best possible service and results from the government they own and fund. There is no reason that people should not expect the same high level of service from the Government as they receive from their favourite retailer, airline or financial institution when they renew a licence, register the birth of a child or pay fees and State charges.

At the last election the people of this State clearly told us that they thought the old way needed improving. They wanted easier access to services at times that suited them, like on Saturdays; they wanted consistent information no matter who they asked; and when their circumstances changed, such as moving house or the birth of a child, they wanted to inform us once—not again and again. This bill supports the work we have done to make these changes. People want coordinated services. For too long New South Wales citizens have put up with multiple, isolated systems run by different departments for the convenience of bureaucratic structures rather than for the people we are meant to serve. There are 394 separate State government agencies, authorities and trading enterprises delivering services. Currently, these services are provided through call centres and shopfronts that do not talk to each other or share information. We have more than 800 websites and 8,000 different telephone numbers.

Improving customer service in public services will be a key factor in growing our economy and making New South Wales number one again, because time wasted on a maze of complex, non-responsive and irrelevant government processes is time not spent on business, learning and wealth creation and takes us away from our family or work within local communities. Some existing customer services—for example, the Roads and Maritime Services, the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, the Office of Fair Trading and the Office of State Revenue—have attracted well-deserved compliments due to dedicated staff making innovations within their own sphere of services. But the former Government lacked the resolve to take these services into a new era.

As we committed prior to the election, we are preparing for the delivery of New South Wales government services, through Service NSW, in ways that suit our customers, including one easy-to-use website with live chat and better functionality, a 24/7 phone info line answered by real people, and extended hours one-stop shops in regional and city locations. It is the Government's objective to make New South Wales number one not only in economic performance and opportunity but also by setting a new standard in best practice for customer services for citizens and businesses in our State. Initially, Service NSW will provide transactions and services relating to driving, boating, Fair Trading licences, and for births, deaths and marriages. This will build over time into complete one-stop access to government services. The people of New South Wales want to do their business with government as quickly and efficiently as possible so they can get on with their busy lives.

They do not have time to wait in queues or to be told, "Ring another number." This is a major transformational journey and the provisions of this bill are a significant step in that journey. Clause 5 of the bill defines customer service functions, which include functions relating to applications for and the issue of licences and other authorities giving information about government services, legislation and other matters, receiving and making payments, the provision of other government services and other ancillary functions. The purpose of clause 5 (i) is to enable the delivery of ancillary customer service functions associated with the core transaction such as the function of administering the learner driver knowledge test that is ancillary to the function of receiving applications for and issuing learner drivers licences. Clause 7 provides the holder of a statutory customer service function with a power of delegation, and that delegation power is expanded to include the Chief Executive Officer of Service NSW.



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Second Reading

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Minister for Roads and Ports) [5.02 p.m.]: Clause 7 also allows delegates of statutory customer service functions to sub-delegate those functions to the Chief Executive Officer of Service NSW. It provides that in relation to any customer service function so delegated or sub-delegated to the chief executive officer, that officer may sub-delegate the function to a member of staff of Service NSW, subject to the terms of the delegation or sub-delegation to the chief executive officer. Clause 8 of the bill allows the Chief Executive Officer of Service NSW and a government agency to enter into an agreement for the Chief Executive Officer of Service NSW to exercise customer service functions of the agency.

The clause allows such agreements to relate to statutory customer service functions subject to delegations pursuant to clause 7, as well as to non-statutory customer service functions. Clauses 7 and 8 are facilitative provisions. They do not require but rather enable agencies to enter into such arrangements with Service NSW. For a number of transactions, Service NSW will process the entire transaction for the agency. For other transactions—for example, applications for certificates from the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriage—Service NSW will accept the application and application fee on behalf of the agency, pass on the application to the agency to finalise the application, and issue the final authority or other document to the customer.

When a customer updates their contact details with a government agency through Service NSW, clause 6 of the bill allows Service NSW to offer customers the service of updating their contact details with other agencies, with the customer's consent. The bill also enables Service NSW to enter into arrangements with other jurisdictions such as other States, or the Commonwealth, or even another country, if such arrangements are sought, to deliver services on behalf of those jurisdictions. For example, a visitor or tourist would be able to renew a Victorian or even a New Zealand driver licence in a Service NSW shopfront if those jurisdictions chose to sign up.

Clause 11 of the bill provides that the Chief Executive Officer of Service NSW may collect, maintain and use records of information for the purpose of Service NSW, including for the purpose of its interactions with customers for whom customer service functions are exercised. This will assist Service NSW to provide high-quality and efficient services to customers. Under clause 12 of the bill, the chief executive officer of Service NSW may enter into arrangements for persons prescribed by the regulations to act as an agent for the chief executive officer in providing services. This would allow, for example, Australia Post, local councils or stock and station agents to provide certain Service NSW services in remote areas, if these arrangements were made.

Clause 14 of the bill provides for the transfer of information between Service NSW and an agency for the purpose of Service NSW providing customer service functions for the agency. It also provides for disclosure to the person to whom the customer service functions are provided if the information relates to the person or service provided. Clause 14 also provides disclosure, if the information is obtained in connection with the exercise by the chief executive officer of customer service functions for a government agency, to any person to whom that agency is authorised or required to disclose the information; and for the purpose of updating customer information under clause 6. The Privacy Commissioner has been consulted in the preparation of the bill. The bill provides that any future regulations relating to transfer of information under the bill may only be made following consultation with the Privacy Commissioner. Clause 15 of the bill modifies the requirements of section 10 of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act and the equivalent provision of the Health Records and Information Privacy Act in relation to the provision of privacy notices.

Service NSW will be permitted to give a general notice referring a customer to material provided by the agency for which it is exercising the customer service function in relation to the collection of the information and which contains the matters about which the customer is required to be made aware. When collecting information for updating purposes under clause 6 or for internal records purposes the Chief Executive Officer of Service NSW will be permitted to give a general notice that refers to information on the Service NSW website or held at the relevant service centre that contains the material about which the person is required to be made aware.

Customers will still have access to the relevant information they should know about the collection of their personal information, but they can be referred to that information rather than being required to read, or be read, a very lengthy notice every time they use Service NSW. The bill also provides for agreements between Service

NSW and an agency in relation to applications for access to government information where that information is obtained or arises in connection with the exercise of functions by Service NSW for the agency. Those agreements can specify which of the two agencies should respond to such applications. The bill also provides for information transfers between Service NSW and the relevant agency for those purposes.

Later this year, once necessary preparations and agency agreements are in place, Service NSW will commence testing its operations and providing services to customers. The number of Service NSW service centre locations and the range of services provided will expand over time. Service NSW is just part of the reforms the Government is making to put customers at the heart of decision-making. The Coalition is working to provide more teachers, nurses and police, innovations such as quiet carriages on long-distance trains, mobile applications to let customers know when the next bus is due or information about traffic on the journey home—obviously much better than it was—delivering the Opel card, better access to government information on websites and the ability to have your say on issues of interest to people. This Government works for its citizens, not the other way around, and to make New South Wales number one in customer service for all our citizens. I commend the bill to the House.