



FORTY-NINTH SESSION

Hansard Report

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TUESDAY 11 JUNE 2019

MADAM SPEAKER took the Chair at 9.00 a.m.

OPENING PRAYER

MADAM SPEAKER (N. RATTLE): Please be seated Honourable Members.

Honourable Members, our first business this morning is a Message from the Queen's Representative. This Message is in relation to an increase being applied to Schedule 3 of \$300,000.

And the Message reads:

Message to Parliament Royal Recommendation that is signed by the Queen's Representative on the 10th day of June 2019.

Message No.4 reads:

The Queen's Representative in pursuance of Article 3 of the Constitution on behalf of Her Majesty and in pursuance of Article 43 of the Constitution recommends Parliament to proceed upon the Bill, the Short Title thereof is the Appropriation Act 2019.

I lay this on the Table.

Thank you.

Honourable Members, may it be a wonderful day for us working together today as we have a lot of work to do as you know and so I greet you all present in this dignified House today including all the people of the Cook Islands who are listening in to the broadcasting and our friends in our Public Gallery.

And I extend special greetings to our friend, Peter McHugh who is with us today for a couple more days.

We have a Ministerial Statement this morning. If I may please call on the Minister Mark Brown.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Madam Speaker.

I give notice to this House that there will be a Motion coming before the House for an increase to the amount of the Appropriation Bill and it will become apparent during the Motion what the increase is for.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much Minister.

I now open the Floor for our Question Time and our Question Time today is 30 minutes and if you can just please ask your question and leave clarifications if necessary.

Thank you.

And I see the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. You have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Good morning to all of us.

This is not a Question. Rather a Motion under Standing Order 37. It is to request Leave of Absence for the Member, Agnes Armstrong.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Member, could I ask you to do that at another time because our 30 minutes for Question Time is particular for 30 minutes. Could we leave that for another time?

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 37 says: “And such Motion shall have priority over all other business of the House.”

MADAM SPEAKER: I think that you can have another time other than Question Time which is only for 30 minutes but there will be time available. We will make sure that you are able to make that time but right now it’s important that we use the Question Time for Questions.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: My reading of the Standing Order – I’m going to sit down but I’m not sure that there is discretion with the Speaker on this particular Motion. It just says: “... such Motion shall have priority....”

But for the sake of moving matters along today, I am happy to wait.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member.

And I see the Honourable William Heather. You have the Floor.

MR W. HEATHER: Good morning to all of us in this House.

My question is to the Minister of Finance or to the Prime Minister.

I refer to the tar-sealing truck that was ordered during the term of the previous Minister. My question is what is happening to this? Is it still alive or it's finished?

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and you have the Floor the Minister of ICI.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Greetings to all of us this morning. Greetings Madam Speaker. We thank our Lord for returning you and your husband in better health.

With regards to the question raised by the Member of Parliament for Ruaau, yes, I have been waiting for this question.

We should know that this particular truck was ordered by the Minister before me. Many problems took place with this truck. Never mind, I was one of those that went to view this truck in Palmerston North. I want to announce to this House that that truck is now in Auckland today. It will be on the first boat by international shipping to Rarotonga.

Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. If there are no further questions.

I see the Honourable Selina Napa. You have the Floor.

MRS S. NAPA: First of all, good morning to all of us in this Honourable House, to you Madam Speaker and to all the staff of Parliament. I know you have been working some long hours to complete our business of the House.

My question is going out to the Minister of ICI and it's in regards to Te Mato Vai. I understand that some of the Te Mato Vai landowners do not want an endearment agreement but would prefer to negotiate their own agreement. What is Government's plan to accommodate these landowners?

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Minister Mark Brown.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Madam Speaker.

I am not sure I understand the question from the Member. I am not sure what an endearment agreement is.

MRS S. NAPA: Enduring.

HON. M. BROWN: An enduring agreement.

The matter dealing with landowners Madam Speaker is before the officials and there is an avenue through the legal provisions for any sort of dispute resolution to be undertaken and that's not something that's currently before me right now but before the officials.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Honourable Tina Browne. You have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I have a question for the Minister of Health. Over the last twelve months, two fully trained paramedics left the Health Department taking their expertise with them. One was a Cook Islander and the other an expat.

The Cook Islander took some time, went to Auckland and trained for three years and he returned and re-joined the Health Department and he was put on \$29,000 per annum which in my view did not equate to the position's efforts and expertise of this person.

On requesting a salary more in line for a paramedic it was declined. The local left and sought a job elsewhere where he was paid so he thought the right amount.

Recently in the newspaper, Government stated they were committed to paying an appropriate salary to staff at Justice, Police, Corrective Services and Health.

Minister, the question is, why did the Health Department allow two paramedics to put the hospital and the patients at risk without ensuring a doctor accompanies the ambulance.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, I see the Minister of Health.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Greetings to all of us this morning. Greetings to you Madam Speaker and to all of us in this House and also to the Leader of the Opposition and your Members. I would like to further investigate on this and I ask you please bear with me as I seek more information on this question from the Secretary of the Ministry of Health. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Minister and see the Honourable Member Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: My question is going out to the Minister in charge of the Manatua Cable. If the Minister can tell us, what is the Cook Islands actual cost for the Manatua cable and what is the total cost for the Manatua cable.

MADAM SPEAKER: I see the Minister, you have the Floor.

HON. M. BROWN: If the Honourable Member had a written question I would have been able to obtain the answer straight away today but I will have to go back and pull my calculator out to give her the correct answer, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you Minister for that short answer, I will certainly be giving you a long list of questions about Manatua cable and it will be coming.

MADAM SPEAKER: I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate, you have the Floor.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you, Madam Speaker and good morning to us this morning and our people listening in and especially to my constituency.

My question is for the Minister of Telecommunications concerning the Manatua cable. As we understand this is just for Rarotonga and Aitutaki but while I was in Mangaia for a week the internet service was really bad. Even if I was using the internet close to the Bluesky Office, only upon my return to Rarotonga that I was able to use the internet and send emails again.

The question is how is the Government planning to improve telecommunications not just for Aitutaki and Rarotonga but also for all the Outer Islands?

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Minister Mark Brown.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you, Madam Speaker and in the interest of time and getting a speedy response to question I was just browsing through the Budget Book here and having a look at the figures for telecommunications.

I can advise the Honourable Member for Titikaveka who asked the previous question, that the total Manatua Cable cost comprised of a loan of 15 million US dollars from the Asian Development Bank and the grant of 15 million dollars from the New Zealand Government.

This is the Manatua cable made up of the four countries consortium, our ownership of the cable that runs to the Cook Islands is called the Avaroa Cable and the establishment cost of the Avaroa Cables Limited the company that will manage the cable ownership in the Cook islands we have appropriated \$150,000 this year and for next year for the running of the office.

Which brings me to the second question then Madam Speaker raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition because the cable will provide opportunity for us to expand satellite connections to the rest of our country.

If the Members of the Opposition could read through the Cook Islands Government Telecommunications Policy Paper that we have put out they will see that the improved service we expect from the Avaroa cables will be replicated with an improved service in satellites to the rest of our country.

Currently the telecommunications services provided by private company of which we are a 40 percent shareholder of which there is limited regulatory authority by the Government.

However, the Members will be aware of the development of the new Telecommunications Bill and also the Regulators Bill that will accompany that piece of legislation before this House in the next couple of months. It is our intention that the role of the Regulator, Madam Speaker will assist in ensuring that service and quality to our Outer Islands, Pa Enua will have more authority.

So, I look forward to the commissioning of the cable by May next year, when I say commission it will be turned on. Already the Board for the Avaroa cables has been tasked with looking at how the improved service to Rarotonga and Aitutaki can also be covered to include improved service to the rest of the Pa Enua.

I know everybody will be looking forward to improved service Madam Speaker, not least our children who keep asking me, Dad when is the internet going to be faster and cheaper so they can use their phones. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Minister it's a pity the Member who asked the question is not here to listen to the answers that you have provided. I see the Member Manuela Kitai you have the Floor.

MR M. KITAI: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Greetings to all of us this morning. To the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and all the Ministers and Members in Government, greetings to you all.

This morning, I received a telephone call from Aitutaki asking me to ask the Minister for Welfare if there is an allocation for the widows and solo mothers under 60 years to receive the welfare benefit. They told me that they will be listening in to Parliament for the answer if it is a yes or a no. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, very much and I see the Minister of Internal Affairs.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Kia Orana Madam Speaker and welcome back. This question has been raised by the Honourable Member when we first came into this Honourable House and as the Minister of Finance has been saying, this budget is the Budget of Love.

So, to answer the Honourable Member's question, I have sourced answers from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. There are 22 women who have the same situation that the Member of Parliament have highlighted collecting benefits for solo mothers.

There is a combination of widowers and women whose partners have deserted them. I think the proper term the Leader of the Opposition is saying, absconded. There are sad situations where mothers are to look after two, three or four children on their own.

We also have situations where husband and spouses are serving prison terms and the mothers are left to tend to the children and these mothers are unemployed. So, Internal Affairs are assisting those who are currently in these kinds of situations.

And the short answer to the Honourable Member is yes, Internal Affairs is supporting these solo mothers.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I give the Floor to the Honourable Tetangi Matapo.

MRS T. MATAPO: Thank you, Madam Speaker and welcome back home and also to Papa Colin.

My question is to the Minister of Health. We are hearing that the water on Rarotonga will be treated with chlorine. My question to you Honourable Minister, is there any plan for treating the water for the Outer Islands. What is the plan by the Ministry of Health on this issue?

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, and I give the Floor to the Minister of Health.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you, Madam Speaker and thank you also to the Honourable Member for your good question.

After our adjournment yesterday the Member and I spoke on this issue about the water on Mangaia. She told me that the water supply in Mangaia is not cared for properly. Today, their public health inspector is here in Rarotonga for further training to upskill him and one of his duties is to look at the water supply.

Above that the Government has plans to improve the supply and quality of water in the Outer Islands. We are aware of the Green Climate Fund and the Prime Minister have mentioned that one of the priority of this funding is on the water supply of the country. There are plans in place to treat the water of our Outer Islands.

I hope I have answered your question Honourable Member and if not we can further speak on this matter at a later time. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister and I see the Honourable Tina Browne and you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is to the Minister in Charge of the Cook Islands Government Incorporation.

About some weeks ago I followed up a request for a Government house for our Members on this side of the House who do not have houses on Rarotonga. I was a little bit miffed or puzzled by the response. The details that I wanted was how many houses does Government have and are they all occupied and who are occupying them?

The reason for that is because I am aware that at least one of our Members of Parliament has had a request there for some time. Some weeks later I get a response.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Member I am going to interrupt you as our time is up. And perhaps you can ask your question first thing tomorrow morning.

Honourable Members that completes our Question Time for today. I would like now to give the Leader of the Opposition the opportunity to move her Motion please.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move:

**That Agnes Armstrong be granted Leave of absence from
this Parliament, because she is sick**

The doctor has given her a medical certificate for two days but I would ask that perhaps we allow her leave of absence for three days in case she is not well to return. Her medical condition is infectious and we should be concerned that it does not infect others.

Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Member can I just ask you to please articulate it, just for the leave without all the information, for three day.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: The Motion is:

That leave of absence be granted for the Honourable Agnes Armstrong for health reasons, for three days

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I look for a Secunder?

Seconded by the Honourable Member of Ngatangiia, Tama Tuavera

The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

We will now go to the presentation of Bills.

PRESENTATION OF BILLS

I ask the Minister Mark Brown to proceed to present the Seabed Minerals Bill 2019.

DEPUTY CLERK AT THE TABLE: Short Title Reads: Seabed Minerals Bill 2019.

BILL READ A FIRST TIME

MADAM SPEAKER: Can the Minister please, name the date and time for the Second Reading of the Bill?

HON. M. BROWN: Immediately after the Welfare Amendment Bill, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, the Seabed Minerals Bill 2019 is ordered for the Second reading after the Welfare Amendment Bill. We will now go to the presentation of Papers.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

This is Paper 15 on the Report of the Infrastructure Bill 2019 Select Committee. I now call on the Chairman of the Infrastructure Bill Select Committee, the Honourable Minister Robert Tapaitau to present the Paper.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Greetings Madam Speaker.

It is with great honour that I present to Parliament on this day:

**Parliament Paper 15; Report of the Infrastructure Bill Select
Committee June 2019**

I lay this on the Table.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister.

We will now go to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

This is in the Committee of Supply. This is Day Five on the Infrastructure Cook Islands:

Interrupted debate on the Question:

**That the sum of \$6,285,169 for Infrastructure Cook Islands
stands part of the Schedule?**

Honourable Members, as we know, we have a lot of work to finish by the end of this week. I would like to suggest that we look at the times allocated for the Vote Items and see if we can reduce the times.

In the case of this Vote Item which was two hours, we will do 30 more minutes on this. That would have been one hour allocated. As we go through the rest of the Vote Items those that were allocated for one hour, we would do them in half an hour as I propose the Question on each Item, I will let you know what the time limit is for that Vote Item.

Please, as we are not doing principles and merits in the Committee, you are only to focus on the amount that is appropriated and speak to that amount and not tell a whole lot of stories on it. Just be precise about the amount that is appropriated. That is the job of the Committee.

So, we will now begin with the debate on that Vote Item to the Question:

**That the sum of \$6,285,169 for Infrastructure Cook Islands
stands part of the Schedule?**

Oh. I beg your pardon.

Under Standing Order 306(1), we will now resolve into the Committee.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY – DAY 4

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We will begin the debate, and I see the Leader of the Opposition. You have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Madam Chair, I am simply asking for clarification.

With regard to the change of the time for debate, I accept that I am new and that I may not have noticed the appropriate Standing Order. I see that 307 was the Standing Order that was moved at the commencement of this Parliament setting out the allocation of time.

I am looking for the Standing Order that allows the Speaker to change that time. If you can assist me Madam Chair I would be grateful.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

To clarify that, those times that were allocated were allocated by the Deputy Speaker at the time in thinking that those times would be appropriate. As per 307 the Speaker can allocate times but as we have gone on. And I look at the business that we have and the amount of days that you have allocated for the Sitting, it is important that we do all of our work and this doesn't constrain your time.

You still have your ten minutes but to focus the speeches and this is a time that the Speakers have allocated. One, the previous was allocated by the Deputy Speaker but as time has gone on we are looking at re-allocating those times. Otherwise you still have your ten minutes to speak.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: With respect, Madam Chair, I am not sure that answered my question.

I do not see a Standing Order here that allows an amendment of a decision that has been made already. I am not opposed to reducing the timing. I have been in discussions with the Prime Minister to see whether we can accommodate the business by the end of this Session.

But for me personally, I would like some guidance on what we can do and what we can't do. We are very aware that timing is an issue during this Sitting and it is my view that restricting the time for Members to speak must be the last resort.

There are some other Ministry Vote Items that I think can go ahead with minimum discussion. I don't believe Standing Order 307 assists because that decision has already been made.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, would it help if I say that the timing of those allocated times are made by the Speaker, not by Parliament, on 307(3).

Look, I think you can still speak but make sure you are just talking about the appropriation and speak for your ten minutes and if you feel you need to take your

whole 30 minutes we can't stop you. That's the thing. We can't stop you. But you have a lot of business to do and that's for you to think about.

So, I see the Minister of ICI. You have the Floor.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Thank you Madam Chair.

Greetings to all of us in the Mighty Name of our God. To you Madam Chair, allow me please to issue words of condolences to my island. To the family on the island of Penrhyn for our bereavement on Sunday of Mama Tokorangi Taia. Our deepest sympathies to all of you there. To the family, to the children, grandchildren – may Our Lord and God help us.

The appropriation of love, love for the people. The Budget of love as previously mentioned in my Budget to the Honourable Members of this House.

Infrastructure is something that I am very passionate about as Minister of Infrastructure. I am humbled and excited at the same time to have received a significant financial support from the portfolio, the Ministry of Infrastructure.

I would also like to thank the Minister of Finance and his team for the good work that they have done.

Operating Budget: \$455,000. This goes towards the recruitment of civil engineers and project co-ordinators.

Establishment of the Pa Enea Co-ordination Division and for a long time coming establishment of a drainage crew.

Other personnel and support to implement the implementation of the Infrastructure Bill, quality assurance procurement and a financial specialist to mention a few. Overall increments across the Ministry, especially those at the lower end.

\$725,000 for Administered Funds. Allocated emergency funds to address flooding, culvert blockages – issues during heavy rain. Drainage, ongoing maintenance and road maintenance to name a few of the areas that this \$1.1 million increase for ICI will address.

I have on a number of occasions that I made it clear and concrete with my team at ICI – HOMs, Directors and all staff – sometimes very sternly, it's the results that we want. The measure of our success is results and not the number of times we appear on the TV or the radio. In order for ICI to deliver the results, building and investing into our productivity is priority.

That is our people resources and having a well-supported work force with welfare and wellbeing being taken care of. There is a saying I follow, you are only as good as those under you. In our language when you look after your workers they will look after you.

Capital Projects – ICI will receive significant fund in its capital project appropriation to the tune of 19.5 million. That's a 10.6 million increase in the 1920 financial year, a 46 percent increase from the current financial year. These are huge commitments by our Budget of Love to our Cook Islands people.

Eight million for road improvements around the island, \$.3 million for construction of the Avatiu Bridge and other drainage and bridges improvement around the island and foreshore protection and so on.

Pa Enea Capital Projects – This is one that I hold dear to my heart. 4.2 million dollars is for you my beloved Tongareva to build your cyclone centres, oh my beautiful Penrhyn. Not forgetting my brothers Nassau and Rakahanga and Atiu we will complete your roads in this financial year coming and when I have it my way, it will be the rest of the Outer Islands.

