



Cayman Islands Constitutional Commission

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Cayman Islands Human Rights Commission

promoting, protecting and preserving human rights

14 December 2017

Commissions Celebrate the Publication of the Constitution in Braille and Audio Formats at an Event **Recognising International Day of Persons with Disabilities and International Human Rights Day**

Last week the Constitutional Commission, together with the Human Rights Commission, launched audio and braille formats of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order, 2009 (the “Constitution”) for persons with sight or literacy impairments in Cayman. The project came about when a member of the public who is visually impaired approached the Commissions about accessing the Constitution; further research showed that there are around 788 persons in the Cayman Islands who are considered to have a “sight disability”¹. The audio production marks the first official audio recording of any constitution in the Cayman Islands history, and, to the Commission’s knowledge, the publication in braille marks the first ever official production of a Cayman Islands Government document in braille.

A private event took place at the National Gallery on Thursday, 7 December to celebrate the launch, giving attendees, many of whom had contributed to the audio production, a preview of the projects. Braille copies of the Constitution were also presented to representatives from the Cayman Islands Public Library Service (which will place one in every library in the Cayman Islands), Sunrise Adult Training Centre and the Lighthouse School. The audio version of the Constitution is now available online and can be accessed via the Constitutional Commission² and the Human Rights Commission³ websites.

Of these more accessible versions of the Constitution, Constitutional Commission Chairman Vaughan Cater says, “While the 2009 Constitution is in place, we should not rest on our laurels and consider that all work in this regard is now complete. Instead, we must continue to reach out and engage people on the contents of this important document. So, if there is an element of our society who simply cannot access the Constitution, as was the case with the visually impaired, then clearly this is something that needed to be addressed. Through the audio and braille versions of the 2009 Constitution, such persons

¹ [http://www.eso.ky/UserFiles/File/5_%20Disability\(2\).pdf](http://www.eso.ky/UserFiles/File/5_%20Disability(2).pdf)

² <http://www.constitutionalcommission.ky/audio-constitution>

³ <http://www.humanrightscommission.ky/audio-constitution>

can now access the contents of the Constitution, utilise it for their needs and hopefully contribute their views on the relevance and appropriateness of the Constitution's provisions."

Attendees at the event included Attorney General, Samuel Bulgin, and retired school teacher and advocate for the elderly, Janilee Clifford, who made the following remarks:

"This is an extraordinary and most welcome initiative. If there's even just one person who benefits from this it will have been worthwhile." – Attorney General, Hon. Samuel Bulgin, QC, JP.

"I was honoured to be asked to be one of the speakers on the Constitution audio recording. I only hope they take it into the schools. We've lost so much of our culture and heritage, it will be a reminder of what we are and what we stand for today." – Janilee Clifford, Cert. Hon.

The event was held to fall between two significant dates – International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) which took place on Sunday, 3 December, and International Human Rights Day (IHRD) which took place on Sunday, 10 December.

The theme for this year's IHRD is *#StandUp4HumanRights*, and marks the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights by the United Nations. In light of this, both Commissions take this year's theme as an opportunity to reflect on how, as individuals and collectively, we treat persons with disabilities, and whether the values we hold as a community, as well as the values enshrined in the Bill of Rights, are revealed in our actions and policies in this area.

Human Rights Commission Chairman James Austin-Smith states, "The Human Rights Commission has had a long-standing history of engagement on the subject of the treatment of persons with disabilities since its inception in 2010. The Commission considers this issue of paramount importance, and continues to support endeavours, like the audio and braille constitutions, to ensure that all individuals can participate fully and equally in society."

The launch of the more accessible formats of the Constitution comes on the heels of IDPD, the intention of which is, amongst other things, to highlight the gains to be derived from fully integrating persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life⁴. The theme for IDPD 2017 is *Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all*, which promotes the message that inclusiveness strengthens all parties involved.

On a practical level this means ensuring that there are resources available to help people with disabilities participate fully and equally in our community. This can be achieved by everyday facilities like having elevators in buildings, including access ramps on pavements and the availability of "blue spots" for parking; but it does not stop there. We should carefully consider whether persons with

⁴ United Nations, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/international-day-of-persons-with-disabilities-3-december.html>.

disabilities have proper access to all public facilities, of whatever variety, in Cayman – not just to public places. Ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities in Cayman is fundamental to the values of the Cayman community and also a requirement of the Constitution.

The Bill of Rights in the Constitution helps to enable equal participation in society for persons with disabilities. Section 16 – the right to non-discrimination – defines discrimination as:

“affording different and unjustifiable treatment to different persons on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, age, mental or physical disability, property, birth or other status.”

The right afforded by section 16 is so important it can be considered a cornerstone of human rights and of any fair and democratic society.

The audio Constitution will be available online on the Human Rights Commission website (www.humanrightscommission.ky) and the Constitutional Commission website (www.constitutionalcommission.ky) from Friday, 8 December. Braille versions of the Constitution will be available at the six public libraries in Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac, the Sunrise Adult Training Centre, and the Lighthouse School as well as at the Commissions Secretariat offices at Artemis House on Fort Street. For more details please contact the Commissions Secretariat at 244-3685 or www.commissionssecretariat.gov.ky.

The Commissions thank Government Information Services for its contributions to this press release.

Ends.

Attachments

Photo 1

Caption: Attorney General Samuel Bulgin inspects a braille copy of the Constitution

Credit: GIS

Photo 2

Caption: Kim Voaden and Finita Ebanks receive a braille copy of the Constitution for the Sunrise Adult Training Centre from the Chairmen of the CC and HRC

(L-R: Vaughan Carter, Chairman of the Constitutional Commission; James Austin-Smith, Chairman of the Human Rights Commission; Kimberly Voaden, Director of the Sunrise Adult Training Centre; Finita Ebanks, Sunrise Adult Training Centre client)

Credit: GIS

Photo 3

Caption: Janilee Clifford listens to her reading of section 109 of the Constitution

(L-R: Lise Hurlstone, Analyst/Administrator for the Commissions Secretariat; Janilee Clifford, audio constitution reader)

Credit: GIS