
CHAPTER 306

**UTILITIES REGULATION AND
COMPETITION AUTHORITY**

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1 - 28 LRO 1/2017

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CHAPTER 306

UTILITIES REGULATION AND
COMPETITION AUTHORITY

12 of 2009
28 of 2010
4 of 2011
32 of 2012
17 of 2013
47 of 2015

An Act to establish a public authority called the Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority and for matters connected thereto.

[Assent 15th June, 2009]

[Commencement 1st August, 2009] *S.I. 75/2009*

PART 1 - PRELIMINARY

1. This Act may be cited as the Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority Act. Short title.

2. In this Act all terms have the meanings given to them by the Interpretation and General Clauses Act unless expressly defined — Interpretation.
Ch. 2.

“board” means the board established under Part III;

“director of electronic communications” means the executive member responsible for developing and implementing policy and regulation of the electronics communication sector, appointed in accordance with section 23; *47 of 2015, s.2.*

“director of utilities and energy” means the executive member responsible for developing and implementing policy and regulation of the regulated sectors, other than electronic communications, appointed in accordance with section 23;

“document” has the meaning specified in section 2 of the Evidence Act, whether in hard or electronic format; Ch.65.

“electronic communications sector” means the economic sector encompassing the provision of all electronic communications, including broadcasting;

“executive member” means any person appointed as an executive member in accordance with section 23;

47 of 2015, s.2.

“financial interest” means any equity interest (including stocks, stock options, bonds) or other ownership interest;

“financial year” means a calendar year;

“licensee” means any person operating under a licence, whether individual or class granted or issued, by URCA under any regulatory or other measure;

“members” includes the executive members and the non-executive members (and in respect of any matter where the secretary is entitled to vote, the secretary);

“the Minister” means the Minister responsible for relations with URCA;

“non-executive member” means any person appointed as a non-executive member in accordance with section 18;

“regulated sector” means those sectors for which URCA has specific responsibilities under any Act or any law, including but not limited to the Communications Act;

Ch. 304.

“regulatory or other measures” means all Acts issued by the relevant body, by whatever procedure including but not limited to directions, decisions, adjudications, orders and regulations;

“statutory fund” means any fund created under any law for the provision of services in regulated sectors;

47 of 2015, s.2.

“undertaking” means a body corporate, partnership, unincorporated association, or any person, carrying on a trade or business with or without a view to profit;

“URCA” means the Utilities Regulation & Competition Authority established under section 3.

**PART II - ESTABLISHMENT OF UTILITIES
REGULATION AND COMPETITION AUTHORITY**

3. (1) A public authority called the Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority (“URCA”) is hereby established.

Establishment of
URCA.

(2) URCA shall be a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal and have the power to acquire, hold and dispose of land and other property of whatever kind.

(3) URCA may —

- (a) sue and be sued in its corporate name;
- (b) enter into contracts and acquire, hold and dispose of any property; and
- (c) so far as is possible for a body corporate, exercise the rights, powers and privileges and incur the liabilities and obligations of a natural person of full age and capacity.

4. (1) URCA shall have such functions as are conferred on it by this Act or under any other law.

Functions and
powers of
URCA.

(2) In performance of its functions, URCA shall have the power to issue all regulatory and other measures, including —

- (a) to make determinations;
- (b) to make adjudications;
- (c) to impose conditions and penalties by order;
- (d) to issue regulations;
- (e) to issue directions, decisions, statements, instructions and notifications;
- (f) to publish and maintain registers or lists;
- (g) to issue technical rules and standards;
- (h) to institute prosecutions in accordance with section 7, for the purposes of enforcing compliance with this Act or any other regulated sector law;
- (i) to issue, suspend, vary or revoke licences, permits and exemptions;
- (j) to conduct inquiries, investigations and oral hearings;
- (k) to request such information from licensees and undertakings, or any other person, in regulated

47 of 2015, s.3.

sectors as is necessary in pursuance of its duties under this Act or; any other law;

- (l) to conduct market investigations and market reviews and publish information and reports;
- (m) to make such arrangements for regulating its own procedures, and such arrangements for regulating the procedure of the committees established by URCA, as it thinks fit; and
- (n) any other power conferred on it by this Act or any other law.

(3) URCA shall exercise its functions through the chief executive officer, who shall —

- (a) carry out the day to day management of URCA and have the functions delegated to him or her by the board;
- (b) be subject to the supervision of the board;
- (c) follow directions and recommendations of the board;
- (d) have due regard to any recommendations or advice relating to the development and improvement of URCA's regulatory policies made directly to the chief executive officer or to the board by the director of electronic communications or the director of utilities and energy;
- (e) where he or she considers it expedient be advised by and take into account the views of any committee established by URCA; and
- (f) act in accordance with the guidelines in section 8.

