

## **EXTRACT FROM ESSAY WRITTEN BY RENITA BARNES**

The Cayman Islands Government presented the Freedom of Information Bill to the Legislative Assembly on the 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2005 and since then many public meetings have been held involving a wide cross-section of the local community. The Law gives the public a legal, enforceable right to official records, to ask for personal information and to appeal against a decision. When the FOI Law comes into full effect in the Cayman Islands in January 2009, the law will allow the public to question the decisions that are made by government.

This law will benefit the people of the Cayman Islands as they are allowed to seek, receive and impart important information. The Law balances the citizens' rights to know about the government's obligations. The old saying "knowledge is power", in this case, helps citizens to vote wisely and be able to respond to the government's agenda.

When the public is informed more meaningful discussion with the government can take place. This results in a greater public interest and promotes public debate of important issues and major government decisions. It also addresses public safety concerns that affect the wider community.

A government that displays transparency has no hidden agenda and will openly disclose all matters concerning the country at large. This strengthens the confidence that the public has in government.