All the infrastructure in the Pa Enea is also a priority with 1.75 million dollars to address the water concerns of our Pa Enea and also not forgetting the much needed ferry for my brothers in Pukapuka Nassau.

These are significant commitments by our Government towards infrastructure development in the Cook Islands. Therefore we ought to express our appreciation to the Minister of Finance and your hardworking team for balancing the books to make this possible. Like the saying goes, *"make it happen"*.

Already within ICI my team have started to put together a capital programming plan for action in order to test the market and to procure the services we need to deliver on these major infrastructure projects.

Honourable Members of this House, my plea to you all is to let us get on with the work by supporting this Appropriation Bill for the betterment of our people. It is my duty to work with my team at ICI to deliver quality infrastructure development that meets the needs of our people. It only benefits our people if we work together as leaders of this beautiful paradise that we call home.

One more thing before I finish off, I would also like to acknowledge Diane Puna the HOM for Infrastructure and my ICI team who are doing a great job. Words cannot express so in saying that to the Opposition side and our side, support this appropriation. Kia Orana and best wishes.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you Minister, perfect timing. I see the Honourable William Heather.

MR W. HEATHER: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I want to express my views on the appropriation before us for Infrastructure Cook Islands.

When we look in Book 2, page 112, under policies, completed and endorsed, road and drainage policy, completed building code and manual review completed. All these area I give my total support to the allocation for his area.

I would just like to touch upon the building code. We are aware of the intensity of hurricanes and cyclones in the world. I would like to request our engineers and the

officials within ICI to seriously consider this and not just for the houses to withstand the storms ahead of us but also for our people living in these houses to be safe and protected from these problems.

As the Minister elaborated before on page 113 on Capital Funding, I am satisfied with this but just one thought on this for my area of Ruaau. I cannot see the allocation for the roads for Ruaau which I have mentioned before and also the flooding that occurred in Ruaau recently due to high rain fall. I am satisfied with the allocation for the Pa Enea and the significant amount that has been appropriated.

But allow me to touch upon the tendering process in seeking services to conduct the work. In recent times, we have seen the problems with the tendering process not being followed. Also the issue of conflict of interest including nepotism and looking at families and friends, my request to the Minister is to seriously address this issue to give fairness across all sections involved.

Under planning and project management under Output 3, we can see the Planning Funding Implementing that ICI is talking about in this output and I am satisfied with this allocation.

I just want to make mention of a recent flooding we had and I requested for two engineers from ICI and they agreed and visited the site with me. The two engineers were Patrick and Gerald. We had a look at the site where flooding went through houses up to knee high level. This is the first time this happened in this household.

I requested them to draw a plan with costing on how to move this water forward and when they are ready I will call a meeting for the village so that we can talk about it with the landowners and if they will agree with this.

The plan has been completed but the problem now is calling the public meeting as I understand some landowners already oppose this plan. But this is not a big issue that is my role to seek the approval of our people of Ruaau.

I would just like to bring our attention to the item on the Pa Enea Coordination Division. I believe that they are working hard in this division and the question is whether there is adequate funds. I am now on the Waste Management for the Outer Islands we do know of the situation on each island like the Nga-Pu-Toru, these small island where these waste are compiled in one place.

If there is adequate funds to address the separation of these waste on each island then I am happy but if not then an increment would be good. Therefore to you Minister I give my full support for this appropriation but if there is going to be an increase I will be happy to support it because it is for the benefit of our people. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Minister you want the Floor again?

HON. R. TAPAITAU: I will wrap it up to finish that time up.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay. Yes, you have the Floor.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Kia Orana again to all of us, Honourable Members.

Just to answer the issues raised by the Honourable Members and it will not take long. I have always asked this question to myself. If I had a billion dollars, I will fix all our problems on our roads, drainage and waste. When we prepare another Appropriation Bill, I will ask for 3 million dollars and all of us in this House must support it. And when it comes to this House, I will be the only person to talk about it, no one else and it will be done.

All the questions are appropriate, and these are not easy work. We have waited until today and decided to do all these work. What did we do during past years and waited until today to criticise about these issues. We did this to ourselves and today, we are blaming all of us. Please do not do that. Let us come together and discuss about this. I am proposing 3 million dollars for the next Budget and I want your support.

On the flooding problem of the Member for Ruaau, yes we feel for our people suffering. This is not a problem isolated to your area only, it is a problem faced by all of us. Like I said, if I could address all these issues tomorrow, I would. Let it be known in this House that it hurts me to see our people suffer. The cries of our people, I feel it. Let us stop arguing in here.

With regards to the issue of the landowner that the Honourable Member for Ruaau mentioned, I would prefer this kind of issue to be in black and white, write it down and bring it to my office. If you do not bring this in, then it will become a problem and you will claim that I have lied to you.

The Member for Ngatangia spoke about the Infrastructure Bill. This is the truth and in the future, no one should continue criticising about this. There was a problem but we have fixed it in this Bill. The Infrastructure Bill will set out the path for us to move forward. The building code is brought to the House and there is a review done on this and it is done.

Today, we are seeing the effect of climate change and there will be strong winds, high waves and frequent rains. In this building code, it sets the way for strong foundations when we build our houses.

The Member for Titikaveka spoke about sanitation from ridge to reef. If the Member wants me to be responsible for this, I can do it. Our questions and problems that we raise is good, but we need to come together and discuss about it and find the solution so our country can move forward. Thank you and Kia Orana.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you Minister, and I give you the Floor to the Honourable Member, Tetangi Matapo.

MRS T. MATAPO: Thank you, Madam Chair and my talk will be short.

First of all, I would like to convey my appreciation to the Minister of ICI for his team of workers that went to Mangaia yesterday, to complete the water supply system in Tamarua. Thank you very much for doing this project for my constituency, today they are having a meeting with the village leaders.

I can see in our budget book the amount of \$250,000 for this project and the people are claiming that the money is gone and there is no more money.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Please Honourable Member just finish what you have to say because our time has expired.

MRS T. MATAPO: In our budget book I see that \$214,000 have been used on the project and I am happy to see there is still money left and I am sure the Minister of Finance will give more money to properly complete the water project.

I want to highlight to you Minister our quarry project and this has been put on our priority list for the gravel churning for our road upgrade. I believe on your next trip to Mangaia you will look into this need of the island of Mangaia. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member that will be the final debate on this Vote Item. I will put the question and the Question is:

That \$6,285,169 for Infrastructure Cook Islands stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

Honourable Members parliament will be suspending until 11.00 a.m.

Sitting suspended at 10.28 a.m.

Sitting resumed at 11.00 a.m.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members please be seated.

Parliament is resumed in the Committee of Supply.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$4,471,346 for Internal Affairs stands part of the Schedule?

And this session will be for 30 minutes. The Floor is open.

I see the Honourable Minister. You have the Floor.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Kia Orana again Madam Chairman and a very good morning to all of your Parliament staff.

To the Leader of Opposition and Members in the Opposition, to all those listening in especially in the Outer Islands – Kia Orana.

To all those living in the gateway to the world, Village Nikao – Kia Orana.

Madam Chairman, I have already shared in detail some of the appropriation for Internal Affairs but to assist us in this House, it can be found on page 114 of Book 1 and page 123 of Book 2.

Before going on, I would like to take some time to thank all the good staff of Internal Affairs and those Welfare Officers in the Outer Islands. They are the ones who are instrumental in the delivery of this Budget, not only for the last financial year but for all the good work that has been done in the past.

I would also like to bring the apologies of the Head of Ministry for Internal Affairs, Anne Herman. She is currently in Geneva with Sandrina representing the Cook Islands on ILO matters. Nevertheless, I would like to say a special thank you to Anne, some of the Divisional Heads – Henry Tupa, Nono Numanga, Ngatuaiane Maui and the rest of the staff. These are the very people that keep our town area clean and those that are responsible for cleaning the towns are the ones that are raking the rubbish at 6 or 7 o'clock in the morning.

I would also like to thank those within the Non-Government sector and the SIF Fund - \$801,000 is allocated to the 26 NGOs that the Internal Affairs works closely with. Some of the NGOs that the Internal Affairs works closely with are: the Creative Centre, National Council of Women, Te Vaerua, Cook Islands Family Welfare Association, Are Pa Metua Trust and in the Outer Islands we have the Aitutaki/Mangaia/Mauke Disability Centres. We also have the Cook Islands Voyaging Society. All in all, we have 26 NGOs that Internal Affairs works with.

I would also like to thank the three Ministries and the Government of New Zealand and the United States, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, Police who have worked on a joint mission to bring our girl, Ngatupuna back home and all the way to Aitutaki.

So, briefly Madam Chair, some of the increment that this Government has promised for our people is the increment of child benefit from newly-born to the age of 16 and I would kindly and humbly ask for the support of all the Members in the House to support for the Welfare Amendment Bill.

The old age pension has also been reviewed and increased from \$660 to \$700 a month. I am very thankful to our Honourable Members, Vaitoti Tupa and Tama Tuavera who have put in a proposal that those who are still living in the golden age of 60 up to the age of 70, their pension should also be reviewed.

I have made my assurance in this House that this proposal by these two Honourable Members and it will be reviewed and a decision will be given at a later stage.

The Caregiver's allowance has also been increased from \$165 to \$200 per month and I come to our two divisional heads from Internal Affairs. This is the funding that our Honourable Member Kitai is talking about. This is the one that we're talking about and he can access this fund for his island especially for those solo mothers and/or widows.

Coming back to the review of those collecting old-aged pension, there is huge confusion on the Facebook where people are thinking that we are trying to raise the age of collecting the pension to 65.

I think that statement was wrongly interpreted as given by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. What the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance stated is that the proposal as submitted by Honourable Members Vaitoti Tupa and Tama Tuavera, for those collecting from 60 to 65 to be reviewed.

There is also inside the allocation \$400,000 for the Vaka maintenance program. The contract for this program has now been reviewed. I would like to thank all those communities, all those agencies that have submitted their bid and have been working very hard to keep our island of Rarotonga clean. This \$400,000 has been sitting there since 2008 and has not been reviewed since then. It is timely for us to review this given the new roads and the new developments on Rarotonga.

\$270,000 has been allocated to CISNOC. Government has already allocated \$500,000 last year to support our biggest contingent of Cook Islands athletes and officials that will be attending the Pacific Games next month.

On that note I would like to thank Owen Lewis, John Glassie and Melanie who are full-time employees at CISNOC as well as the CISNOC Board chaired by Hugh Graham.

Within the allocation there's \$100,000 that has been allocated to Infrastructure Cook Islands to assist with the preparation of all the sports venues in Atiu where the MANEA Games will be held in October next year. All sports equipment used will be donated to Atiu and CISNOC is able to source funds to assist the sports federation with an amount (between \$5,000 to \$10,000), for a pre-Games visit.

In conclusion, this Office is a true reflection of the Budget named the Budget of Love where this particular Ministry, Internal Affairs, and its hardworking staff are working with newly-born and children, working with the youth, working with the elderly as well as caregivers, working with the disabilities and those agencies in the non-Government sector.

Thank you for your attention.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister. I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you very much Madam Chair for this opportunity.

Thank you very much to the Minister of Internal Affairs for all his explanations. Then I don't need to go through what I was going to explain. Before all of that I would like to say in this House that I support the allocation for Internal Affairs especially the increase in salaries and allocation for the work that needs to be done.

I appreciate the increase in payment for the elderly from 70 years because there is an increase to \$700 per month. As mentioned by the Minister, I had suggested some

ideas to the Minister, for them to consider today and the future. I have looked at the estimates for the coming year and the following years. There is a slow increase and this is why I had made proposals to the Minister of Internal Affairs.

Looking at the proposal I have given to the Minister I suggested that between the ages of 60 to 65, \$500 per month remains. Between the ages of 66 to 70 an increase of \$600 per month, and as proposed by Government those 71 years and over to \$700 per month. I am aware that there is going to be a continuous increase in payment as we go forward and my suggestion here is if you reach the age of 76 to 80 years that you collect \$800 per month. If you reach the age of 81 to 85, \$900 will be perfect.

As I have been told, pensioners living in New Zealand are collecting \$1,700 per month. That is why I think when you are 86 to 90 years, \$1000 per month is perfect and when you reach 91 to 100 you collect \$1,200 per month. I believe that the age group of 95 plus there is about five or just a few more in that age group.

Madam Chair, the reason why I brought this up I have related this to the allocation made by the Minister of Finance and when I look at it is just by right that we get to be paid with this allocation. We have to think back how our nation grew until today and we just remember our parents that have passed on and for us still alive we are the ones who nurtured our nation for us to be here today.

For us in this House, Madam Chair we are also involved in this situation and what I believe here is that we all support these initiatives and look at how we can improve these situations.

I would now like to raise the issue on the amount allocated for the Vaka maintenance of our island. I am happy with the comments from the Minister of Internal Affairs on that allocation. I would say it has been ten years in the waiting for this to eventuate.

As mentioned by the Minister, we have an allocation of \$400,000. Let me assure you Madam Chair, our people are relying on the Members of Parliament to do these duties. This is alright however, increasing the allocation will assist the Member of Parliament and Committees responsible for keeping our islands clean.

I understand there is an allocation of \$5,000 to assist all the Committees in the Vaka maintenance. If this can be increased to \$15,000, I think the Committee will be very happy with that. If you look at the work that has been given by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, it is quite a lot of work. The task also involves cleaning the drainages in the villages.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We will give the Floor to another Member please. I see the Leader of the Opposition, or I give the Floor to the Member Tetangi Matapo.

MRS T. MATAPO: Greetings to everyone again in this House.

Madam Chair, firstly I want to give my support to the Budget. I will be brief, but I just want to say thank you to the Minister for the allocation to this Vote Item, and let me share my thoughts.

While I support the allocation of \$400,000 for Vaka projects, I also know this is only for the island of Rarotonga. During past Council meetings on our island, we always ask the Council members if there is an allocation for cleaning the island like the Vaka maintenance for Rarotonga. So Minister, maybe in the future you can allocate some money for the Pa Enua like what we have for the Vaka maintenance on Rarotonga.

Secondly, I would like to talk about the increase in payment for caregivers. I thank the Minister for that increase, but my plea here is for the Ministry to look at the standard of the people and the policy that is in place determining a person to be a caregiver.

This is the intention of our Welfare Officer in Mangaia, to find caregivers based on the criteria set in your policy. I know there are a lot of elderly people on the island but there are not enough caregivers. However, we have a group that calls themselves the “elder-ability” and they look after the elderly people in our villages. This group of people provide care to our elderly people but once their funding is expended, they cannot continue their good work.

The increase of the personnel remuneration allocation, I am happy with that but I am concerned about our Welfare Officer because she is the only one doing the work on our island and she does the work with dedication. The Ministry of Internal affairs are aware of her good work for the island. I would like to propose that this officer’s salary be increased as some of you have made your own increment submission earlier for your own people.

The allocations and increases mentioned by the Minister, I give my full support for this Appropriation.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Tetangi Matapo and I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa. I will allow you to finish as I see that you were not quite finish. But our finishing time is coming up.

MR V. TUPA: As I was saying earlier about the allocation for those contracted to clean the roads on our island that this payment should be increased because they are doing a great job.

When you meet a tourist at the Punanga Nui, their comments is always, you have a beautiful clean island. I am always at the Punanga Nui Market every Saturday morning to give good tidings to the many visitors to our shore.

It is the Ministry of Internal Affairs who is responsible for cleaning the roads that makes our island clean and beautiful.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Members, our time has expired. I will now put the Question.

The Question is:

That the sum \$4,471,346 for Internal Affairs stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

JUSTICE:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$2,855,763 for Justice stands part of the Schedule?

And the Floor is open and we can have 30 minutes on this Vote Item. I see the Leader of the Opposition, Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Kia Orana again to all Honourable Members. Before I talk on the Justice allocation can I talk briefly on another matter and I will seek support Madam Chairman from the Members of the Government.

Under Standing Order 307, there is a possibility to change an allocation under this instrument. I am troubled that a Government agency as important as Justice is allocated only 30 minutes to debate on. Standing Orders 37 appears to have no discrimination with the Ministries with a small Vote Item and those with a big Vote Item for example, Tourism and Police.

We look at page 10 of the budget book, Government has recognised that law and order is important and the budget has been increased according. Those of us in this parliament House that have worked with the Justice knows that there are issues in this department that we need to discuss so that these issues can be addressed. With respect Madam Chairman I don't believe that half an hour is sufficient to debate this particular Vote Item.

I am going to ask that it be extended to an hour for Justice.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member may I interrupt you please. The Chair can decide that as long as the people stick to the business of the Committee. I will extend the time depending on how many people are wishing to speak. So, we have already spent 3 minute doing that. This is something that the Chair can decide on.

You may have the Floor if you wish to debate on this Vote Item for one hour.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Ministry of Justice for a long while has had problems. I see in the narration there are some attempts to try and resolve some issues that have been outstanding for many years.

In particular I refer to page 129 on the right hand side of the page, second paragraph from the bottom. The narration there includes the capacity assessment of the Ministry of Justice that was done in 2016. I was part of that report and it was to assess the actual capacity of our Justice Department to cope with the work that is performed by that Ministry.

Arising out of that there was then the many recommendations made by that Committee, I thought it was an excellent Committee and it was chaired by the lady

from Public Service Commission, Daphne. They were assisted by Theresa Trott. The recommendations that came out of that and my understanding is that the current Secretary of Justice has already started implementing some of the easy ones.