47 of 2015, s.3.

Powers of investigation.

5. (1) URCA may investigate one or more of the following —

- (a) any contravention;
- (b) any alleged contravention; and
- (c) any circumstance where URCA has reasonable grounds to suspect a contravention,

of any provision of this Act or any regulated sector law.

(2) In conducting an investigation under subsection (1), URCA may —

- (a) request in writing that a licensee or undertaking, or any other person, that is the subject of the

47 of 2015, s.4.

investigation provide the information and documents set out in the request within the time specified in the request; and

- (b) enter premises and inspect, copy and retain documents to the extent permitted under a warrant obtained under section 6.

5A. (1) A licensee or undertaking, or any other person, required to produce a document under section 5 shall not —

Destroying or falsifying documents.
47 of 2015, s.5.

- (a) intentionally or recklessly destroy or otherwise dispose of, falsify or conceal such document; or
- (b) cause or permit such document to be destroyed, disposed of, falsified or concealed.

(2) A licensee or undertaking, or any other person, who contravenes or fails to comply with a provision of this section commits an offence.

5B. (1) No person shall provide information to URCA or an authorised representative of URCA, in connection with a function or duty of URCA under this Act or a regulated sector law, which is false or misleading in a material particular.

False or misleading information.
47 of 2015, s.5.

(2) A person who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence.

5C. (1) No person shall attempt fraudulently to obtain under section 5 entry to the premises of, or information from, a licensee or undertaking or any other person.

Falsely pretending to be employee of URCA.
47 of 2015, s.5.

(2) A person who obtains, or attempts to obtain, entry to premises or information by falsely presenting himself to be an officer, employee or agent of URCA commits an offence.

5D. (1) No person shall at any time molest or, without cause, hinder or obstruct an officer, employee or agent of URCA in the performance of his duties or anything which such officer, employee or agent is authorised, empowered or required to do under this Act or any regulated sector law.

Obstruction of URCA in the performance of its duties.
47 of 2015, s.5.

(2) A person who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence.

5E. (1) No person shall, in giving information or making an application to URCA or to any other person under or for the purposes of this Act or any regulated

Making of false statements.
47 of 2015, s.5.

sector law, make any statement which is false in a material particular.

(2) A person commits an offence who, pursuant to subsection (1), knowingly or recklessly makes a statement which is false in a material particular.

(3) No person shall —

(a) procure or attempt to procure for himself or for any other person a licence under this Act or any regulated sector law by making or producing, or causing to be made or produced, a false or fraudulent representation or declaration, either verbally or in writing; or

(b) knowingly aid or assist in a procurement or attempt to procure under paragraph (a).

(4) A person commits an offence who wilfully or fraudulently contravenes a provision of subsection (3).

Search warrants.

6. (1) Where information provided by URCA (or any other person) satisfies a magistrate that URCA has reason to believe that —

(a) any person is contravening any part of this Act or any regulated sector law; and

(b) entry to specified premises, vehicle, vessel, aircraft, hovercraft, buoy or beacon is necessary for the enforcement of this Act,

the magistrate may issue a search warrant to a peace officer.

(2) The peace officer to whom a warrant is issued may be accompanied by an authorised representative of URCA and may enter the specified premises, carry out search and inspection of those premises and test and seize any relevant apparatus, equipment or documents in accordance with the terms of the warrant.

(3) Where under this section a person has the right to examine and test any equipment or apparatus on any premises or in any vehicle, vessel, aircraft, buoy or beacon, it shall be the duty of any person who is on the premises or is in charge of, or in attendance on, the vehicle, vessel, aircraft, buoy or beacon, to give him such assistance as he may reasonably require in the examination or testing of the equipment or apparatus.

7. (1) Subject to the provisions of Article 78 of the Constitution, proceedings for an offence under this Act or any regulated sector law shall not be instituted except by URCA, alone or in conjunction with the Attorney General, by or with the consent of the board or by the chief executive or other officer authorised in that behalf by special or general directions of the board.

General provisions as to prosecution.

(2) It shall not be necessary for the chief executive officer or other officer to be qualified as a counsel or attorney, in order to prosecute or conduct those proceedings mentioned in subsection (1) before a court of summary jurisdiction.

(3) Notwithstanding any provision in any law prescribing the period within which summary proceedings may be commenced, proceedings for an offence under this Act or any regulated sector law may be commenced at any time within the period of three months from the date on which, in the opinion of the board, sufficient evidence to justify a prosecution for the offence comes to its knowledge, or within the period of twelve months after the commission of the offence, whichever period last expires; and, for the purposes of this subsection, a certificate purporting to be signed on behalf of the board as to the date on which such evidence came to the knowledge of the board shall be conclusive evidence thereof.