I am happy that there has been an increase on that budget but I think there should be more. I say this because one, our land records are supposed to outlive all of us into the next century. That division needs a lot of money to be able to get records into a condition that they are age proof. There are not enough people in that division.

There is also the division of having court orders signed and sealed. There are not enough people in that division either. When I talk about Court Orders, and the Prime Minister will know about this, the Court Orders for the Northern Group solar, the one that I was involved with, was sent to Justice shortly after the order was made in Manihiki. It took us almost three years, several meetings to finally get it sealed and I think that happened only about two months ago.

It is because there are not enough people in that division. The person in that division is over worked and under paid. So, when I say that Justice is an important part of the Law and Order, it is because we rely so heavily on our land records that are kept at the Court.

One of the concerns that I have and have had, and people in this Parliament will be aware, is that we have not been able to attract workers into the Ministry and that's because we are not offering enough money to make it attractive for people to apply. It is so important to make sure that our records are accurate and yet we don't pay those people sufficient for the expertise that they bring.

So, I am going to ask you Minister of Justice, if you can have a look and see whether there is anything we can do to reward those people who have huge responsibilities. For instance, it is not an easy task to check whether an Order is right or wrong. It takes a person who has been there for a long time, and who knows exactly what the job is and understands that it needs to be consistent with the Court records, to do that job.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you and I see the Honourable Member Vaitoti Tupa.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you Madam Chair. I want to express my thoughts on the allocation for the Ministry of Justice.

I fully support this allocation, not only support for this fiscal year but also for future forecasts the increments that I can see. But I would like to highlight the issue of our people going to Court. Some elders in my village of Matavera have asked me to consider the issue of fees at our Court because they find it very difficult today.

When I look at this appropriation in Book 2, this is one of the proposals by this Department to re-align these fees. So, I want to tell our people that the Ministry is certainly reviewing this.

I would also like to touch upon the issues raised by our people in terms of Occupation Rights, Leases and so forth. Our people keep changing their minds in respect to these, even though this has been fully explained. We understand the ruling by our people of old that when your Occupation Right is given to you, that's it.

However, today our people are wondering how this is happening. Maybe an idea is to review this.

An issue asked of me to raise in this House is the question of selling of our land because there has been concerns within some families and landowners where some of them are looking to sell land. They haven't followed the proper arrangements with leases. These are some concerns of our people because they see this land being sold and they cannot do anything about it.

I want to bring this to the attention of this House with the hope that the Secretary of Justice will look at it and review these matters.

These thoughts are not mine, but my people who asked me to raise it in the House. These are important issues so our people do not have difficulties with their land. These are proposals under this allocation in Book 2 to review and to re-adjust all these because I want to bring this to our notice and to help our people.

With regards to the issue on land survey, I know this is one area with difficulties because I believe there is only about three staff in this Division. I am looking in terms of when we need to establish our plans for our lands. I support the notion that our qualified surveyors should conduct this exercise. However, the approval of the map should still lay with this Division in Justice.

This is one area that needs to be strengthened so our people do not have long delays in getting their survey maps. I know this has been allocated in Book 2 of the appropriation. The most important thing for me is for my people to hear that I have put this before the House.

Also, on the island of Aitutaki there are problems and the land survey in Aitutaki is having problems but I believe these have been addressed by Justice.

This is what we want to do to help our people in terms of surveying land and issuing payments to help them out and in terms of registration in the Land Court. Again, this is one area as mentioned with long delays in land registration. Because when I consider our people from overseas coming back to secure land, by the time they have to leave their land case has not been completed.

That is all I have to bring to the House to demonstrate to our people that we are looking at addressing these issues.

To end my thoughts, I support the appropriation.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you and I give the Floor to the Honourable Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I think our country is one of the most fortunate nations within the Pacific because some of the Land Court Judges are some of the best in the Pacific.

Land Court Sittings have improved here because in former years, there may be one or two sittings a year. Now there's about three. Therefore the benefit to our people they can approach the Court three times a year for cases of Succession, Occupation right and Leases and so forth.

In July, there will be a Sitting and normally it is now done in April, July and October. When we have time please do consider reviewing the list of cases for the Land Court. You will see that two weeks is a full listing for the Judge. I believe the last Sitting in April was cut short because the Judge fell ill. I believe the Judge already had a case of flu. However, because of the heavy load he became even sicker, he is returning in July.

On the issue of fees, in Table 17.1 as Trading Revenue, that is from the fees. I raised this question because at the time when it was proposed to increase the application fees to Court, I was part of the reviewing and discussions.

I agree with the increases because at that time we were advised that the revenue generated from the application fees will be returned to run the operations of the Ministry. Even though there was an increase in payment from \$5 to \$150, this is a significant increase on our people and they complained especially with succession applications.

This is not a complicated application. You take the Death Certificate and your Birth Certificate to show the connection between you two and you file your application but the application fee is expensive. That is what the people are complaining about.

When we look at the application for Occupation Rights, it's the same thing. If you have a good family and they give you an Occupation Right, you have all the papers, to take your application to the Court and the fee is still \$150.

The reason I am talking about this is, the purpose the application fee was increased is to help the Ministry's operating costs. If our economy is good at the moment and there is a little bit more cash floating around, why can't we reduce the fees to make it easier for the people who cannot afford it? In the Outer Islands especially, most of their applications are for succession.

If you have a lot of land, one is in Avarua and another in Ngatangiia and one in Matavera, that means you have to file three applications and right there it's \$450 and you haven't even gone to a land agent or a lawyer. So, I ask the Minister please look at this area for you to maybe look into bringing the fee down.

I am looking at the staff chart which is on page 134, there are some Deputy Registrars for the Outer Islands. When the Court went to the North to consult about the solar project, a Court sitting was held in Tauhunu and Tukao. While we were on Tauhunu, the Judge wanted to know where the office of the Deputy Registrar was.

He was taken to a shack that was used maybe twenty years ago. So, if we have appointed some Deputy Registrar, I ask that they be looked after and given an office as part of the local Government offices of the Island Government.

On Atiu, there is an improvement on the office for the Deputy Registrar. The Court sittings used to be held in this office but I think the message here is that we should respect our Justice and we give them some reasonable or equip them with a proper office so they can work from their office.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I will give the Floor to the gentleman here as I haven't heard him speak in the last couple of days. You have the Floor Honourable Member.

MR T. KAVANA: Kia Orana Madam Chairman, thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak in this House and welcome home to you and Papa Colin, nice to see you back with us. It is always good to have a mother in the home.

Thank you also, Madam Chair for the fund from the Cook Foundation as it helped a family in my electorate and on behalf of the family that was helped, I would like to say thank you and to your Board Members. The fund helped them to purchase a water tank.

I stand to support the appropriation allocated for Justice. Firstly the Government have allocated \$60,000 for our Justice building in Aitutaki. It is timely that this building be renovated and if it is not enough but this is just the beginning. The status of this building is not good at the moment but when the renovations are done then it will be good.

What the Honourable Members have said is right and I believe when this building is renovated the condition of Land records will be improved. This is the job of the Members of Parliament of our island to make sure that the records are up to date and also for the other Outer Islands.

I always ask myself why we can't get Birth Certificates on our islands and also Marriage Certificates because technology these days are up to date. We have to get these things from Rarotonga and that is an extra cost for our people. I believe with the help from the Government we should be able to do all this on Aitutaki. This is one of the problems that I see on Aitutaki and that is why I stood up.

I thank the Government and the Minister of Justice and her Associate Minister and the staff of this Ministry for helping our island. My people are asking when are we going to have our Land Court Sitting and we need to address these problems. I would also like to talk about the help that needs to be given for the staff members on the island. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you and I see the Minister of Justice you have the Floor.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Madam Chairman, Kia Orana to all of us in this House, Greetings to all our people in the Outer Islands; in the Northern and Southern Group islands.

Special greetings to the Associate Minister and the Secretary and all the staff of the Ministry of Justice in Rarotonga and also in the Outer Islands. Special greetings to Papa Nooapii Tearea who have worked in this Ministry for a long time.

As noted by many previous speakers I also am thankful to the Government for this good appropriation for Justice. We are aware that it was only recently that the Corrective Services was separated from Justice and is now a Ministry of itself. The appointment of the Secretary for Corrective Services. They have been a lot of changes and a lot of work to be done during this short period.

The appropriation for Justice is \$3million and I rise to fully support this allocation. About \$900,000 in this allocation is for personnel and the employment of new staff to fill the vacant positions in the Ministry. As mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition the areas of the service that needs improvements. She also mentioned the increase in fees. I am surprised that she is a member on this committee and she supported the increase in the fee charge and today she is saying that this is not a good thing.

I want our people to know that this is in our budget allocation from the recommendations of the Capacity Assessment Committee that submitted 62 recommendations. Our new Secretary is looking at these areas that needs immediate attentions. The increment of staff salaries is in this year's budget and I hope the staff listening in to parliament will be happy with this announcements and the increase in their salary.

There is a news release in the local newspaper. There was a question asked about the Outer Islands. We will start with Rarotonga and Aitutaki before we go to the other islands in the Pa Enua. There is also an allocation by Government for our court Judges.

I now want to look at the plans for the renovations of our court building. The Government have heard your cries and this is in the plan for CIIC to work on the court house. There will be renovations to the court buildings in Aitutaki and Atiu. The court house in Atiu is already condemned but this will be attended to in this budget.

The court records are important and these will be protected. The scanning of these have already started so we will be able to maintain these important documents. Honourable Members I ask for your support for this important appropriation.

There will be law changes still to be done to accommodate the Corrective Service. Our land laws needs to be amended like occupation right and the protection of our ancestry land being sold to foreigners. We want to do the right thing when we make these law changes. Many of our laws are old, some of them from back in the sixties and these need to be change to accommodate the time.

I strongly support this Appropriation and future Budget because there will always be improvements in our Government services. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you Minister and I see the Leader of the Opposition, Tina Browne and you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I have two more areas to present to all Honourable Members.

Firstly, I would like to respond to the Member from Arenikau concerning land courts in Aitutaki. Yes, we are still asking the Ministry as to when the land court is going to Aitutaki. It has been over three to four years for the land court to be held in Aitutaki again. Maybe there is no land application to the court in Aitutaki. Maybe there are other reasons for this.

I am happy with your news that an amount of \$60,000 was used to renovate the court house in Aitutaki. Last court sitting in Aitutaki the Judge wanted to go to the toilet the court registrar took him to the hotel instead. I am happy to hear that there is work being done to improve the court house in Aitutaki. Maybe one of the reasons stopping the land court going to Aitutaki is the Judge not having a good rest room to use during these court sittings.

It is the Ministries decision as to when the land court goes to Aitutaki or any Outer Islands.

With regards to the lease of lands in the Outer Islands, I just want to talk about the cost in the Outer Islands. If you want to lease your land on Rarotonga, it is cheaper to pay for lease here than in the Outer Islands. The reason is, if you are the applicant and you live on Aitutaki and you have no lawyer, you are required to pay for a recording officer to fly to Aitutaki and record your landowners meeting, and then submit your application to the Leases Approving Tribunal.

I am aware that the outstanding application for Aitutaki is a very long list.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, I am going to interrupt you please. Parliament is going to suspend until 1.30 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 1.00 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.30 p.m.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, you may sit down.

May I remind all Honourable Members those who did not have vaccination this morning, you may do so now. Please when you go don't go in a group. Go one by one and if you think you will do it tomorrow, you will be charged.

Thank you.

We are back into the Committee of Supply, the Justice Vote Item.

The last speaker before we suspended was the Leader of the Opposition. Honourable Tina Browne, you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you Deputy Chair.

First, I want to say Kia Orana to the Secretary of Justice who has joined us this afternoon. You should be comforted because much of my criticism of Justice has been to the previous Secretary of Justice.

I note Deputy Chair our lunch today was very healthy, and I noticed some hesitation with Members not to go and get a second helping.

Now, I want to cover two particular remaining areas in Justice. I left off by talking about how you acquire a lease in the Outer Islands. Currently I am aware that there is for example no recording officer in Aitutaki nor in Atiu. So, when you apply to have a lease on those islands, it will involve trying to negotiate availability of a recording officer from Rarotonga.

It will also involve the clients paying for the expenses of the recording officer to go to Aitutaki, hold the meeting and return.

So, money-wise the landowner pays for the application \$150. The landowner needs to pay for the recording officer to fly to Atiu or to Aitutaki and in turn the landowner also needs to pay another fee for LAT and if this is approved there is another fee of \$150 to go into Court.

So, right at the start we can see for the Outer Islands it is expensive. As mentioned by Members in the Government there is also a fee that needs to be paid to the lawyers.

Sometimes the lawyer's fees are free and that is an additional cost as well. There is another fee that needs to be paid. The applicant needs to pay for the lawyer to fly to the Outer Islands to sort their land issues out. Please Minister we ask for you to look into this so the cost for our landowners in the Outer Islands will come down.

The Member from Matavera mentioned about the survey, the importance of surveying. This is one of the important aspects of owning land. If we don't resource the Survey Department a problem will come about if the Survey Department makes a mistake

Already the Survey Department has been sued for making mistakes about issuing land. There are a lot of issues surrounding this. Before this happens we need to sort it out.

So, I ask the Minister to please look at this issue.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Leader of the Opposition. I can see the Minister responsible. You have the Floor.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you very much to all of us. I would like to say thank you very much, including our Secretary of the Justice and all the staff members for your support and your words of support for this appropriation.

Thank you very much to the Minister of Finance and the Government for this appropriation and to all the issues raised by our Honourable Members and to all those issues you've raised.

These have been noted down by our Secretary. We understand these are his responsibilities. Again I would like to say thank you very much for the support for this appropriation for the Justice Department.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister. I now put the Question.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$2,855,763 for Justice stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

Before we continue, I would like to remind all Honourable Members there is a time allocation for the remaining agency Vote Items that we are going to go through.

They are: Corrective Services – 1 hour; Marine Resources – 1 hour; Ombudsman - 5 minutes; Parliamentary Services – ten minutes; Police – 1 and a half hours; Prime Minister – one hour; Public Service Commission – one hour; Tourism – one and a half hours; Transport - 30 minutes; CICC one and a half hours. Seabed Minerals Authority – 30 minutes. Should I repeat that for your information?

Thank you Honourable Members. I now put the Question.

CORRECTIVE SERVICES:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,339,941 for Corrective Services stands part of the Schedule?

The debate for this Vote Item is limited to one hour. Do we have any speakers please?

I can see the Honourable Minister George Angene. You have the Floor.

HON. G. ANGENE: Greetings to the Chair of the Committee and to all our people listening in from the south to the north – greetings to you all. To all those that have titles and positions all throughout the country, greetings to you all.

Mr Chairman, I rise to present my support to the Appropriation for Corrective Services. I see there is no allocation for our personnel in the budget for those looking after our people in the prison. I am not going to talk on the subject but I would just like to say that a new department has been created and this department is not a new one but it has been established under Justice.

I send a special request to the Prime Minister as well as the Deputy Prime Minister to give me permission to go ahead with this task. The reason behind all of this is that I want to help them out, to teach them life lessons as Jesus said in Matthew 25 Verse 35. What I am saying is I have reached this position and I have not forgotten them and what I am trying to do is to help them, to nurture them throughout their whole lives.

I must thank all the religious groups coming to our prison, to share their messages to our prisoners. I want to thank one of these people, Dan Turua and he is an instructor in martial arts. I have been involved in martial arts and the most important lessons of martial arts is to respect others and it is not to train to kill people or assault the Prison Guards.

This is the reason why I brought this man into this programme to help our inmates. This programme is doing well. I have noticed the inmates showing respect which is the right thing to do. These are some of the things that I want the people to take note of. As I have already mentioned in this House, I know the inside and the outside of this place.

The problem is not in this place or the law but the problem that I can is the behaviour of the people and our inmates, how we can find ways and means to help them.

I have been criticised for letting the inmates out to work. Mr Deputy Chairman, I have not let the inmates out to go and work for their food but a request came to me for help from people in the community. My purpose here is not for them to be paid with money but to provide them with food. They have food already in the home. Government has provided an allocation for their food and also to pay for the people to look after them.

When I look at the life of our inmates in prison, their lives are better than mine. They are being looked after by human beings and I am looked after by my dogs. I have asked these inmates I want them to be humble to the leaders in the office and to be honest. The law will not touch you if you do what I ask you. If you are thinking of doing wrong, I am telling you that you will be locked in this place that I have been to.

Members of this House, I am requesting your assistance in looking at solutions to upgrade the conditions of our inmates in prison. We should not cast them aside just because they have done wrong. We should remember that these are our children and one day in the future they will be released and they have a right to elect you during the election time.

And if you have been one of those who have gone to the prison to hire them to work for you, you would have noticed what goes on in there. May be in the future one of them will become like me or turn out to be a business person. What I can see is all these inmates are absorbed in different type of behaviour which was influenced by people coming into our country. There are different types of bad behaviours seen today and our people are following it.

I wish to ask the Minister of Prison, for the 14 years he was the Minister in charge he only visited the prison once and that was it. I want to tell our people listening in that I visit the prison in the morning and night and I have been there for 365 days.

I am not there to spy on them but I am there to look at the running of this place because I have been there. Kia Orana.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister. Before I have the next speaker, I would like to make an announcement.

I am asking those MPs that do not want to be vaccinated would you please go outside one by one sign a form for rejecting the vaccine. This is because I do not want the nurses to sit outside there and wait for us. They have other jobs to do at the main hospital. So, thank you Honourable Members for your attention.

I also have three more MPs to do this and you know who you are then please just go out and do it. Please take your time but hurry up. I can see the Honourable Member from Matavera the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you for this opportunity to speak on this appropriation. I thank the Minister of Corrective Services and I can see his love for this Ministry for him to visit this home for our children.

I come back to the appropriation but before I begin I want to tell this House that I support this appropriation this afternoon. The reason that I support this allocation is because of the amount for personnel.

When we look at the re-establishment of this Ministry last year personnel was appropriated at 100,000. When we look at the appropriation for this year 2019/2020 the appropriation is for \$1,005,842 for personnel. We can say there is an increase for personnel by one million.

We will come back to the operation of the Ministry. We have put aside the sum of \$50,000 for this. When you look at the same allocation this year it has increase to \$140,115, so this will total to \$190,115 for this area.

I would like through you Madam Chair to express my hearty appreciation to the Minister of Finance and the Minister responsible for this Vote for this huge increase. For I am sure they see that the remuneration of the staff in this office is not good.

I bring us to Book 1 under Output 1 and 2. Under Output 1 is probation services to highlight there is also an increase in the staff remuneration in this area also. Under Output 2, is prison services and the remuneration for staff has also increased. I have met some of the prison officers during the dancer of the year event.

Some people have left but those remaining have no other options but to stay. What is the reason of staff leaving, it is the rate of pay. They have been told by their head that there will be increase for personnel. And today we see this significant increase for personnel and I am sure the staffs are happy to hear this good news.

My friend working in probation services told me if the salary is good he will remain in the service. This is the reason why I am saying that our workers that are listening in should be happy that there is an increase in personnel to pay them to do the work.

I also take note of the significant increase in the allocation for operations. We will see the improvement in the work conducted by the staff in Output 1 and 2. Especially those probation officers travelling around to inspect the young people under the law and on probation.

As well as our prison wardens who are looking after our prisoners as they are being requested to do works for our people in the community. They don't just supervise the inmates they also join in the work to serve our community.

Therefore, to you my two friends that are heading these two departments, Prison Services and Probation Services. Here is your budget allocations it should assist with you performing your duties to our people. As well as the comments of the Minister in Charge he has met and discussed the requirements under Output 1 and 2.

I have now every confidence that when there are vacancies in these two departments many people will be applying for the position. One of the worst fears for us is the case of our prisoners escaping and we have much to fear.

My time is up and I give my full support for this allocation.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member, now I see the Honourable Member for Teimurimotia. You have the Floor.

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you Deputy Chair. Before I start talking on my views on this Appropriation. I just want to refer to one particular significant achievement and milestone that has been highlighted under this Vote Item.

Where it says, number 3 out of the McDermott and Matapo prison report, 13 of the 47 recommendations have been achieved and some partly. Because I am sure by now everyone and all of us Members of Parliament are aware of the background of the McDermott and Matapo prison report.

I would like to congratulate the Minister of Corrective Service as well as the Minister of Finance for actually increasing the budget allocation for the Corrective Services. Because in the McDermott report it was asked for additional funding will go to strengthening the prison services and in particular the rehabilitation processes and legislative services to address the issues.

These included replacing the existing prison with a modern and more humane building. Doubling or increasing the number of prison wardens and equipping them with uniforms, batons and handcuffs and so forth. Installing a new fire fighting equipment in the prison and also developing an electronic alert system for emergencies. I believe the milestones achieved out of these recommendations put out by the report was prioritised by the urgency of the services required to address the issue.

Other concerns raised were poor pay for prison officers, security fears and the jail having to house and look after mentally disturbed inmates or patients. I see however in budget allocation that a number of these areas have been addressed and taken care of under this budget allocation.

Aside of my approval, I just want to bring to the notice of the House and ask the Minister whether the egg farm business of the prison is still going. Because I notice in the last week or so there has been a shortage of eggs on the island. This is probably a good opportunity to utilise the service of the Corrective Services to provide eggs for the island which will generate income for the prison.

To the Minister of Corrective Services I give my full support to this budget and also to offer my apologies for not visiting our prison regularly. However on my last visit I was able to see all the improvements at the prison to care for our people. Those are my thought and God Bless!

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member and I see the Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Kia Orana Deputy Chairman. I rise to present my thoughts because this is one area that the Government agreed to increase their budget. This is one of the branches of the law and order sector we talked about.

I refer to page 33. I am satisfied because the vision for the agency is a safer Cook Islands and the mission is to successfully rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders back into society through positive changes in their lives with the support of our stakeholders, our families and our wider communities.

When I weigh this on the one hand to provide a safer society, on the other hand to seek ways to be able to rehabilitate these offenders into our communities. The thought is to improve their life so that their one mistake let that not be the judgment for the rest of their lives.

On the milestones as referred to by the Member from Titikaveka, I refer to the report by McDermott & Matapo because this report, is not only about Prison Services. It's about Customs, it's about Immigration. It's a holistic approach to providing a safe community for us. Some of the recommendations relate not to the Prison only but to Customs and to Immigration.

My only concern when I referred to this page, I am wondering why Health was not included in this. The reason being, because as we discussed last week some of the prisoners have mental illness.

This is one thing that deserves special consideration whether these mentally ill inmates either remain in Prison or should they be referred to hospital? That is why I am suggesting that maybe Health has a role to play as we consider and look forward to a safe Cook Islands.

We do know that this report by McDermott & Matapo arose out of an incident. I have read this report. However, there are some additions to this report which the

Opposition sought from the Prime Minister's Office regarding the policies. Those I was not able to obtain. We were assured that it was being looked for.

So, I request to the Minister if you have an entire copy, if you don't mind, we are only looking for the last few pages relating to Policies. We do realise that this is not the only report that was compiled for the Prison. There have been many reviews and reports done before. I know that in one previous report it was chaired by Boy Herman. Later on, I chaired a review committee. The reason I mentioned this is to confirm that I have visited the prison and I have seen inside there.

But the reason why those reports were commissioned wasn't the same reason as the McDermott & Matapo Report. It was because of the living conditions as well as the food provided to the inmates. That's why those previous reports were commissioned. However, when the report was completed, that was it.

In this current report, there is a very strong recommendation right at the end. The recommendation to Government is to form a high level working group to see the implementation of these recommendations. Maybe if you reply Minister, you will elaborate. It must be because as reported, 13 of the recommendations out of 47 have been implemented. Unless the 13 items advice has been implemented, maybe really they don't have an allocation funds. Because my understanding of the recommendations is it can be easily fixed without money injection. Some can be achieved but not too expensive and some expensive and long-term. If it was urgent in 2016 it is urgent still today.

This is what we discussed last week on this situation and I heard the Prime Minister talking about people who do not carry out their jobs properly. Government ends up paying for their mistakes.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you the Leader of the Opposition.

I now see the Honourable Minister, Mac Mokoroa.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Thank you Honourable Chair.

Firstly, I would like to say greetings to the Secretary of the Corrective Services, Tai Joseph. Congratulations on being appointed as the Secretary of this established entity.

Prior to 1995 the Corrective Services was a stand-alone Ministry. After the reform it was combined with Justice along with the Probation Services. Today we are unwinding that process where we are now putting the Ministry on a stand-alone basis. However, this time combined with the Probation Services.

The vision for the Ministry for a safer Cook Islands is fitting for this new Ministry where it needs to address the safety of our general public, the safety of our staff and the safety of our inmates.

I am not sure what is the going ratio now but the ratio in the past is for every five inmates that come out of Prison, four of them will go back into Prison. One of the actual milestones that we would like to see in this House and going forward is that

ratio has dropped from every three inmates that comes out of prison two goes back in as repeated offenders.

As stated by previous speakers the rehabilitation and reintegration of our inmates from Prison into the society is very crucial for the safety of our Cook Islanders.

With those few words I would like to encourage and thank the Corrective Services and thank the new Minister who is well experienced and well versed and has been serving within and outside of those four walls but now in a different boat. There is no better professor or lecturer to tell us the ins and outs of this organisation.

On a national scale it will be important that all the law sector – the Justice, the Police, the Corrective Services and Probation must work together to deliver for a safer Cook Islands.

Our country now is enjoying the increase of stats to \$170,000 a year. We must project that we are a safe peaceful society. So, I wish you a successful term as Secretary of the Corrective Services, Tai Joseph, and wish you well going forward and I support this Budget wholeheartedly.

Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister. I see the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Please allow me this opportunity to complete my thoughts on this allocation.

When I heard the comments made by the Minister Mokoroa, we are on the same level. We want a safer Cook Islands.

Firstly, I want to congratulate this Tai Joseph for his appointment as Secretary of Corrective Service, congratulations. I believe that under your leadership you will look at the recommendations in the McDermott Report the parts that can be implemented and where finance will not be required and to ask your Minister for help where money will be required.

Regarding rehabilitation, I want to share what I have seen. When I used to visit Teina Bishop, I believe he tried to find ways to help the inmates to find a solution that when their term is up they will not be attracted to go back into prison.

I want to correct myself because I am not meaning that they escape but when they are released because during this time when I visited this friend sometimes he is preparing for his students. If this is part of the rehabilitation programme, I think this is a good thing and I don't think there will be any cost involved to run this programme.

The ratio that out of four, three will return inside is not a good number. We want if we achieve the ratio three to two or even out of three just one will return then that is a very good thing for us. Not only for us, but it means that we were successful or the Prison Services was successful in rehabilitating these offenders.

I did not stand to not support this allocation but to support it because if we want a safer Cook Islands then we need to work hard to provide the result. Before I take my chair, I would like to tell the Minister that I know when the people working at the Palmerston hostel finish having their lunch, all the food that is left are taken to the prison.

I am not saying the leftovers in a bad way but the excess food they have for lunch is taken to the prison. So, the community do help our friends in prison and on that note I support the allocation.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Leader of the Opposition. I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate you have the Floor.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman. Greetings to all of us again.

I would like to briefly speak about something the Minister mentioned earlier on. Firstly, our prison in Aitutaki is not in a good state but I do believe like the Court House it needs to be renovated. We cannot house anyone there and our prisoners are sent to Rarotonga.

To support this Ministry or our people that are going into prison, in the 1990's there was this person by the name of Papa Rio. He went to Manuae as a caretaker and the reason was to rebuild the airport there. Some of these inmates were taken to Manuae to work on the airport on Manuae.

Manuae is about 60 miles from Aitutaki and it is difficult for these youth to try and swim back to Aitutaki. But a youth stole a boat and sailed back to Aitutaki. Papa Rio taught these inmates about good living and fishing and growing their own food. He taught them lessons that they never had in their own homes. All their time was spent on stealing from people and wandering around the streets.

This man actually improved the lives of these youth so there was no cost to Government. The business people also travel to Manuae on their small boats to visit them. When these boys see the boat they will tell you that you are coming from the wrong direction.

We noticed that they really want to return to Aitutaki but Papa Rio told them to change their behaviour and these kids spend almost two years on Manuae. These children treated Manuae like their own homes.

When this programme came to an end they returned to Aitutaki and all the business owners employed all of them. Maybe this is one of the ways we can look into. We know today in Aitutaki, all the boats are 200 hp and it only takes two hours to reach Manuae.

There is no expense in this but a good person is needed to lead like a teacher to find ways to correct these kids. Some of these inmates when they get out of jail they find ways to go back to jail and eat steak. We want them to turn into good citizens so this

will become a good reputation for us to keep the tourists returning to our country. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member, I see the Honourable Minister. I want to remind us Minister that the time is up for this appropriation but I will give you a short period of time if you can make your speech short for two minutes.

HON. G. ANGENE: Firstly, thank you Deputy Chairman for giving me this opportunity to express my final thoughts.

I want to say thank you to the Government for giving me the opportunity to be the Minister of this Ministry. To the Minister of Finance and your team for giving us this appropriation, it is not enough but I am sure that I will try for the time being but I will come for more in the future.

To the Secretary of this Department Teokotai Joseph, thank you. The appointment of this person is not because he is from Tupapa but he was employed in the Police and I am sure that he can run this Ministry. We are working closely today to find ways and means for peace to prevail and not trouble.

We are working closely with him to assist our people in the community and for peace. The Minister of Police is saying serve for peace and that is my aim in all my Ministries to bring peace to the people. I refer to the prison as a site for earthquake but we will work together to bring about calm and peace. As mentioned earlier there are four that come out but three ends up returning back inside. The Bible says, angels will rejoice when one soul confesses his sin. The one that returns is a lot of success.

Mr Deputy Chairman and all Members of Parliament thank you very much for supporting this budget allocation of this new Government Ministry. Thank you may peace remain with all of us.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Minister and thank you for your understanding. I now put the question.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,339,941 for Corrective Services stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

Honourable Members we will move on.

MARINE RESOURCES:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$2,372,618 for Marine Resources stands part of the Schedule?

The debate for this Vote Item is limited to one hour. I see the Honourable Member of Matavera and you have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chair for once again giving me this opportunity to speak on this Vote Item.

I am happy to see that there is an increment in this Appropriation and I fully support this. I want to highlight Output 3 in Book 2. This is about Inshore Fisheries Management and Aquaculture. In this particular Output there is an increment.

I want to talk about aquaculture. This is a dream for me and I would like to encourage Government to seriously look into this area. I believe this Green Climate Fund will assist this area.

There is a mud land area in Matavera that has not been planted with taro for well over 12 years. There is another area in *karekare* that also have been idle for a long time. The reason being when water fills this area during strong rainy days there is no outlet and the water remains stagnant in that spot. The question is what we are going to do to make this area productive again. If we cannot plant this area again with taro on the dry patch land will we not consider planting taro in the mud water or swamp taro?

I believe a study can be done on these sections of our island to determine the viability of such plans – planting swamp taro and even farming of eels and prawns for the consumption of our communities. The water does not flow out of these sections of land because the main roads on the seaside are higher than these areas of land. The Honourable Tama Tuavera is aware of this situation because his home is right next door to this wetland sections.

The aim of these landowners is to fill up the wetlands with soil so they will be able to build houses on them. That is the reason I am proposing this to the House to consider aquaculture for these wetlands on our island.

Mr Chairman I have surveyed this section in Matavera and the land area is about 11 acres. If we use this area for the farming of the fish tilapia, prawns, eels and the planting of taro. This will bring in a lot of profits for the country and even the village of Matavera.

I have inquired the administrators of the Green Climate Funds and they told me that we can tap into this funding because of the food security option. Why can't we tap into this funding to assist us in setting this up because for over 11 years this section of land have been sitting idle?

I have also asked the owners of this land and they told me it is not worth planting taro on the land again. I use to plant on Papa Motu Kora's section of land but today I am no longer planting on that land.

My purpose of bringing this to the House is to consider other options that may benefit our people on the land. I spoke to the head of the Green Climate Fund he told me that a good business plan is all that is needed to convince the administrators to supply the funding.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I will interrupt you Honourable Member. I was just wondering how the woman Members of Parliament would like the fish from your swamp. Will they consider this as a delicacy or not.

Parliament is suspended until 3.30 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 3.00 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 3.30 p.m.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All be seated. We will now continue with what we were discussing before we suspended Parliament.

Before we suspended, the Member for Matavera was on the Floor and he was talking about some unusual work that was happening. The Floor is yours Honourable Member.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you very much again for this opportunity Mr Deputy Chairman.

I would like to say again, this is a very important part for our country. Maybe they can look into further helping aqua-culture and marine and the group out there that can help out is – SOPAC. SOPAC provides funding to help areas that I have mentioned.

Government can look into allocating some funds under the Green Climate Fund during the planning stages. I believe if the Government seriously considers this, it will become a pilot project for other programs outside the country.

My time is up but I fully support this Vote Item.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much Member of Parliament. I can now see on the Floor the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you Deputy Chair. To answer your question, no, we women don't like the fish grown in mud water. We like fresh water prawns.

I stand here to give my thoughts on this appropriation. When we look at the Marine's vision it is ensuring excellent stewardship of our marine resources. I looked in the dictionary for the meaning of the word stewardship, it says, it's the job of supervising and taking care of something.

So, what we are doing now is to deliberate on the appropriation and provide the money to the Marine Resources to take care and look after our marine.

I want to talk about Output 2 – The pearl industry support and laboratory services. In Schedule 1 of the Bill, there is no allocation for the Pearl Authority. And to my understanding, the Pearl Authority has been placed under the umbrella of the Marine Resources.

That may not be a bad idea because in the last couple of years, on the Board for the Pearl Authority, was an Honorary Member, the then Secretary of the Marine. The thought behind this is, it would be better to have the Marine as part of the Board.

In the Northern Group Islands, the Fisheries Officers are support officers as well and help the pearl farmers in ensuring their farm is managed well. When I look under the Pearl Industry Support, the budget for the Pearl Authority seems to have been placed under that output.

Under the Staffing Chart at page 144, for pearl support you have Penrhyn, Manihiki and Rakahanga, if they are looking into reviving the pearl industry in Rakahanga, I think this is a good idea. This is something I am looking into. If this is the intention under this Staff Chart in Output 2, that is excellent not only for Manihiki but also for Penrhyn and Rakahanga.

We would like for our Northern Group Islanders to have a broad range of income ability because there are no other income earning ventures for our Northern Group Islanders. This has become a responsibility for Government. I am not sure about Penrhyn but I understand there hasn't been any harvest from out of Rakahanga for many years now and if there has been a harvest maybe it hasn't come through the Pearl Authority.

So, there needs to be other business ventures to help our people in the Northern Group so they can receive an alternate revenue earning. Manihiki is not too bad because farmers are still working on their farms but not as good as in past years. The number of farmers has reduced due to the issues in the lagoon and also the price of the pearl on the world market has also reduced.