(4) In any proceedings for an offence under this Act or any regulated sector law the wife or husband of the accused shall be competent to give evidence, whether for or against the accused provided that the wife or husband shall not be compellable either to give evidence, or, in giving evidence, to disclose any communication made to her or him by the accused during the marriage.

(5) Where an offence under this Act, or any regulated sector law, which has been committed by a body corporate is proved to have been committed with the consent or connivance of, or to be attributable to any negligence on the part of, any director, manager, secretary or other officer of the body corporate, he, as well as the body corporate, shall be deemed to be guilty of that offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

8. (1) All regulatory and other measures by URCA shall be proportionate to their purpose and introduced in a manner that is transparent, fair and non-discriminatory.

Guidelines.

(2) URCA shall carry out its functions and exercise its powers in a manner that makes best use of the economic and other resources available to it and that is best calculated to promote any policy objectives applicable to any regulated sector.

Duty to consult.

9. (1) When issuing regulatory and other measures, subject to any specific procedures under any regulated sector law —

- (a) URCA shall allow persons with sufficient interest a reasonable opportunity to comment on proposed regulatory and other measures which, in the reasonable opinion of URCA, are of public significance; and
- (b) URCA shall give due consideration to those comments prior to introducing those measures.

(2) URCA shall, as soon as practicable, publish its standard procedures for seeking comments, which shall include —

- (a) how consultations will be published;
- (b) the minimum time for responding to consultations, which in ordinary circumstances shall be no less than thirty (30) days;
- (c) how URCA will publish comments or summaries of comments received; and
- (d) guiding principles for determining when URCA may derogate from the standard procedures.

(3) A regulatory or other measure is likely to be of public significance if it relates to a regulated sector and can lead to one or more of the following —

- (a) a major change in the activities carried on by URCA under this Act or any other enactment;
- (b) a significant impact on persons carrying on activities in a regulated sector;
- (c) a significant impact on the general public in The Bahamas or in a part of The Bahamas.

Duty to publish documents.

4 of 2011, s. 2.

10. (1) Subject to section 11, URCA shall take proportionate measures to make available to the public regulatory and other measures which in its opinion, are of public significance. URCA shall also —

- (a) publish such regulatory and other measures on its website as soon after these are issued; ensure that URCA's website includes a notification

system for registered users; and take steps to ensure that the website is regularly updated and remains available to the public; and

- (b) maintain copies of documents at its principal office for inspection by the public on request during normal business hours without charge.

(2) URCA shall consider whether notice of certain regulatory and other measures of public significance should also be given by publication in one or more newspapers circulating in The Bahamas.

11. (1) Subject to subsection (2), URCA shall not be required to publish or otherwise divulge information that in the view of URCA would be commercially confidential.

Confidentiality.

(2) Nothing in this Act shall limit URCA's duty to provide information to the court.

(3) All members, officers, employees and agents of URCA must comply with any confidentiality provisions under their terms of employment. Any person who contravenes such provisions shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding twenty-five thousand dollars or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding two years or to both such fine and imprisonment.

PART III - THE BOARD

12. The board shall have the functions specified in this Act.

Functions of the board.

13. (1) Subject to subsection (3) below, the board shall consist of seven persons being —

Structure of the Board.

- (a) non-executive members, comprising —

47 of 2015, s.6.

(i) a chairperson and

(ii) three non-executive members, and

47 of 2015, s.6.

- (b) executive members, comprising —

(i) the chief executive officer and

(ii) the director of electronic communication and the director of utilities and energy, respectively.

47 of 2015, s.6.

(2) Subject to section 14(3) no more than one public officer shall be appointed as a non-executive member at any time.

(3) The number of non-executive members of the board may be increased by order of the Minister published in the Gazette, provided however that the number of non-executive-members may only be increased if —

- (a) URCA’s obligations are extended to sectors other than the electronic communications sector; and
- (b) such a change in number is necessary to ensure that all sectors are sufficiently represented.

(4) Prior to increasing the number of non-executive members under subsection (3), the Minister shall —

- (a) have regard to whether the non-executive members together have sufficient experience in each of the regulated sectors;
- (b) consider whether the non-executive members together provide for a proper representation of The Bahamas as a whole; and
- (c) request and consider the views of the board.

47 of 2015.

(5) The secretary to the board —

- (a) shall be appointed by the board to carry out such functions as the board may determine from time to time; and
- (b) may attend meetings of the board but is not entitled to vote thereat unless otherwise authorised by this Act.

(6) The secretary to the board shall be the person responsible for ensuring URCA’s compliance with its legal obligations.

The chairperson.

14. (1) The Governor-General shall on the advice of the Prime Minister after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition appoint the chairperson for a term of three years.

(2) The chairperson shall be a non-executive member.