However, there still remain on the island of Manihiki some very hard working people in the pearl industry and they continue to farm. There are two lazy people, one on this side of the House and one on that side of the House.

We are allowing an opportunity for the lagoon to restore itself so that it can provide food to the pearls again. I understand this is one issue in Rakahanga, there were too many pearls in the lagoon in those days. So, maybe there weren't enough nutrients in the water so the pearl didn't grow very well.

So, here is my question for the Minister of Marine because the role of Pearl Authority under its Act is to do with marketing. I agree that the advisory arm has been always the Ministry of Marine. Yesterday I spoke about the FSDA.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Member for Ngatangia.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Mr Deputy Chairman.

I am looking in our Book and I could see an allocation for Fisheries and aqua-culture. It is on page 141 if you are looking for it. It states in the Book and also on the internet "Aqua-culture is the breeding, rearing and harvesting of shellfish, fish, plants, algae

and all types of water environment. It is also the world's fastest growing food production sector and is essential to sustain food demand for an increasing population."

This is new money for our economy. This is an income generating opportunity for the private sector, small scale fisheries in the Outer Islands and to develop new local commercial export fisheries. There is a lot of allocation here.

During our time in Penrhyn, I have seen all the large buildings built on Penrhyn and it still remains standing today. I asked the Minister Tapaitau about these building because my view was to make use of these buildings again to benefit our people. He told me his views because in one of these buildings is a laboratory and also a tank to hold water brought in from the ocean and maybe this can benefit us where we can breed fish and shellfish to sell to help our people.

One thing I want to point out is the breeding of tuna. The Minister took us around for a lagoon tour of Penrhyn and the lagoon is like the open ocean. I have seen some documentaries on TV and one documentary I have seen is the Tuna Wranglers. If we are thinking about sharks in the sea, yes there are sharks in the sea.

These people go out and catch wild fish and they bring these tuna back to breed in their cages and they fatten them and sell them to the Japanese. But in case a shark enters the cage then that is why they are called shark wrestlers and they are not allowed to kill the sharks.

When I look at this business it is a multi-million dollar business because I am not only talking about ocean farming I am also looking at aqua farming. I know a meeting was held two weeks ago on conservation and the main issues they were discussing was on aqua culture.

I am happy because maybe this is one of the things to wake our people up in the Northern Group. We hear about the decline in the pearl industry and maybe this is one avenue to encourage our people to seek revenue for them.

We should not forget about Mitiaro and Mauke and Aitutaki because Mitiaro has a lake and I hear that Mauke also have a lake and maybe you can breed Tilapia and other things that you can sell to your people.

I heard that Pukapuka also has a lake when I was there. I am asking Government for further funds although there is a significant amount of funds here for inshore and aqua culture. I think the amount is \$869,781. This is what I am looking to support - aqua culture. This is new money into the country for our people up North. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member, I see the Leader of the Opposition Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you Deputy Chairman.

I rise to complete my views. I refer to the Chart regarding the staff for Output 2. I can see Rakahanga only have one Fisheries Officer and the line below says no funding.

When we move to the left, we can see Manihiki has four Fisheries Officers. Maybe the Minister can look at this because if the pearl industry is going to be revived in Rakahanga someone will be required to help Papa Tu.

The other day we were talking about FSDA and the fact that FSDA was the marketing arm of the financial industry. The Pearl Authority is supposed to be the marketing arm for the black pearl industry but over the last ten or more years the condition in the lagoon played a huge impact on the condition of the pearl shells in Manihiki.

Numbers coming out of Tahiti was also another factor and so the prices for black pearls from farmers dropped, whereas before, we were earning some revenue, good revenue from black pearls now like the FSDA with the financial industry, it has been on the decline.

There is one part of the Pearl Authority I would like to ask the Minister. In the Pearl Authority there is a pearl exchange. The pearl exchange was set up largely to help the farmers. When a pearl farmer harvest his pearls, he bring the harvest to the Pearl Authority. And they grade the pearl parcel and they give an estimate of the cost per unit and they pay your funds.

The farmer goes back to Manihiki and start the production of pearl again. Before that, farmers had to do their own marketing and selling and therefore it was not well organised.

These farmers asked me to ask the Government whether the Pearl exchange will remain under Marine Resources. I know just recently about three or four weeks ago some farmers harvest their pearls and brought their pearls to the Pearl Authority under the exchange and it was sold and they have got their money. This revenue of course goes to the farmer to improve their farms. So, if you may Minister to clarify this.

Otherwise, I am happy to support this appropriation and I am happy that there is consideration for Rakahanga and also the possibility of another Fisheries Officer for Rakahanga. Never mind we shall support not only for Rakahanga but also for Manihiki and Penrhyn. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, I see the Member Terepai Maoate you have the Floor.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you Mr Chairman and greetings to all of us.

I would like to convey my thanks to the Minister of Marine and his staff for sending two officials to place two floats in our Aitutaki Ocean. This is not enough and we would like to request for more but we give our appreciation for the two.

For the funds allocated to assist our people and the people are asking if these are available again to be distributed. They don't want an oven they want fishing gears.

My thought goes to what Government is proposing to do to help our people. When we listen from the Outer Islands on the radio on the prices of fish selling at Ocean Fresh store we see there is an increase in the prices. Our fishermen are finding it hard to sell their catch. And the fishermen of Aitutaki are finding it hard to supply the demand for fish especially during wet and cold seasons.

For those of you that do not know but this time of the year the catch is low. It is a matter of luck that you catch a good one during this time. I put a recommendation to the Government to consider.

I am talking from experience of the time I spent in Rakahanga. The men are always getting a good catch of the ocean fish. Since there is not many ways to sell the fish they dry it. I am uncertain as to what they do with the dried fish. There have tried to freeze their catch into boxes but the high cost of fuel for running the generators to power this freezing process it did not succeed.

Today the solar power is installed in the Northern Group. The proposal to Government is to consider our fishermen in the Outer Islands especially in the North. To install again the freezing containers to store the fish of the people in the North so that it can be shipped and sold on Rarotonga. Like what is happening in Palmerstone.

However with the solar power being free the Government should not charge our people so they can send their catch to Rarotonga and make a business out of this venture. We should encourage not only the fishing and agriculture also.

I give my full support to this Appropriation for the Outer Islands and Rarotonga. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member and I recognise the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Henry Puna.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Chair, Kia Orana to you and all you staff, all the Honourable Members and our people listening in to our broadcast.

Kia Orana to my people of Manihiki, we are the focus in Parliament at this time. Parliament is talking about our pearls. I do not know what the Member for Matavera is quibbling about his fisheries in the mountains. If you want a fishery, please follow your sister to Manihiki that is where the lagoon and ocean is.

I would like to thank all the Members that have commented on this Vote Item and for your support. I want to make some point of clarification on a few questions raised.

Firstly, on the Cook Islands Pearl Authority, this Member beside me is the Minister for CIPA. However we are talking about Marine Resources which is my portfolio. I will speak honestly and bluntly. CIPA has been a bit of a disappointment and like the Leader of the Opposition is saying, it was setup for marketing purposes of our pearls.

I know they tried many times and met with the pearl farmers on many occasions but nothing concrete ever came out. In fact the only marketing exercise I have seen was

CIPA sponsoring the netball in the Cook Islands. Maybe the girls were supposed to be the black pearls. The Government has taken a policy decision to close down the Cook Islands Pearl Authority.

In money terms we were just wasting money. In fact it was over \$300,000 a year. To answer one of the questions from the Leader of the Opposition, the pearl exchange is being retained, in fact it is being assumed into the Ministry of Marine Resources. The reason is that from the discussions with the pearl farmers that are active now. They speak highly of the pearl exchange and they are very, very complimentary in terms of providing marketing service to the pearl farmers.

I know that the Leader of the Opposition is referring to her and I in this House as the two farmers who are not active anymore. I had no choice, I don't know what her excuse is. But I think we have done the right thing in retaining the pearl exchange and certainly the Secretary of Marine Resources to take that on board.

As of now, arrangements are well in hand to ensure that the pearl exchange continues to operate and function effectively as from the 1st July. And yes, the allocation that had been previously given to CIPA is now given to Marine Resources as part of that shift.

Fisheries Officers, one for Rakahanga and four for Manihiki. This is right, in Rakahanga everybody is a fisheries officer and they are all experts in long line fishing. They don't need to be taught, in fact quite often on Facebook you will see them boasting about catching over 80 yellow fin on one trip. It reminds me of the huge *pipinanue* catch in Tamarua last week. I was waiting for some to show up on our dinner table, yes your bus will be slow to arrive.

For Manihiki I can understand why four officers has been appointed as fisheries officers because they provide assistance and service to the pearl farmers. And yes there are still some active pearl farmers in Manihiki and who knows might happen in the future. Rakahanga did have some pearl shells very, very healthy in their lagoon. But everybody panicked and nothing came of it.

But I think the Leader of the Opposition is correct because there were not enough nutrients in the lagoon to feed the shells. Rakahanga is a much protected lagoon and there was no drainage and so the shell didn't last forever. But let's see what happens in future.

Chair, let me come back to where we are now heading into the future. When we became Government, this country was only earning just over a million dollars in revenue from our fisheries and that's when people were just taking so much fish out of our ocean without paying for it.

In fact, we lost so much fish during that time compared to now. The system then was you pay \$20,000 for an annual license and you can take as much fish as you can out of our ocean. So we can say we were truly ripped off. But now the game has changed.

We are operating based on science. The scientists tell us how much fish we can afford to sustainably sell from our ocean and I want to reassure the people of our country that we are selling way below what we can sustainably sell.

In fact, not even 15 per cent of what we can sell. But guess what, as of now, we are earning \$17 million from what we are selling and the year is almost only half way through. This is how we are sustainably managing our resources. This is what we are compelled to do because of our Marae Moana and this is why international companies are interested in the Cook Islands.

The future of fisheries for our country is looking very, very healthy because while we are still in a good place right now, these companies want to do business with us to give us more returns for our fish, not by us selling them more fish but by building our fish into a brand that is worth really exclusive prices. And all because of the Marae Moana Act that this Honourable House passed.

You see the world knows that we are serious about our commitment to Marae Moana and they love us for it. Just the other week we had a workshop out at Muri Beach Club Hotel with our international friends to see how we can introduce a system in order to build the brand of our tuna. Many of you were there and thank you for your participation but what we will do is build our tuna into such a brand that the world will be craving for it.

We don't have to sell too many. The world will want all of it. We are creating a demand based on our environmental reputation.

So I want to say Mr Chair that our fisheries is in a very good space right now and into the future.

I pay tribute to all those who have headed the Ministries in days gone by and to the current Head of the Ministry, Pamela. Again, another lady taking charge of our Ministry but she has a very strong pedigree having served for over six years with the Forum Fisheries Agency in Honiara. She knows all there is to know about fisheries management and, more importantly, she has cultivated very strong relationships with key fisheries contacts throughout the region.

Just next week one of the Ministers will be chairing the Forum Fisheries Ministers' Meeting in Pohnpei while I will also chair the SPC Conference in Noumea. The topic of conversation for the conference will be about Marae Moana. I tell you what. We've got so much to say about it but it's not hot air. There's some real substance behind it.

So our fisheries is in good hands and is in a good space at this very moment. And I commend all the officials that are employed in this Ministry, both here in Rarotonga and in the Outer Islands.

I also want to thank the European Union for their funding that is going out to all our fishermen here in Rarotonga and to the Outer Islands.

Chair, thank you for the opportunity to make some comments and Honourable Members, thank you so much for your support.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister responsible for Marine Resources.

Honourable Members, I now put the Question. The Question is:

That the sum of \$2,372,618 for Marine Resources stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

OMBUDSMAN:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$330,398 for Ombudsman stands part of the Schedule?

The debate for this Vote Item is limited to five minutes.

Can I have a speaker? I see the Honourable Minister, Mac Mokoroa.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Thank you Honourable Chair. I have been standing for one minute.

Honourable Chair, I am most humbled to present a humble and lovable budget of \$330,398 for this prestigious office of the Ombudsman. Honourable Chair, we have just recently appointed on board a new Ombudsman, Papa Nono Tearea who has been a long-serving Member of the Ministry of Justice to take up this post. By the same token, I would like to thank the outgoing Ombudsman, Papa Tearoa Tin for holding this post for some time.

On a much brighter note, these two are from the Village Nikao and both have served in the public service especially in the law sector before taking up this post. So both brings on board some much needed skill base for this Office.

I would also like to say a big Kia Orana to all the staff of the Ombudsman Office. While the Prime Minister is happy to announce a female Head of Ministry for Marine, I am happy to announce that this office is highly staffed by mainly female staff.

Fortunately, Papa Nono is the only male staff in this Office.

Honourable Chair, our key areas of focus for this Office is to develop a stand-alone case management system which has started this week. This system will capture and store complainant's information, received and initiated by the Ombudsman's Office.

The previous system installed was unreliable and today malfunctions. Further to this, this Office will carry out an educational program for Government Ministries, Island Councils and the general population of the functions of the Office of the Ombudsman.

Over and above this, the Office is trying to improve their investigative functions and reporting requirements as required under different legislations such as – apart from the Ombudsman's Act, the Disability Act, the Official Information Act, Police Act, Conventions of the Right of the Person with a Disability and a newly introduced one which is the Human Rights issue.

Over and above this, the Office is required to maintain a close relationship with colleague's institutions regionally and internationally and I am happy to note that the Ombudsman has just recently returned from spending a week of orientation with the Ombudsman of New Zealand.

It is worthy to note that the current Ombudsman of New Zealand was a former Judge of the High Court of the Cook Islands so both have already built a strong relationship while both were serving for the Ministry of Justice.

Finally Mr Chair, to address and reduce the backlog of cases in terms of investigation, reviewing and reporting which has been resulted by an unreliable case management system in the past will also be put in place.

With those few words I would like to support this appropriation for the Ombudsman's Office.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister.

The five minutes time has been exhausted Honourable Member.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I wish to request if the five minutes can be extended because I understand that five minutes was supposed to be mine.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you. With my permission I will grant you another ten minutes. No, no. I will have to correct myself. It's only five minutes.

Thank you Honourable Member.

HON. T. PUPUKE-BROWNE: Deputy Chairman, I think you are right the first time. I don't think I will spend ten minutes. I stand to support this allocation and the reason for that support is because of the confidence of the new Ombudsman.

I have worked with Nooapii Tearea when he was with the Ministry of Justice and I believe he is confident in carrying out the duties of the Ombudsman. I am also sure that he understands his work in that he has to be fair.

When we look at the staffing resources, his head is the neutral Parliament and I am happy that they have an Ombudsman Bill that is going to come before Parliament hopefully later on this year.

I think and I believe that we should give the new Ombudsman an opportunity to demonstrate to us what he can do. So on that note, I will be the only speaker from the Opposition and we support this allocation.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Honourable Members, I put the Question and the Question is:

That the sum of \$330,398 for the Ombudsman stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

That completes the Ombudsman Vote Item.

PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$758,681 for Parliamentary Services stands part of the Schedule?

The time limit for this Vote Item is ten minutes. I see the Honourable Member for Matavera, you have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you very much Mr Deputy Chairman for the opportunity to speak on this appropriation.

I think I will only take two minutes on this appropriation. Firstly I support this appropriation because it has increased.

And secondly, I have spoken on this subject regarding the Religious Advisory Council. The Prime Minister confirmed that we do not have a Minister for RAC, even though there is a Minister responsible but we not have a Minister for RAC. That is my request to the Government if we can have a Minister for RAC.

The reason why I spoke about RAC under the Parliamentary Vote Item is that when we convey our greetings to our people, we always make mention of our traditional leaders, the different denominations and Government. My request therefore to Government and the Prime Minister is if you could consider having a Minister for the RAC. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member and I see the Leader of the Opposition you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE-BROWNE: Thank you Deputy Chairman.

I will not take long but I rise to speak on this allocation. When I look at the vision of the Parliament the first one says “a modern” so I am happy with the extra \$300,000 that the Minister mentioned earlier because the meaning is that the building will be renovated to be a little bit more modern.

I have only one request because I am looking at the staff at Parliament and I want you to modernise their pay because we can see especially during the busy time like the two weeks we have come through. We should feel sorry for them because while

Parliament finish at 10.30 p.m. and we all leave to go home, they stay on to work until 2.00 am the next morning.

So, I would like to make a humble request to the Minister of Finance, if there is any money hidden under the mattress please consider the staff of Parliament.

We in the Opposition support this allocation.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Leader of the Opposition. I see the Minister responsible for Parliament.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you Mr Deputy Chairman.

Firstly, I would like to give my full support to the Vote Item for Parliament. I also want to convey my greetings to Madam Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the Clerk of Parliament and to all the staff members of Parliament.

We all understand the weight of their work during the last couple of days. As previously mentioned by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, the staff worked very hard each day from the beginning of our Parliament sitting until the end and some of you don't get to go home until about 2.00 a.m. the next morning.

I would like to ask maybe the Clerk of Parliament to look for some money in this allocation and pay the staff what they deserve. There is full support by our Honourable Members and I also believe our people can see what they do. Although Parliament doesn't sit often, you still work your normal working hours.

We can see how the money in his Vote Item is distributed, I would like to talk about Parliament Select Committees. We understand that this is an important area especially for our people in the community. It is only right for the Bills to be taken to our people especially to those in the Outer Islands so you can understand what the Bill is about.

I am happy to see the increase in this Vote Item and as mentioned when we travel for consultation work you were happy to receive the parliament bill that we brought to your island.