(3) The chairperson shall not be a Member of Parliament or a public officer.

(4) In appointing the chairperson, the Governor General shall ensure that the chairperson has appropriate expertise in accordance with section 18(2)(b)(ii) and is of good standing and reputation.

47 of 2015, s.7.

(5) The chairperson shall be appointed at the expiry of the previous chairperson's term or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter.

(6) In the absence of a nominated chairperson, the deputy chairperson appointed under section 15 shall act as chairperson.

(7) No person may be a chairperson if he or she has been the chairperson for an aggregate duration of six years or more in the preceding nine years.

15. (1) The chairperson shall appoint one of the other non-executive members as the deputy chairperson.

The deputy
chairperson.

(2) The deputy chairperson shall be entitled to carry out the functions of the chairperson, in such cases and manner as may be determined by or in accordance with any directions given by the chairperson and the deputy chairperson shall, in the absence of the chairperson, take on the duties of the chairperson as required.

(3) One or both of the executive members may require the deputy chairperson to call a board meeting if they have requested that the chairperson call such a meeting and the chairperson has not done so within a reasonable period of time.

16. Any member may at any time resign his or her office by notice in writing to —

Resignation of
members.

- (a) in the case of the chairperson, the board; and
- (b) in the case of all other members, the chairperson.

17. (1) The board shall be convened by the chairperson as frequently as necessary so as to carry out its functions and not less than twelve (12) times per year.

Proceedings of
the board.

(2) The procedure for carrying out functions which are conferred on the board shall be in accordance with such arrangements as may be determined by a majority of the board.

(3) Unless otherwise specified in this Act, the quorum for the proceedings of the board shall be two (2) non-executive members and one (1) executive member.

(4) Unless otherwise specified in this Act, voting at a meeting of the board duly convened under subsection (3) shall be by a simple majority of the members present and voting and, if there is an equality of votes, the chairperson

shall have a casting vote. No member (including the secretary) shall discuss with or disclose to any person who is not a member, any views or votes of any member.

(5) No member shall vote at a meeting of the board on any matter regarding his or her appointment or the terms of his or her appointment.

(6) In determining whether a member is present and voting for the purposes of subsection (4), the member must participate in the meeting but need not be physically present at the meeting.

PART IV - NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Appointment of
non-executive
members.

18. (1) Subject to section 14(1) the non-executive members shall be appointed by the Governor-General.

(2) Before appointing a non-executive member, the Governor-General shall —

- (a) have regard to any recommendations from the non-executive members for the replacement or reappointment of any of the non-executive members; and
- (b) ensure that the non-executive members would together have —
 - (i) appropriate expertise in the relevant regulated sectors; and
 - (ii) broad experience, such as experience that would be expected of professionally qualified economists, lawyers or accountants or persons having backgrounds in business or, subject to section 13(2), public service:

Provided always that no Member of Parliament may be appointed a non executive member of the board;

- (c) unless the non-executive member is reappointed in accordance with this section, the appointment shall be made following an open and transparent process that any person who is appointed has appropriate experience, knowledge, good standing and reputation, taking into account the criteria in subsection (b).

(3) Subject to the following provisions of this section, the non-executive members shall each hold and

47 of 2015, s.8.

vacate office in accordance with the terms of their appointment.

(4) Subject to section 44 and without prejudice to section 19(1), a non-executive member shall be appointed for an initial term of three years. *47 of 2015, s.8.*

(5) Except where a non-executive member advises the Governor-General in writing that he does not wish to be reappointed, a non-executive member may, upon expiry of the initial term, be reappointed for one or more further terms. *47 of 2015, s.8.*

(6) Each term of appointment of a non-executive member shall be for a period of three years. *47 of 2015, s.8.*

19. (1) If the board is satisfied that any non-executive member — *Removal, resignation or death of members.*

- (a) is an undischarged bankrupt or has had his estate sequestrated without being discharged; or
- (b) had such financial or other interest as is likely to affect prejudicially the carrying out by him or her of his or her functions as a member; or
- (c) is absent from meetings of the board for a period longer than six consecutive meetings without the permission of the board; or
- (d) has neglected the duties of a member; or
- (e) has been found to be guilty of material misconduct; or
- (f) is incapacitated by physical health or mental illness,

the board may by notice in writing remove that member from the board.

(2) For the purposes of this section, the quorum for proceedings of the board at which matters in subsection (1) are to be discussed shall be all other members. Voting at such meetings shall be by unanimity of those members.

(3) In the event of death, resignation or removal of a non-executive member, the Governor-General may appoint a new non-executive member in accordance with section 18.

20. *Repealed.* *47 of 2015, s.9.*

21. URCA shall pay non-executive members for their services to URCA — *Remuneration of non-executive members.*

- (a) such compensation as approved by the Minister;
and
- (b) reasonable expenses which the non-executive members properly incur in connection with the exercise of their powers and the discharge of their responsibilities in relation to URCA.