So, I thank you for this opportunity to present this to you on what has been approved for the Parliament. I believe this is sufficient for this House and I thank Government for the allocation for parliament and the Opposition for supporting it. Thank you very much.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister.

Honourable Members I am going to put the question.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$758,681 for Parliamentary Services stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

POLICE:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$5,375,199 for Police stands part of the Schedule?

The debate for this Vote Item is limited to one and half hours. I see the Honourable Member for Matavera.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Chairman for this opportunity to speak on this Vote Item. The good thing about this Vote Item is the allocation for the personnel, the increase in the payment of the staff of the police department. I thank the Minister in Charge and the Minister of Finance for this appropriation.

There is an increase of \$386,273 for personnel. There is also an increase of \$80,000 for operations. So, the total amount appropriated for personnel is \$3,518,527. This is just to pay all the staff of Police. There is also an allocation to provide the services of \$541,724 and these have been increased from the previous year. I also believe that this will pay and help those in the Outer Islands.

There should be sufficient funds to assist the police service in all our Outer Islands. The most comforting thing I see here is the increase to the pay of our Police force. We have heard in past years the many staff of this entity leaving the service. I have asked last year for the pay of the police to be increased. Today we can see this happening.

I look at those in the Police force that have served for many long years for example John Strickland from Matavera and Solomona Tuaati from Ngatangiia and Areumu and Aka from Nikao. They have been in the police service for well over 20 years.

Maybe these men can be honoured in the structure of the police and I note that the position of Deputy Commissioner is yet to be filled and the Superintendent position. I suggest to the Minister to consider assigning these senior officers to senior positions in the service. Maybe one of these men can be the Deputy Commissioner and it will not be long they may be taking their retirement option. I ask the Minister of Police to reward these men before they retire.

We are always complaining the work our police is doing. How are they to carry out their duties if they are not being paid appropriately? I commend the police for the good work they are doing in the monitoring of our student drivers. They have a programme targeting the youth called, Blue Light. This program targets the age group from 15 to 18 years. The program teach the youth, how to use the roads properly and how to drive with care. There is funding to assist this youth programs.

We need to look at our police serving our Outer Islands. There are people in the Outer Islands who have worked for the police for 40 years and are still in the service in the Pa Enuu. For example our police on the island of Manihiki is the longest

serving police in the Cook Islands. Maybe some kind of reward should be considered for these long serving men.

I humbly ask the Commissioner and the Minister of Police to reward these people who have served in the Police force for a very, very long time.

There are some good people who have served as policemen but now have moved on to other Government agencies. Those are my views on the budget allocation of the Police and I fully support it. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member, and I admire your acknowledgement of the menfolks in the Police Department. That means you and I are not gender bias.

I see the Minister Rose Brown.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Kia Orana again, to all Honourable Members. Kia Orana to the Minister of Police, Commissioner Maara Tetava and all your staff.

I stand for my island of Enuamanu to fully support this appropriation before the House. There has been some help given to Enuamanu and this came about by consultation with the island leaders.

The first issue was the wild pigs. I thank the Commissioner for assisting the people of Atiu with this issue. This was a great help to the island. I also convey the appreciation of Nga-Pu-Toru because the Member for Mauke is in the Chair and cannot speak on the Vote Items. So, it rest on me to speak for all of Nga-Pu-Toru.

This program which was conducted on Atiu, brought youth participants from Mauke, and Mitiaro to Atiu for a training course for young people. I am not sure, if you have seen it on the internet as to what took place. It was well supported by everyone and it was a joyous occasion and we all felt good about it, both the parents and the students themselves.

This was a new experience for our youth. I would like to say thank you to the Police because out of this two youth from Atiu, one was identified to be an Honorary Constables to assist the Police in Atiu. Thank you very much for this. I trust this will be the same for other islands because when we travelled to Mitiaro and Mauke, the people gave their words of thanks for starting this program outside of Rarotonga. We trust this is not the first and last, this will continue to develop and improve our youth.

This is what we were told as to what the youths from Mitiaro did when they returned home. They went to ask for the responsibilities of the Police to be given to them. This is the result of this workshop for our youth on Atiu.

Thank you, for awarding medals for our elders who have served our people. On Atiu the Pastor, Michael Akava, has served a long time in the police force before he became a Pastor. Please accept the words of appreciation from the people of Atiu, and Nga-Pu-Toru. The Minister is from Atiu and he cannot help but agree with the requests.

On top of that, the Commissioner of Police is also from Atiu and Nga-Pu-Toru. This is our thoughts for the future and we look forward to your future support.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister. I see the Honourable Member from Ngatangiia, Tamaiva Tuavera.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Chairman. Greetings to all of us in the Name of our Lord. We are all busy working, these past few days.

I would like to present my thoughts on this allocation for the Police. I see a significant increase for this Vote Item this year. I am sure our Police are smiling for this welcomed increase.

I also support the notion that of those Police that have left the force, maybe through this increase there will be an opportunity for them to come back. I am asking the Commissioner to seriously consider this situation. When those who have left the force know there is an increase in the budget and they realise the salary has been increased, they may want to return to work again in the police force.

When I consider the new recruits in the Police force, there are 117 altogether compared to the number of islands in our country. I am pleased I was able to meet all the Police on the islands that the Select Committee visited. When you look at these Police, they have served a long time on their islands. I am sure some of them do not want to leave their island.

When I consider the allocation in this budget, there is \$3.5 million for the Police personnel. Maybe there will be an increase in the salary level for the new recruit because we do know there is a salary banding for this group.

There were two young people that asked me, Captain Tama - if we join the Police, how much money will we be paid? I told them I wasn't quite sure, but I am certain that there will be an increase.

So, I asked them are you joining for the money or for the protection of our people. One said to me for both and one said for the money. I thought, never mind. This is the thoughts of young people when they start employment but what warms my heart is they will be applying to be in the Police force.

I am heartened when I look at this allocation for a new PABX system for the Police of \$70,000. I think they are using this today. I know this is a big support for the Police as they conduct the Search and Rescue.

I see there's an allocation for the Search and Rescue Division. I think about \$50,000 is allocated. I am happy about the Search and Rescue but I am confused as to how come tourists/visitors are getting lost in the mountains. Maybe somebody has moved the sign post and they have made the wrong turn. Still sometimes accidents do happen. Maybe they have strained their ankle and they need to be rescued.

I am looking at the vehicles used by the Police today. I consider these vehicles are appropriate for them but I have sympathy for some of them, who cannot fit in these small vehicles. I am encouraged by the words of the Prime Minister earlier on diets. This made us ashamed of our eating before.

We consider this, to be right, that some of the Police officers should slim down because some of them are on the front line. Then how can they chase offenders. I know the Minister Mac Mokoroa knows that you should be fit if you are a Police.

I touch base on the idea of night patrols at night clubs. I don't visit night clubs frequently but sometimes I do visit to observe what is happening in our night clubs. I have sympathy for our Policewomen because they are the ones that go in when there is trouble at night clubs because they do make an impact on the offenders.

One time I asked the Policeman to count the number of people in the night club and asked him, if there was a law for the number of occupancy in the night club. He answered, yes, there is a law on the limitation of numbers in the night club. So, I suggested to him to close it down. But they couldn't close it straight away. They had to wait for the decision of the Commissioner to close it.

So, let that be a warning to all night club owners or bar owners. I am hoping the Police Commissioner is listening in on his Budget and this is one area that he must address with all the Police Officers.

We know there are many youth that are taken to Court for fighting and making troubles in the night clubs. These troubles started in the night clubs and then these night club owners, wash their hands of these cases, push them out the door and forget about them. Now, I am asking the Commissioner who is responsible?

I support this appropriation. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Member of Teimurimotia, Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you Deputy Chair. I would like to focus on Output 2 on agency crime prevention. On this issue I would like to extend my thanks to the community police of Takitumu, especially in Titikaveka and all the Policemen in Vaka Takitumu carrying out their work especially those in Titikaveka.

I am supporting this responsibility for Police for preventing crime in our community. Sure, there are paid Policemen conducting their responsibilities but also my acknowledgment of the community Police who conducted crime prevention until the early hours of the morning without pay.

I know that maybe the support given to them is provision of maybe vehicles for chasing offenders on the road. I ask for this support to continue towards our community Police because I note that they are not only conducting their work in Titikaveka but also reaching the village of Ngatangiaa.

When I look at the appropriation under introduction, part of their responsibilities is community support. When I look at this I don't see an allocation for our Policemen responsible for the Police dog. This responsibility is given to a son of ours from Teimurimotia and I would like to ask the Minister if there is an appropriation for the Police dog and what help does the Ministry give to this person who is doing this work.

The many times I have been to the airport, I have not seen the Police dog there. Maybe it is because we have only one dog and the dog has to perform many tasks elsewhere. Maybe the Police is thinking of bringing in another Police dog to help with the work of this dog. I will say like human beings the dog will get tired too. Those are my thoughts on this.

Now, I am looking at the increase in the Agency Appropriation for Crimes and Operations I am happy with this increase because we the community are required to help the Police. We are to work together with the Police especially in the area of drugs that is coming into our country. We do not know how bad the situation is and why they cannot resolve these problems.

Maybe there are not enough resources and maybe it's the knowledge of the Police. We in the community have a part to help the Police. If you know what is happening in your village you must help the Police and let them know what is happening. We should not ignore what is happening because our youth may get involved into these bad things. The parents and leaders must help the Police in looking after our village and people.

I am also looking at the Takitumu Young Riders Programme, if this can be explained to the House, as to what this programme is about; the name sounds good.

My last comment is on the achievements and milestones of the Police, on the part where it says resolution of arson investigations. The people today are still asking if there is any report on the fires that was started by arsons and who is responsible for starting these fires.

I mention this because I know of two houses that were burnt down in our village in the past but we have not seen any report regarding those fires. Maybe there is a reason for this and with the increase in the salaries of the Police force, it will improve the standard of their work.

Deputy Chairman, my people of Teimurimotia, our Volunteer Police, our two Community Police Officers, and the Aronga Mana we give our support for this appropriation for the Police. This is our support to help the Police in trying to solve the problems in our village and in Takitumu and all of Rarotonga.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Member for Amuri/Ureia on the Floor.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you Mr Deputy Chairman, greetings to all of us this afternoon.

I wish to comment on the appropriation for the Police. I just want to comment on some problems and I leave the part of the accounts to the Member for Matavera.

I give my support for the increase in the appropriation for the Police as mentioned by the Member for Matavera and others. Some members of the Police have also complained to me about their salaries and this has been a long time issue, so I would like to thank Government for providing this increase.

I want to talk about the Police on our island of Aitutaki. We met with the Island Council to discuss about the problem that occurs during the weekends when the youth go out to the clubs. The question was asked to the Police as to what they can do to the after hour's entertainment which gets out of hand. The youth are also travelling on their motor bikes through the village and they are making a lot of noise and travelling at a fast speed.

The Head of the Police said they do not have enough money or resources to help them. They can only fill their vehicle and run it for one or two times a night. If they travel from town to the Golf Club, it is hard for them to be able to go back for a second time.

Many of the youths involved are still going to school and the college Principal brought this matter to the meeting. The Police suggested that the school children are the responsibility of the parents and the ones who are of age to go clubbing is the responsibility of the Police.

The problem these days is that our young people have mobile phones and when the Police vehicle is on the road, the youth text their friends to tell them of the whereabouts of the Police on the road and for them to be on the lookout.

How can the Police staff do their job properly if these youth are already ahead planning their movements for their afterhours programme. I ask the Minister and the Commissioner and the Police staff to please look into this problem. I believe that these are some of the problems that are happening in the Outer Islands and if we can look into this and help our people in the Outer Islands.

One other point I want to raise is our youth taking all unlawful substance and breaking the law. I understand that this is already happening in Rarotonga and has now reached Aitutaki. I do not know how we can solve this problem but I believe the Police has a program that deals with this issue. I encourage the police to continue with the program.

I encourage the entities of Government to work together to fight against this problem. I strongly support this Appropriation although it is not enough but a great start.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member and now I see the Leader of the Opposition and you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you, Deputy Chairman. I stand to share my thoughts on this allocation. I support the previous comments on the increase of the personnel allocation.

I read the Public Accounts Committees report for the 16 June 2017. I believe this is the first report from this committee. They reviewed three main issues. I only want to bring to us one of this issues. In their recommendation regarding a police corrupt conduct it was assumed that the salary was not appropriate. This was regarding some money in the police safe that was missing or stolen by this junior police officer.

I am sure the Deputy Chairman can remember this investigation because he was a committee member on this Public Accounts Committee. The thinking behind this recommendation was that the wage paid to these new recruits of only \$14,000 is the problem.

The Public Accounts Select Committee of 2017 recommended a minimum of \$21,000 as a starting salary for the new recruits to the Police force. Through their investigation they concluded that the money was stolen because of the low pay of the new police officer. I believe with this increase in this Appropriation that you take on board the recommendations of the Parliament Public Accounts Committee.

There are other recommendations in this report and if you don't have a copy ask the Deputy Speaker for a copy.

My second thought is in regards to the visit about two weeks ago by the Government of New Zealand ministerial delegation to Aitutaki. The Opposition was given an opportunity to meet the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Police for New Zealand. I was happy with our meeting because they told us of what they can do to help our police – training, and capacity building, which we have to ask for it.

In my discussion with the Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand he also informed me that this was the same things that he discussed with the Minister of Police. I think we should seek their assistance so that our people will not complain about the investigations that does not get off the ground. I think one of our objectives as I am looking at your vision which says, to beat crime soundly.

I believe what we are attempting is to instill confidence in our police force. We want to have faith in our police force and not to doubt their services. If one of the allocations in this budget is to work to achieve that; then I support this Appropriation. I am looking at table 24.4, Capital Funding, the allocation here is \$70,000 but that is for the PABX system.

Not so long ago, I went to the Police office and noticed the office space is very small. Even in this small office space there are two office tables in it, beside the cabinets for their files. One thing I cannot forget is the heat in that office, maybe the air condition does not work and it is rusted. I told the Police that the offices in the building should be installed with air conditions. The windows cannot be opened and they have no choice but to sit in this hot room.

I ask the Minister to look at this area, the Police Office building and how the conditions of the offices can be improved.

Finally, I want to make a request for the policeman in Rakahanga. He does not have an office and no stationery, no typewriter and no motorbike and laptop. I am not too concern about the motorbike because he can walk around the island as the distances are short and close by.

So, Mr Minister I am asking for the Rakahanga Policeman, a laptop and some stationery - please.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

And before we proceed, I want to make an announcement to all Honourable Members, that I am proud to be part of the Public Accounts Committee and I am happy to announce that there are seven reports of that Committee and you can find it on the Parliament website.

Thank you very much Honourable Members. I see the Honourable Member from Pukapuka/Nassau.

MR T. ELIKANA: Thank you Mr Deputy Chairman.

I stand here to fully support the appropriation for the Police Department. We understand they have been requesting for such an appropriation. This year's allocation is very suited to what the theme is for this appropriation, the Appropriation of Love.

I would like to say thank you, to the Minister of Finance for the achievements in his appropriation for the Ministry of Police and to fore warn the Minister of Finance that this is not enough. Maybe in the next Budget year, there will be an increase for personnel in the Ministry of Police. We have heard comments from the Members on the appropriation for our Police.

I was once a Policeman and I worked to protect and serve our country and this is also the experience of our Minister of Police. There are many who started their public service life as Policemen but change their jobs but continue to work to serve our country. I would like to show my appreciation to those who had the patience and served with courage in protecting our community and the country.

To the Commissioner of Police, your officers and all those working in this Ministry I would like to say thank you to you all. In spite of any negative remarks or comments, you must have a lot of patience, the main thing is the safety of our people as they live in our nation, not only them but also extends to visitors visiting our paradise.

These are the main reasons I stood up, and to show my gratitude in the allocation for the Ministry of Police. One major area I would like to speak on is regarding my islands of Pukapuka and Nassau. As expressed by our Mayor and Island Council, their delight of an event that took place a few months ago. The Commissioner allowed for two Honorary Constables to be sworn in for those two islands, one for Nassau and one for Pukapuka.

The comforting news is that since this two took up the post, there was a decrease in our children driving without licences on the road, and parents riding bikes with their children sitting in front of them. Before this, Nassau never had a policeman and only Pukapuka had the Honorary Constable Tutau Punga to help the policemen, Brian Opo.

I have had discussions with the Commissioner of Police and he is aware of the plans set for my islands in the near future. Only he and I know about this and for you not to know. The Members from the Pa Enua might jump in and spoil our plans. So, thank you very much for this appropriation for the Ministry of Police.

I would like to speak about people making comments on Facebook. Let us be careful as to what we put there, that it is not just rumours. Like what I said before, that I feel sorry for these young policemen serving and protecting our country but facts are being twisted so as to discourage them from working in the police force.

I feel sorry for our young policemen as there are some rumours being told about them. Maybe this is holding many back from wanting to become policemen. If you have seen it with your own eyes, then you can talk about it. If you have not seen it with your own eyes then do not talk about it or make up stories because if you are required to enter Court; the Judge will not believe you. Your stories are all made up. Then you are damaging the reputation of that particular Police officer because your stories are false.

Before I sit down Mr Deputy Chairman, I am very happy with this big increase in the appropriation for our Police Department. We are aware in the last few days a post on Facebook that there are eight new recruits in training. 60 per cent of the new recruits are from Pukapuka. They have made the right decision to join the Police Force as there is an increase of \$20,000 per year for recruits.