PART V - STAFFING OF THE REGULATOR

Appointment of
staff.

22. (1) URCA shall have the power to appoint officers, employees and agents as it considers necessary for the performance of its functions.

(2) Subject to subsection (3), no officer, employee or agent may enter into an agreement for the provision of his or her services with any company primarily or substantially active in a regulated sector.

(3) Subsection (2) shall not apply where —

- (a) the officer, employee or agent will enter into the agreement referred to in subsection (2) on behalf or at the direction of URCA, or
- (b) the board of URCA has approved the agreement.

Appointment of
executive
members.
47 of 2015, s.10.

23. (1) The chief executive officer and the director of electronic communications and the director of utilities and energy shall be executive members.

(2) The executive members shall be appointed by the board for an initial term not exceeding five years and shall be selected using a competitive selection process under section 28, provided always that no Member of Parliament may be appointed as an executive member of the board.

47 of 2015, s.10.

(3) Upon the expiry of the initial term, the board may reappoint an executive member for one or more further terms, each such term not to exceed five years.

47 of 2015, s.10.

(4) Notwithstanding any provision of this Act, where there is a vacancy in the office of or a prolonged absence by an executive member, the board may delegate the power to perform the duties of the vacant office or absent member, until the vacancy is filled or for the period of absence —

- (a) to a remaining member ; or
- (b) to any other person with appropriate expertise in the relevant regulated sector.

24. (1) URCA shall pay to the staff —

Remuneration of
staff.

- (a) such remuneration as approved by the Board after consultation with the Minister; and
- (b) reasonable expenses which the staff properly incur, and in accordance with any established procedures, in connection with the discharge of their responsibilities.

(2) URCA shall also make for the staff (or previous staff) such provision (if any) for pensions, allowances or gratuities, and payments when special circumstances arise.

PART VI - GENERAL PROVISIONS RELATING TO MEMBERS AND STAFF

25. (1) Throughout the term of his or her employment with URCA and for such further period determined in accordance with section 26, no non-executive member or executive member shall have a financial interest in, whether directly held or indirectly held through an associate, or be an employee, a consultant or board member of any entity that is licensed by URCA or is otherwise primarily or substantially engaged in a regulated sector.

Conflicts of
interest.

(2) Each non-executive member and executive member shall present a written declaration as to the non-existence of any such interest in accordance with subsection (1) and shall promptly inform the board of any such interest that arises or is likely to arise during his or her employment at URCA.

(3) Any other member of staff shall comply with subsection (1) and (2) if so reasonably required by the board.

(4) If any non-executive member, executive member or other member of staff of URCA (to whom subsection (3) applies) knowingly contravenes the prohibition in subsection (1), that person shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding fifty thousand dollars.

(5) Each non-executive member and executive member shall declare on his or her appointment, reappointment, annually during his or her term and on request by the board any interest that he or she has, or knows his or her associates has, in any entity who is

licensed by URCA or is otherwise primarily or substantially engaged in a regulated sector and such a declaration shall be published on URCA’s website. Any other member of staff shall comply with this subsection if so required by the board.

(6) For the purposes of this section 25, “associate” means in relation to any individual —

- (a) that individual’s spouse or partner or parents or minor dependents;
- (b) any body corporate of which that individual is a director or where that individual can exercise voting control; and
- (c) any employee or business partner of that individual.

(7) For the purposes of this section 25, “voting control” mean the control of or the ability to control, whether directly or indirectly, the exercise of the right to vote attaching to one or more voting shares in a body corporate —

- (a) by the exercise of a right, where such exercise confers the ability to exercise a right to vote or to control the exercise of a right to vote;
- (b) by an entitlement to exercise such a right to vote —
 - (i) through a nominee; or
 - (ii) through or by means of a trust, agreement or arrangement, understanding or practice, whether or not the trust, agreement or arrangement, understanding or practice has legal or equitable force or is based on legal or equitable rights.

Services in
related sectors.

26. (1) No non-executive member, executive member or member of staff may, during his or her term of employment, engage in any employment, consulting or similar service relating to a regulated sector within the duties of his or her engagement by URCA.

(2) For twelve months after his or her term of employment, any such person referred to in subsection (1) may only engage in such employment, consulting or similar service with the prior written approval of —

- (a) in the case of executive or non-executive members, the board; or

(b) in all other cases, the chief executive officer.

(3) The board shall have the authority to waive the application of subsections (1) and (2) to any person or category of persons if it would be disproportionate to enforce it.

(4) Any person who knowingly employs a person in contravention of subsections (1) and (2) shall be guilty of an offence and shall be subject to a fine not exceeding fifty thousand dollars.

4 of 2011, s. 3.

(5) A person who engages in employment, consulting or similar service in contravention of subsection (1) and (2) shall be guilty of an offence and shall be subjected to a fine not exceeding twenty thousand dollars.

27. (1) The non-executive members, executive members and members of staff shall —

Duty to act in good faith.

(a) act in a manner that is independent of, separate from, and not accountable to any licensee or other entity that is primarily or substantially engaged in a regulated sector; and

(b) exercise their functions, issue instruments and follow procedures that are impartial with respect to any licensee or other entity that is primarily or substantially engaged in a regulated sector.

(2) Nothing in this Act shall prevent URCA from —

(a) consulting with any person or organisation on any matter related to URCA's functions, duties or powers; or

(b) issuing an instrument that has a differential or prejudicial effect on a licensee or other business that is primarily or substantially engaged in a regulated sector.

28. When appointing a person under a competitive selection procedure, URCA shall conduct an open, competitive and transparent selection process that seeks to identify well-qualified candidates. This procedure may include publishing advertisements for applications nationally and internationally, reviewing any available references and holding interviews.

Competitive selection process.

**PART VII- DELEGATION, SELF-REGULATION
AND COREGULATION**

Delegation of
powers.

29. (1) Other than as provided for in this Act or any other law, the powers of URCA shall be exercised by the chief executive officer under delegation by the board and he or she may be advised by an executive committee established under section 32 as expedient. The chief executive officer shall be accountable to the board as set forth in this Act.

(2) URCA may recognise or establish, or assist or encourage the establishment of, bodies that have expertise in, or represent persons having interests in, any matter concerning competition, monopolies, utilities or any matter connected with any regulated sector.

(3) The functions of those bodies shall include one or more of the following —

- (a) the provision to URCA of advice, information and proposals in relation to anyone or more of those matters;
- (b) the representation of the views of anyone or more groups of persons.

Self-regulation
and co-
regulation.

30. URCA shall have regard, in performing its functions, to the desirability of promoting and facilitating the development and use of effective forms of self-regulation and co-regulation.

Committees.

31. (1) URCA shall establish —

- (a) an audit committee; and
- (b) such other committees as URCA considers from time to time to be appropriate.

(2) For each committee, URCA shall —

- (a) appoint the committee's members, who shall be members, officers, employees or agents of URCA; and
- (b) establish the remit of each committee.

(3) A committee of URCA may itself establish sub-committees whose members shall be members, officers, employees, or agents of URCA.

(4) The chief executive officer may from time to time establish an executive committee as expedient to assist him or her in carrying out his or her duties.

32. (1) In establishing an executive committee the chief executive officer shall have regard to any specialist advice that may be required. Executive committee.

(2) The executive committee, if so required by the chief executive officer, shall advise the chief executive officer on matters related to the performance of his or her duties, including the day-to-day management of URCA and any such other functions or duties delegated to the chief executive officer by the board.

(3) Decisions at meetings of an executive committees shall be taken by the chief executive officer, who shall —

(a) give due consideration to the views of the other members of the executive committee; and

(b) act in good faith in accordance with section 27.

(4) The executive committee may include —

(a) the chief executive officer;

(b) the director of electronic communications; *47 of 2015, s.11.*

(c) the director of utilities and energy; and *47 of 2015, s.11.*

(d) representative members of staff for the conduct of — *47 of 2015, s.11.*

(i) legal affairs;

(ii) URCA’s finances; and

(iii) such other functions as are considered necessary by the chief executive officer.

33. (1) The board shall appoint an audit committee chairperson and such chairperson shall — Audit committee.

(a) at the time of his or her appointment, not be a non-executive member, executive member or a member of staff of URCA; and

(b) have appropriate accountancy skills and experience and shall be registered as a public accountant in accordance with the Public Accountants Act.

(2) The audit committee shall —

(a) comprise the non-executive members, the secretary and the audit committee chairperson;

(b) meet at least twice every year; and

(c) report to the board within four months of publication of URCA’s annual report on —

- (i) URCA’s performance against its annual plan; and
- (ii) the extent to which URCA’s deployment of its financial resources has delivered value for money.

(3) The quorum for the proceedings of the audit committee shall be three audit committee members, including the audit committee chairperson. Voting shall be by a majority with the audit committee chairperson having a casting vote.

(4) URCA shall publish, in accordance with section 10, the audit committee’s report within two months of it being delivered to the board.

Proceedings of
the committees.

34. URCA shall make arrangements for the keeping of proper records —

- (a) of its proceedings;
- (b) of the proceedings of any committee or sub-committee established under section 31; and
- (c) of the proceedings of any meetings of the board.

PART VIII - ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT

The URCA
Fund.