I see that all of you understand that we are very bright people. Greetings and Kia Orana.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

Parliament is suspended until 7.00 p.m. this evening.

Sitting suspended at 5.55 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 7.00 p.m.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please be seated Honourable Members.

Parliament is resumed in the Committee of Supply.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: The Question is that:

The sum of \$5,375,199 for Police stands part of the Schedule?

I believe the Honourable Minister had the Floor. I see the Honourable Minister George Angene, you have the Floor.

HON. G. ANGENE: Kia Orana Madam Chairman. I rise to give my support for the appropriation of the Ministry of Police. Before I continue on that, can I say something concerning this appropriation?

I have been associated with this department for maybe 24 years and over. I used to really hate this department back in those days but when I became a Christian, things changed. I understood that this is one of the most important departments of our country. However, one area that I do not like about this department is the prison where our young people is put into. They hate the Police but I am encouraging them to be good young people.

Madam Chair, I would like to bring to the House the concerns of the many wandering dogs on our roads. Sometimes these wandering dogs attack people. I am not only talking about other people's dogs but also the dogs in my home.

I would like to ask the Minister of Police to look at ways to tighten our laws to reduce the number of dogs on our island. I want to say that the owner of the dog should be the one to be charged. But we will wait for the law that the Minister of Police will put in place in the future regarding dogs. A lot of people have visited me in my home to express their concern about wandering dogs on the road and chasing them. So I would like to encourage our people to visit the Department of Police if you have issues with wandering dogs.

I am very happy with the allocation for the Police because in 2013, I asked the Commissioner of Police at the time to prepare a budget and increase the Vote Item for Police. When I went through their Vote Item, I did not see the particular area, I requested for the Commissioner of Police to insert in their budget.

During that time, I saw the need to put in the Police budget, what I call the dangerous allowance. The reason for this is because I have seen Police officers working late at night to monitor traffic and also attend to problems at the night clubs. If an incident arises, where someone attack a policeman while on duty, there is money available to help the officer involved.

The Bible says, *"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise because this is a world of temptation"*. I have chosen this verse for us and again it says, *"...be careful because this is a world of temptation"*. The Lord also says, *"...be prepared"*, because there will be a time when a dog attacks you, and you are prepared to face the dog.

That's the reason the verse says, *"Be prepared"*. Two tourists came to see me because they thought the dog that attacked them was mine. They swore at me and my wife. This is the reason I am asking the Minister of Police to give some teeth to the legislation regarding dogs. Minister, I am not only talking about other people's dogs but mine as well in my home.

I would like to stress Madam Chair that the owner of the dog should be prosecuted. I may be harsh on this issue but I want to protect our children, parents and everyone.

One other issue that I would like to raise with the Minister of Police; if he could ask the media person at the Police to stop posting on Facebook about our problems in the country. It is not a good image for our country when tourists read them. What he is doing is stopping the tourists from coming to our country because of what they read on Facebook. This means we lose the opportunity to earn the benefit from our tourists.

These are my thoughts but the last say, rest on the Minister of Police. I will end here and I fully support the appropriation for the Police. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, I see the Minister Vaine Mokoroa.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Thank you, Madam Chair and Kia Orana to all of us this evening.

Madam Chairman, I would like to briefly do a flash back before commenting on this Vote Item.

Back in 2004 our total national budget was sitting on \$82 million today it sits on \$276 million. This figure shows that it has risen fourfold and this is an increase of 194 million dollars to date and a 70% increase over a period of 15 years.

Today, I am most happy to support this appropriation for the Police Service, a handsome budget of \$5,173,416. This is an increase that is happily supported by both sides of the House to which I am truly humbled and thankful.

Kia Orana to the Commissioner of Police and to the Honourable Vaitoti's good friends, John Strickland, Solo, Aka and Areumu. Of these five members the last two are the best because they are both from Nikao. Both were my working mates and my boss while I was in the Police. I would also like to highlight that these are the most Senior Executive Officers within the Police Force. They are also the most experienced in all branches within the Police. I mean all these names that I mentioned above.

I take on board Honourable Tupa your comment for vacant senior post to be filled before these four retires. I am very happy for the initiatives that all Honourable Members from the Opposition are demanding a pay rise for the Officers of the law.

Honourable Chair, this national budget as highlighted is targeted for those Ministries within the law sector such as the Ministry of Justice, Police, Corrective Services and Probation. One of the emphases and the basis of that increment is to address the pay skill of staff within each of these Ministries. I have also been assured by the above Senior Police Officers that the salaries for junior police officers have been adjusted accordingly.

Honourable Chair, last year in this House I highlighted that in this financial year, *Te Kukupa* will be taken on the dry dock with a 150 thousand budget allocated last year. I am happy to announce that this programme is complete and *Te Kukupa* is in Vanuatu on a joint exercise and will soon be making their way home.

I am happy to announce that this program is now completed and Te Kupapa is currently in Vanuatu on a joint exercise and will soon be making their way home.

Honourable Chair I am also pleased to announce that in 2022 a new patrol boat will replace this one. This will be a more state of the art patrol boat funded and supported by the Australian and New Zealand Governments.

Over and above this state of the art new Te Kukupa is the plan to upgrade the current police building. Therefore, all the issues that we heard from the Leader of the Opposition regarding the communication, equipment's, workstations, stationeries, and printers will be addressed, once the contracts are advertised and awarded to the successful bidder.

Honourable Chair drugs and transnational crime are the ongoing trend at the regional and international level. Whilst in the pass we have experienced arson cases and the never ending fatal accidents. I am comforted by the fact that there was an arrest made for some of the arson cases. If my information is correct one of the offending party is a juvenile and his case is yet to be dealt with.

Honourable Chair like our tourism figures our number of vehicles arriving on the island are also increasing and creating a problematic area for our police force. Whilst alcohol and speeding are the main causes of our fatal accidents our police patrol on the road will help minimise these occurrences.

Our recent joint ministerial forum held in Aitutaki with the New Zealand Minister of Police has been very fruitful. The Minister of Police, Stuart Nash was highly briefed by the New Zealand police, he was also happy to assist the Cook Islands Government as well as the Cook Islands police.

Coming back to our villages, let me thank our community police officers as well as those voluntary police officers that are serving our people as well as our community. I acknowledge that the islands of Atiu, Pukapuka have received their Honourary Constables, whilst the Honourary Constables for Mangaia and Mauke are yet to be confirmed.

As for the dog man I am happy to advice that he is located in the good village of Nikao this will enable him to travel to and from the airport or the wharf to undertake their work. We have two dogs that service our boarder.

Honourable Chair the onus of minimising youth at risk is for parents to take a much more proactive role, to ensure that their own children are able to take care of themselves and as well as of their friends. I apologise to the Honourable Member Selina Matenga Napa on the Takitumu young riders I am afraid as I am not too familiar with this proposal but I am only too familiar with the shooting range because that range is also located here in Nikao.

My understanding was this shooting range was supposed to be for the Te-au-o-Tonga young riders group but it has been converted into a shooting range for our police officers for their firearms training.

To conclude, I take note of the complaint that was lodge by the Honourable Minister George Angene on the control of wandering dogs in our community. I too had similar complaints in the village of Nikao and I am only too happy to ask all those with the complaint about dogs to come into the station and discuss with Papa Mautara. Where to pick up these wandering dogs and what is the right approach to sort out these wandering dogs.

With those final words I would like to reiterate and support this budget appropriation and thank you very much.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much Honourable Minister. I will now put the Question.

The Question is:

That sum of \$5,375,199 for Police stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

We will now go to the Question.

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$2,721,886 for the Prime Minister's office stands part of the Schedule?

Thank you and I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you Madam Chair for giving me this opportunity to speak on this Appropriation.

Madam Chair, I see an increase in this allocation. When I look at the allocation for personnel and salaries this has increased by \$105,595 and this amount to a total appropriation of \$1,393,400. On the operation allocation this has increased to \$269,875 and the total for operation is \$396,447.

I fully support this allocation especially when you consider the increase in the salaries of the Members of Parliament because when you look at this allocation there still remains the amount of \$243,000 under SRF.

I believe Madam Speaker that this amount should be increased. I have made my recommendations and would like to present it in parliament. I consider the Northern Group islands allocation to help the Members of Parliament in assisting their people to be in the vicinity of \$40,000.

When we come back to the Southern Group the amount of \$35,000 is sufficient to assist the Members of Parliament. And for the Members of Parliament on Rarotonga

the amount of \$30,000 is plenty. I did not look at Rarotonga only because I see more benefit for the Northern and Southern Group islands.

The difficulties in operations are the reason that Rarotonga is considered first before the Outer Islands. This is my recommendation Madam Chair to assist our people in the North, South and Rarotonga.

When you consider the work under the Prime Minister's office, I am happy with the vision set by this office – “A well governed, resilient and secure Cook Islands”. I say that this vision of this office is appropriate for this allocation.

The most important consideration here is our people in the Outer Islands. That is the reason I make this recommendations.

When we refer to the Green Climate Fund this office is also responsible for this fund. When we look at this program known as PEARL – the Pa Enea Action for Resilient Livelihood. I believe that this will serve to help our people. This has been allocated under this office. I see this as a significant amount for us here in the Cook Islands under the Green Climate Fund. And I would like to elaborate on what the Prime Minister said regarding solar power.

We have heard the Northern Group is completed and in the Southern Group only one more island before it's fully completed. That is why I bring this to the Floor and how we can help our people.

To conclude my views, Madam Chair, even though my time is not up, firstly I would like to commend the Minister George Angene. Secondly, I would like to commend our Prime Minister because when you drive around Rarotonga at night you would have noticed, that Matavera was the only village with no coloured lights. Yes, it's all in the appropriation. That is why I give my thanks to the two Ministers because I have sought help from them.

I like what has been written in the newspaper because this confirms that coloured lights for Matavera will be put up, as per the Budget of Love.

I want to let my people of Matavera know, that I have sought help from these two Ministers to get our coloured lights and I thank them because we are getting it. Thank you to the two Ministers. I have received written confirmation for our coloured lights in Matavera.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you and I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: Good evening Madam Chair. You probably have noticed that our male Members are happy sitting in the House today. I smiled because I can see my two male colleagues are moving forward and they are forgetting they have a sister colleague with them.

Anyway, I will come back to the Vote Item for OPM. I have picked two points to focus my thoughts on.

When I look at Cabinet Services for the funds allocated for community support of \$100,000. In the past when this is appropriated, we, the Opposition Members are not given the opportunity to utilise this fund. When a Member seek assistance from this fund, we are advised that the fund is exhausted. I have been advised that this fund is at the discretion of the Cabinet Ministers. If a MP need assistance from this fund they have to make a written application to the Cabinet.

I am not certain why this is labelled as a Community Support Fund when only a limited number of people are able to access and utilise it. However, as mentioned earlier, there is this Social Responsibility Fund, of \$343,000. I am not sure what this administered payment is, maybe it is the Community Support Fund and Social Responsibility Fund put together.

Under the Social Responsibility Fund, we the Members of Parliament are able to obtain funding for our constituency. However, in some cases, especially during the time of the Constitution Celebrations, when we make a request for the monthly entitlements, we are always advised that this is exhausted. My request to the Prime Minister, if you are announcing on the funding available to the Government Members, Please do likewise for us in the Opposition or else we will wait for another month before submitting our requests.

My last thoughts are on Output 6 – Emergency Management Cook Islands. I see an increase in this output. I am happy for this because I have participated at two workshops run by the Emergency Cook Islands. A workshop on policy and planning for emergencies operation for all the islands and the Vaka on Rarotonga. The second workshop was the plan for your village. I was happy to see the people that attended the workshop because this is their area when it comes to emergency in the villages. They are just the perfect people for this, in particular the Red Cross and so forth.

One area that I really wanted to see in the appropriation for Emergency Cook Islands is the tree trimming exercise in the villages, just before the cyclone season. In the past, I always visit the Ministries to seek funding for our tree trimming in Titikaveka. When you go to Titikaveka, you will see some tall and huge trees along the roadside. Our village is quite big and it has always been difficult for us to seek for the right Ministry to help us with our tree trimming programme.

When you call on ICI as well as the Ministry of Agriculture there is no assistance available and the Emergency body, which I believe is the right Ministry to deal with tree trimming. Tree trimming is not their responsibility.

I must say that I am grateful to the ex-Minister of ICI, Papa Teariki Heather as well as the Government of the time for allocating some money – I think it was about \$30,000 – to assist with the tree trimming in the villages. The very little amount that we are given in our Social Responsibility Fund, makes it hard to this kind of work, unless you are doing it, bit by bit each year.

I will be rising again later on but I support this allocation.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member, and I see the Honourable Member from Nukuroa.

MR T. TANGATAPOTO: Greetings Madam Chair and everyone in the House this evening.

I want to raise three issues under the Vote Item for the Office of the Prime Minister. Firstly, is regarding the Island Government. When I became the Executive Officer for Mitiaro in 2016, I noticed that all the Council members on the island were all public servants working for the Government. I believe this is not quite right because I feel that when individuals are elected to run the island, they should not be working like normal staff members.

My plan during those days were to try and increasing their annual salary to \$12,000, then they stay home and don't have to sign the book at 8am and 4pm. But this did not happen as the personnel allocation was not enough.

I want to ask the Prime Minister and the Chief of Staff of the Office of the Prime Minister, for this to happen this year and maybe next year. I want the Mayor for Mitiaro plus the Councils to be a stand-alone person and not a public servant. I think that will be a good thing and they have been elected by our people and they should have a different office as they are not just ordinary people.

This cannot happen unless their salaries can be increased. I also believe that it is not right that you are the boss and your worker gets more pay than you. I remember when I became an Executive Officer, I am responsible to the Mayor but I get 40 thousand dollars and he gets 8 thousand dollars. If I was that Mayor I will not waste my time but I will just check my account each fortnight.

I now wish to talk about the SRF. I have already thought about this funding as mentioned by the Member for Matavera. After the first year on becoming a Member of Parliament, I think I can do more work than relying on the Island Government funds. We know in the administration of the Island Government there are certain appropriations that you cannot just spend. I know that the allocation for Members of Parliament of ten thousand dollars is small and that is my opinion because of the work that I have done from the amount that I was given.

I have not considered an amount but the figures given by the Member for Matavera I support the amount of 35 thousand dollars for the Southern Group islands.

I now want to speak on the Government Representative of the Outer Islands. In the past this is a highly regarded position on the island; what I see now is that there is no more respect for this position. Maybe his work load has been reduced but I want to talk about the wages that he is being paid.

I am disappointed when I saw the allocation for Mitiaro and there are three people working and they are responsible to the Ministries in Rarotonga. I want to speak on the officer for Environment. I was surprised when I saw the high salary that is being paid to this person as there is no justification for the amount of work that he does on the island. I hope the Minister can help me on this issue as I am not happy that he is getting more money than our Government Representative.

The Government Representative are under the control of the Prime Minister maybe he will feel sorry for these people and increase their pay. I think this is enough thank you Madam Chairman.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Before I give the Floor to you Honourable Member, I just want to recognise the Chief of Staff from the Prime Minister's Office and Valentino Wichman.

You should be at home having a lovely dinner, than Sitting in Parliament but we are happy to see you here tonight, making a special effort to be here.

I now give the Floor to the Honourable Patrick Arioka.

MR P. ARIOKA: Thank you, Madam Chairman. First of all, Kia Orana to you and welcome home. We can see that you are looking so vibrant on the Chair, and it shows that you have been looking forward to come back home.

Kia Orana, to all of us in the House in the good Name of our Lord. Kia Orana, to our people listening in and watching our livestream. Greetings, also to my constituency and to all who are working for the event that is planned for tomorrow, the investiture for Kaimarama Mataiapo in Murienua.

Kia Orana to the Chief of Staff of the Office of the Prime Minister and all the staff working under you. I am very happy to see the increase in allocation for the Cook Islands Red Cross and also for Agriculture.

Now, you can see the achievements and milestones that has been achieved here as explained by the Member of Matavera. This is a large increase of 1.8 million dollars for the three years ahead.

Last night there is also an allocation for the programme Ridge to Reef with these two departments working together and we can see that the work is going ahead and next month the new nursery that will be opened on the island of Atiu.

I have had discussions with the Member of Parliament for Tamarua with the programme Ridge to Reef and I also believe that the two other Members from Mangaia will join us in preparing the budget for the next financial year. So, Members we can see that the work is moving forward.

I can see that the two Members of Ngatangia and Matavera are happy with their handouts and therefore it is appropriate that this is the appropriation of love. There are some areas that needs improving but overall this is very good for us all.

The second aspect I want to talk about is the Red Cross programme in our country. Our Outer Islands will be happy to hear of the appropriation for this as this programme reaches all the Outer Islands and the allocation for next year going forward is \$50,000, and you.

Madam Chair, will know that during our time working for the Red Cross, we actually fought for this amount of money and today it has happened. I am sure the staff

members at Red Cross will be very happy with this allocation. The Red Cross will benefit from all the funds collected from all the Red Cross bodies around the world through donations and contributions that have been collected on the roads throughout the world.

The Red Cross has been within our midst for thirty years and so it is right that the Government take seriously the work they do. The \$50,000 meets the 62 percent of its core services in the running of the Red Cross today.

Therefore, it will support disaster risk reduction, disaster risk management programmes that are being carried out throughout the Cook Island. Our community health based program will be strengthened even further to continue its wonderful work throughout the Southern and Northern Group islands.

This allocation should be under the Prime Minister's Office because the Red Cross is working together with the Emergency Management Cook Islands. Therefore, it is appropriate that this two offices work jointly together to prepare the communities before disaster strikes.