35. (1) URCA shall establish a fund which shall be referred to in this Act as the “fund”.

- (2) The fund may be applied for the purposes of —
 - (a) paying remuneration and compensation to the non-executive members, executive members and members of staff;
 - (b) meeting all other costs and expenditures properly incurred by URCA in exercising its functions and powers.

(3) URCA may open, operate and close bank accounts for the fund.

- (4) There shall be paid into the fund —
 - (a) all fees and other payments received from licensees and applicants for licences issued by URCA;
 - (b) any loans obtained by URCA;
 - (c) any other money, income, profit or proceeds derived from or representing any money or

property which is lawfully vested in URCA from time to time.

36. Subject always to section 8(2) and if approved by the board and subject to those terms and conditions (whether as to repayment, payment of interest or otherwise) as approved by the board — Loans.

(a) URCA may apply to the Minister for a guarantee from the Government. No such guarantee shall be given unless previously approved by the House of Assembly in accordance with section 18 of the Financial Administration and Audit Act; Ch. 359.

(b) URCA may apply for commercial loans, subject to the following provisions —

(i) any application for a loan or loans in the aggregate exceeding one million dollars shall be approved by the Minister and subject to the consent of the Minister of Finance; and

(ii) unless exceptional circumstances apply and unless so approved by the Minister with the consent of the Minister of Finance any loan or loans in the aggregate exceeding one million dollars must be applied for the purposes of infrastructure or premises properly required by URCA in carrying out its functions and exercising its powers;

(c) URCA may apply to the Minister for an emergency loan should the revenues provided for under section 41 (1) be insufficient to carry out its duties. A loan under this subsection shall be on such terms as the Minister may specify and shall be repaid by URCA within three years.

37. (1) For the purposes of this Act, monies paid into the fund which are not immediately required by URCA are surplus funds. Payment of surplus funds into Consolidated Fund.

(2) Subject to subsection (3), URCA shall at the end of each financial year pay into the Consolidated Fund all surplus funds standing to the credit of URCA. 17 of 2013, s. 2.

(3) The Minister of Finance may, at the end of the financial year, authorise URCA to reserve from surplus funds such sums, if any, as the Minister may determine.

(4) URCA may utilise funds reserved pursuant to subsection (3) —

- (a) to meet the anticipated costs for the forthcoming financial year;
- (b) to invest in securities issued by the Government of The Bahamas; and
- (c) in deposits with any banking institution regulated by the Central Bank of The Bahamas.

Exemption from
business licence.
Ch. 329.
Accounts and
Audit.

38. URCA shall not require a business licence under the terms of the Business Licence Act.

39. (1) URCA shall —

- (a) keep proper accounts and proper records in relation to those accounts; and
- (b) prepare in respect of each year a statement of account giving a true and fair view of the state of affairs of URCA.

(2) The accounts shall, to the fullest extent possible, allocate URCA's revenues, costs and expenses, whether in respect of personnel or otherwise, to each of the regulated sectors.

(3) In allocating URCA's costs and expenses under subsection (2), URCA shall use its reasonable endeavours to —

- (a) allocate directly incurred costs and expenses —
 - (i) to the regulated sector to which they relate; or
 - (ii) where relating to a number of regulated sectors, to each of the regulated sectors to which they relate in proportion to the burden from each of the regulated sectors;
- (b) allocate indirectly incurred costs and expenses on a reasonable and transparent basis.

(4) The annual accounts of URCA in respect of each financial year —

- (a) shall be prepared in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and International Auditing Standards;
- (b) shall be audited within four months of the end of the financial year by an independent auditing firm selected by the audit committee and approved by the Minister; and

- (c) shall be published together with the auditors report in the annual report published under section 41.

4 of 2011, s. 4.

(5) Any statutory funds shall be audited in accordance with subsection (4).

40. Repealed.

17 of 2013, s. 3.

41. (1) As soon as possible and in any event no later than four months after the end of each financial year URCA shall prepare and publish —

Annual Plan and
Annual Report.

- (a) a plan of its proposed objectives for the forthcoming year (the “Annual Plan”); and
(b) a report of the carrying out of their functions during that financial year (the “Annual Report”),

whether as two separate documents or as a joint document.

(2) The annual plan shall —

- (a) set out URCA’s strategy for the forthcoming financial year to meet the objectives set out in any regulated sector law;
(b) set out the broad priorities of URCA for the two years following the forthcoming year provided that these may require adjustments in light of any sector policy published by the Government in any regulated sector under the terms of any law;
(c) include a series of key performance indicators against which it shall measure its performance during the forthcoming year;
(d) include the level of remuneration to be received by non-executive and executive members for the forthcoming year; and
(e) set out URCA’s budget based upon its target activities for the forthcoming year.

(3) The annual report shall —

- (a) outline URCA’s financial performance against its budget;
(b) include a detailed report of URCA’s performance against the key performance indicators published in the previous year’s annual plan; and

(c) set out the key activities carried out during the previous financial year, whether or not envisaged in the previous year's annual plan.

(4) URCA shall publish the annual plan in draft form on its website in accordance with section 8 by no later than the end of the financial year and shall give interested third parties the opportunity to comment.

(5) URCA shall publish its final annual plan on its website as soon as practicable after the deadline for receipt of comments from third parties (whether orally or in writing).

(6) URCA shall publish its annual report in conjunction with the annual plan under subsection (5).

(7) URCA shall arrange at least one oral hearing during which the annual plan and report shall be presented and questions from interested third parties answered.

41A. The Minister shall, as soon as possible after publication, cause the annual plan and report of URCA referred to in section 41 to be laid before both chambers of Parliament.

Minister to lay
Annual Report
and Annual Plan
in Parliament.

32 of 2012, s. 2.

PART IX - TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS RELATING TO URCA

42. (1) URCA may apply to the Minister for a loan from the Government not exceeding one million dollars in order to carry out its functions and exercise its powers prior to URCA collecting any funding under section 40.

Initial funding.
4 of 2011, s. 5.

(2) Any loan made under subsection (1) shall be on such terms as the Minister may specify and shall be repaid by URCA within three years.

43. (1) On the commencement of this Act, each of the following regulators is dissolved —

- (a) the Public Utilities Commission established under the Public Utilities Commission Act; and
- (b) the Television Regulatory Authority established under the Television Regulatory Authority Act.

Dissolution of
the legacy
regulators.

(2) Subject to subsection (3) the property and contracts of each of the regulators referred to in subsection (1) together with all functions and powers required to

28 of 2010, s. 2.

ensure the effectiveness and continuity of regulation, are transferred to URCA.

(3) The Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority (URCA) shall cause to be transferred to the Consolidated Fund of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas the sum of five million nine hundred and ten thousand dollars (\$5,910,000.00) standing to the credit of the Public Utilities Commission as of 31st July 2009.

28 of 2010, s. 2.

44. (1) The number of non-executive members shall be determined to be three at the date of commencement of this Act.

Initial provisions relating to the non-executive members.

(2) The Governor General shall appoint the non-executive member, who shall be the first chairperson of the board, as soon as possible after commencement of this Act. The Governor General shall appoint the first chairperson having regard to section 14(4) and the first chairperson shall serve an initial term of three years.

(3) The Governor General shall appoint the remaining non-executive members of the first board in accordance with the procedure set out at section 18(4)(b) to (e) and one such non-executive member shall serve an initial term of two (2) years and the other non-executive member shall serve an initial term of four (4) years.

(4) The first chairperson shall be eligible to be reappointed for a second term upon expiry of his or her respective initial term under section 14(3).

(5) The remaining non-executive members of the initial board shall each be reappointed for a second term upon expiry of their initial term under section 18(3).

45. (1) Subject to subsections (2) and (3) and to section 43(2), the enactments in the Schedule hereto are hereby repealed.

Repeal enactments.

4 of 2011, s. 6.

(2) Nothing in this section shall affect —

(a) the continuation of any civil or criminal proceedings under the legislation referred to in the Schedule hereto;

(b) any liability to pay fees or penalties under any of the legislation referred to in the Schedule hereto or subordinate legislation made under or pursuant to those Acts that accrues before the date on which this section comes into operation.

(3) Any subordinate legislation or instructions that relates to the functions or powers of the Public Utilities Commission or the Television Regulatory Authority shall continue to apply to URCA, *mutatis mutandis*, until such time as URCA issues regulatory or other measures for similar purposes under this Act that are inconsistent with that subordinate legislation or those instructions. Once URCA issues regulatory or other measures that are inconsistent with that subordinate legislation or those instructions, then, to the extent of the inconsistency, the subordinate legislation or instructions will cease to apply.

PART X - MISCELLANEOUS

Protection of
members of the
board and
members of staff.
47 of 2015, s.12.

46. (1) A member of the Board or member of staff of URCA shall not be personally liable for any act done or default occasioned *bona fide* in execution or intended execution of any of the functions of URCA under this Act or any regulated sector law.

(2) Where any member of the board or member of staff of URCA is exempt from liability by reason only of the provisions of this section, URCA shall be liable to the extent that it would be if the said member of the board or member of staff was a servant or agent of URCA.

SCHEDULE (Section 45)

REPEAL OF ENACTMENTS

The following enactments or parts of enactments shall be repealed pursuant to section 45(1) of the Act:

- (1) Public Utilities Commission Act (previously Ch. 306); and
- (2) Television Regulatory Authority Act (previously Ch. 307).