One program that I wish to talk about is the blood donation program. The Red Cross manages this program and this will help our people. There are other programs that is managed by the Red Cross which in turns help our people.

Madam Chairman, I am happy with this allocation and I give my full support to these two offices. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, very much and I see the Honourable Tetangi Matapo and you have the Floor.

MRS T. MATAPO: Thank you, Madam Chair and Kia Orana to all Honourable Members.

Firstly, I greet the Chief of Staff and the policy advisor for the office of the Prime Minister in the public gallery. These are two important men working in the Prime Minister's office and maybe afterwards they will confirm to me the arrival of the Mangaia school bus.

Koutu Mana Tutara o te Ipukarea – this is a great title for this office.

The first thing I would like to speak on in this appropriation is on Output 5 – Renewable Energy Development Division. I would like to thank the gentleman who is part Mauke and Mangaia who worked on establishing the Solar Energy project of Mangaia. If you visit Mangaia you will find the biggest solar farm in the Cook Islands is in Mangaia.

The only difference about our solar power is the fee is still high, when it should be cheaper. Our people are requesting a reduction but we realise that the final decision rest with the Island Council. In December last year the Prime Minister exempted the whole island from paying their power bill.

When I met the Island EO, he told me that funds is needed to purchase the battery for our solar power system. Even with the complaint from the people about the charge of our power it still high. I see in this appropriation for the Prime Minister Office an allocation for the Solar Energy Project in the Southern Group.

I am asking for some funding to assist the Mangaia solar project to make it work properly and hopefully cheaper. I hope the EO is listening, so he is aware that on return we will have some good news for him on our solar energy project.

My second thought is on the governance of the Pa Enua because I see an allocation for the election of the Island Councils. One of the things that we discussed in our Island Council meetings is the training for people that will be elected into the Island Council office. I read in the description for this appropriation that there is an allocation for training the Outer Islands.

I support the views presented by the Honourable Member for Mitiaro on a pay rise for the Island Mayors and also a vehicle for this office. I have inquired about the other Southern Group islands whether their Mayors have a Government vehicle they do not have any. Maybe I will get in trouble with our Mayor because he does not want to be a beggar. To my Mayor if you are listening please bear with me.

The third aspect that I would like to talk about is on climate change. We are aware of the climate change projects that was done for Mangaia. They have done a great job on the island but now things have come to a standstill and maybe that is stage one. I also see that there is an allocation in this budget for climate change, so I am thinking that there is a stage two for our projects in Mangaia.

This is the allocation for Green Climate Funds. Maybe this funding will assist the young people that was assisted by the climate change funding in their agriculture farming projects to improve their local venture.

Our time is running out, I will end with the request for funds for the Oneroa water tanks. Therefore, Mr Prime Minister I strongly support this appropriation. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, and I see the Honourable Prime Minister and you have the Floor.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. We are just having a discussion whether somebody else might want to have a go before I finish off.

Kia Orana to our people listening in to our broadcast. Kia Orana to the Chief of Staff of the OPM and the Chief Policy Advisor, Valentino Wichman. This is a very good example to be present in parliament to support the passage of your office Appropriation just like the other Ministries that was here when their Appropriation was being debated.

I am happy with the views presented by the Member for Matavera, it was sweet. He will be the right person to replace the Minister of Finance when he retires. I think he will be good in appropriating Governments' funds. I think you have created a rift

between me and my Mayor who is your sister. We were together last Sunday evening and she was asking about the colour lights for Manihiki.

All the other Demo constituencies have colourful lights and this includes, Titikaveka. I was hoping you will not say anything until the lights are turned on. But thank you very much for your support.

I would like to speak about the issue the Member of Tamarua spoke about. I thought Mangaia was a very intelligent island. They are still in the dark. Their solar program is well done. I recall when we opened the solar program and gave them one month of free electricity usage.

The island MP is asking, Prime Minister, the dust on the road will cause cancer to us. I will quote a passage from the Bible “those who love me are my friends” but during the election of Ivirua By-elections it was totally different. So they are still in the dark.

Thank you very much for your support for the appropriation for the Office of the Prime Minister. We all understand this Office carries out some very important jobs. I am very happy that Ben Ponia is the Chief of Staff for this Office. He is very intelligent and has been trained to do this job. Even with all that is happened in the past we shouldn't use this to hinder us. We are going forward. Under his leadership I can now see some of the new aspects listed in this appropriation.

Under Output 1:– a Mechanical Overseer for the Outer Islands. When the Deputy Prime Minister and I with the Seabed Minerals Select Committee went to the Outer Islands, we found out there was a shortage of qualified mechanics. The heavy machineries donated by China that were sent to the islands were in a bad state. These machines have greatly assisted our people in the Outer Islands. The only problem is when it breaks down there is no mechanic available to fix the problem. We do have mechanics on the islands but they do not have the knowledge to repair the machines.

We have one person in Rarotonga that can actually do all this job and he works at ICI. This gentleman named Teina Nootai but he is very busy with the jobs on Rarotonga and the Southern Islands. If there is a chance, he can go to the Northern Group but as we all know transportation is a problem.

We have also found a returning Cook Islander, a Manihiki descendant with papers in mechanical engineering. He runs a business in Auckland repairing and servicing vehicles. If this gentleman is listening, I know he knows I am talking about him. I have spoken to the Minister of Finance and he agrees that this vacancy should be filled, not only for Manihiki but also for Rakahanga, Penrhyn and Pukapuka. As he lives in Manihiki, it will make it easier for him to travel to the other islands on the new ferry for Nassau.

I can see there is \$135,000 allocated to start this, to help this gentleman establish his business to cater for the Northern Group Islands. He will need to travel to the other islands in the North to survey, inspect and prepare a maintenance schedule to service all the machines. This is one of the new inclusions in this appropriation.

Secondly, under the leadership of Valentino Wichman, there is work that they are looking into on how to manage and run our Consulate Office in Auckland as most of the consulate work is carried out in the Wellington High Commission. When we met with our community there, they expressed their biggest need is assistance with the referral cases they receive from the Cook Islands.

So, our agencies are looking deep into how we approach the request from our New Zealand community. I believe in the near future they will come together and establish a policy on how we can manage the Auckland Consulate.

As mentioned by the Member from Mitiaro concerning the payment to all the workers in high positions, friends – money is not the most important thing. Maybe we are still looking down on our GRs. If we do not respect them, then that is the biggest problem. We do not do that in Manihiki. In the Northern Group Islands we do not do that.

I am not troubled if someone else is collecting more than I am. In fact, that is the reality I have been operating with, since I became Prime Minister. My Heads of Ministries are in fact getting paid more than I am. That is fine because they have different work to do and they're getting on with it and I need to get on with mine.

It is not the pay that is important. It is doing the job and getting the job done. Therefore, I ask for us to leave the money aside to show us that our positions are important. Let our work and our actions speak for us.

GCF Accreditation: One of the most proud achievements our country made in the last 12 months. The only Pacific island country to acquire that status.

Oops, I can see my time is up.

But may I just in closing, say thank you very much again for your support on the appropriation for OPM and a parting word of advice, Honourable Members, there's heaps of funding assistance available to all of us. Don't just rely on money from our Budget.

There's plenty of other funding out there that is available to help you with your programs and your projects. You are all aware of the Japanese Grassroots Fund, the Indian Grant Fund, the Canadian Fund, and the German Fund. Heaps of others.

Please come and see us if you need help for direction where you can obtain these funds from because we want to share the benefits to all of us.

Thank you Madam Chair and thank you Honourable Members.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you Prime Minister.

I put the Question. The Question is:

**That the sum of \$2,721,886 for the Prime Minister's Office stands
part of the Schedule?**

Motion agreed to

Honourable Members, we will now suspend Parliament and return at 9.00 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 8.28 p.m.**Sitting resumed at 9.00 p.m.**

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members please be seated. Parliament is resumed in the Committee of Supply:

PUBLIC SERVICES COMMISSION:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$2,423,610 for Public Service Commission stands part of the Schedule?

I see the Honourable Tina Browne, you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to present my thoughts on the appropriation for the Public Service Commission.

Since last week and yesterday, in every allocation we have been discussing it has involved public servants and wages. We have been talking about them in those particular Ministries but this is of course the Ministry that runs the public service.

When I look at the narration on page 160 the vision of the OPSC is “*Leading Public Service Excellence*” and their mission statement is “*To embed a culture of performance excellence across the Public Service*”. We have two good words in that mission statement “performance and excellence” and of course throughout our discussions we have struggled or at least our side have struggled with those two aspects and it seemed to me that we are all in agreement that you reward performance.

My apologies in advance because the last time I was involved with the Public Service was a few years back when I used to be on the panel to appoint HOMs. At that time the public servants were divided into bands, if you fall into this band you go from here to there and in that band.

In my involvement with Justice and the pay for the public servants in the Ministry Justice one of the difficulties that was explained to me about rewarding performance, is the bands system because of the band that these staff are in. The way I understand it and I will be happy to be corrected, is that when the time comes and if this band is going to move, they all move. And therein I think lies the problem because that doesn’t recognise performance.

It does not recognise performance of the performers and so in my mind there is no incentive for public servants to do better or perform well because they will not be rewarded.

And I wonder whether this Ministry although I see under achievements at No.2, they talk about a Government Remuneration Framework which has been reviewed according to this. They talk about number 5, Job Evaluations. I would be interested to know as to what was involved in the Government Remuneration.

My question to the Minister in charge is, is the public servants still under the Banding System or is that a thing of the past? Because if we are going to reward performance then it's difficult if the public servants are confined within bands.

I look across the page to HOMs salaries and you have a figure of \$1,741,645. I am trying to work out what the definition of HOM is because in the Ministries that we have gone through for example the FSDA, my understanding is the Chief Executive Officer or the Acting Chief Executive Officer's salary is in that allocation. I am therefore wondering whether the definition of HOM is restricted to some only of the Ministries that we have gone through.

We know that the Head of State's staffs is paid from that allocation of the Head of State and the Ombudsman's salary is paid from that Ministry. So is a HOM a Secretary and that it relate to the Ministries and not to the agencies?

The Prime Minister in his supporting speech of the previous allocation was talking about him not worrying about what people get and he said that his own HOM gets more than he does. I am interested to have some idea of what HOMs get. Maybe in his response the Minister can address that question please.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you and I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you Madam Chair for the opportunity for me to speak. I am looking at the allocation for the Public Service Commission. I am looking at the Operations allocation. This is a big increase in the operations vote. This amount is about \$204,169 and this is a large sum compared to the last year.

I am also looking at the supportive allocations to assist with other duties within the department especially for Administered Payments there is a big increase in this area. This has increased to \$368,760, and the appropriation for other operations we are looking at \$1,741,645 and this is to assist with the operations within this Ministry.

You might question how I got these figures. If you look at the appropriation for this year and then you look at the appropriation for the past year, you will see the difference with all the operational allocations for the years in the past and the current year. Last year the Operation Budget was only \$81,000 but this year this has increased to \$285,616.

I also go along with the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition and she is right because we in the Opposition do need to understand what is going on with the allocation of money. And she is also correct mentioning about the Ministries, Agencies and SOEs.

All Government Ministries are under the leadership of the Public Service but whereas the other arrangement, their rights or their contacts for the agencies they are under the

Ministries and the Board. And that is also the arrangement and organising of the State Enterprise.

Under the leadership of the Agencies, the Minister appoints the Head. Through the organisation of the Board for that agency, whereas for the HOMs they will apply to the Public Service Commissioner. As well as the State-owned Enterprises, they will go through the same procedures.

My request to the Minister and also the Head of the Ministry for some clarifications on the organisation of the Ministry.

Salary banding. The qualifications for this area is for new ones and the old and whether you have the qualifications and experience. Within this, they will be able to decide where you should be in that banding category. With the banding of the HOMs that falls under the leadership of the Commissioner.

This is how they hire people. They look at the criteria and your qualifications. This is also the arrangement with hiring the HOMs. I believe there are three tiers, tier 1, 2 and 3. These are the arrangements for paying our HOMs. This is our request to the Commissioner to give us an explanation as to how do they work the salary banding for the HOMs? I do not believe they just look at how or the increase for your salary is within the salary banding. And also with increasing your salary it is under a clause for each department that says performance appraisal.

Under the performance appraisal this is where your performance is measured. This is my request to the Minister of Public Service Commission for an explanation of how this really works and I understand as I was once a Government worker. I do believe there are others that don't understand how this works.

Concerning the performance appraisal they look at your performance at work and they have the last say whether this person is suitable for this job. This is how these three areas work.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I see the Honourable Selina Napa. You have the Floor.

MRS S. NAPA: Greetings to you Madam Chair. I am looking through the salaries allocated for the staff members of the Public Service Commission, as this will fall under the appropriation for the Public Service Commission. I am looking at the number of public servants employed by the Public Service Commission, there are 852 women and 996 men.

Even though there are more men employed in the public service, there are however more women as Heads of Ministries in the Government. So, to all the women leaders in our Government and in the Outer Islands, congratulations and continue to serve our people well.

There are many people working for the Government in the Outer Islands as I observed during my travel to the Northern Group and Southern Group islands. They are the breadwinners for the family. We all know, there are no other means of income on

each of the Outer Islands. One way for us to do is to encourage the Outer Islands to seek other ways of earning money rather than just relying on the Government.

I am looking at the total number of people employed by the Government of 1,950. When I look back to the time of the reform, there is an increase or the same numbers previously employed by the Government. We need to weigh and balance out the people working in the private sector and the Government to ensure our economic growth can sustain these numbers.

On one side, if you are an employer it will become difficult for you. We can say that this Budget is for the people, a Budget of Love. Maybe, the Government has a lot of ways and means to keep the people employed in the public service.

Under the leadership of the Public Service Commission, I can see there are a large number of employments for our youth. This is a sign that our youth are actually returning back to work in our country. Maybe this is one way of helping them by employing them as interns in the Government to give them a chance, as they are our future leaders to lead our country.

Looking at the increase in salaries for our Island Councils, they are paid \$20,000 per annum. Under the Public Service Commission there are 222 people employed as Island councilors. I am not sure how this is all worked out. Maybe there is difficulty in placing them in a salary banding. I am looking at those being paid \$30-\$40,000 per annum. In the past, I have compared it to today, there is an improvement.

I am looking at those who are earning \$70,000 plus per annum, maybe the HOMs in each of the Ministries. There are 29 of them altogether.

The other point, I am looking at is the number of transport owned by the Government. I am not sure who is in charge of our transport, whether it is under the Public Service Commission. I am looking under an Achievement – the motor vehicle.

I have seen vehicles owned by Government parked at night clubs and this include the sports grounds. I have seen lots of Government vehicles parked at other questionable places. This is one area we need to look at; the motor vehicles owned by Government and paid by taxpayers parking at places that they should not be taken to.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. And I see the Honourable Tetangi Matapo. You have the Floor.

MRS T. MATAPO: Greetings Madam Chair. Greetings to all Honourable Members tonight.

Before I speak on the Appropriation Bill I would like to speak on something the Prime Minister said earlier. I would like to remind the PM in regard to what you said about us living in the dark. This is when we go straight to the Queen and that is why we are called British. Maybe there is some hidden way you are holding back as how we get to the Queen.

Coming back to our appropriation, well done for tonight. Speaking about the Outer Islands and the figures mentioned in our appropriation. The allocation of appropriation for both the women and the men, we understand there is a difference with you living in Rarotonga and us in the Outer Islands. There is no other way we can earn money.

There are those working in the Government sector, some of them 40 years plus, and you should look at how you can best remunerate them. Some of our older public servants who are working, started work without qualifications. Some of our youth started work without qualifications but is earning more than those who have worked for a long time. I think considerations should be made on the remuneration of long time serving staff.

We all understand those who earn less than \$20,000 most of them live in the Outer Islands. To those who have qualifications you all make them work in Rarotonga and we label this in Mangaia as brain drain.

I would like to talk about Island Government in our appropriation. One request here. Please bear with me for asking more. There are a few people that find it hard to apply for a place of work. Sometimes the Government makes the choice who they want to work for them. Even if the Member of Tamarua requests that maybe just one person from Tamarua is employed within the water works in Tamarua. They don't hear what I ask. Anyway, I can see some appropriation are done very well so, I support this appropriation.

That is all I have to say. These are my thoughts. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Let me just acknowledge the Public Service Commissioner who is with us tonight in the public gallery. Welcome to Russell Thomas.

I see the Honourable Prime Minister. You have the Floor.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Madam Chair. Greetings to all of us again in the Name of our Lord. Special acknowledgement to the Public Service Commissioner in our midst.

As you can see there is no negativities about this appropriation. The only comments coming through are important issues.

I would just like to touch upon a question raised by the Leader of the Opposition regarding Job Evaluation.

Before I speak more on this, I would like us to refer to page 168 in Book 1. That illustrates the size of the Public Service and who are labelled as public servants. This term is a bit loose – public servants.

Strictly speaking, there are only 14 public agencies, 13 before the establishment of the Ministry of Corrective Services. However, as we understand this is not only the public service? Also included are Crown agencies and State-owned Enterprises. So,

when you put all these together there are about 32 agencies and there is a significant number of public servants.

As commented by the Member for Titikaveka before this was up to 1,950 public servants throughout the country and they are not only on Rarotonga. This is spread throughout all the islands of our nation. We can realise how difficult it is to manage this large work force because they don't have only one responsibility. You are talking about Health, Police, doctors and all sorts of other areas.

There has to be a system or a way of coming up with a system to manage and to govern effectively all these 1,950 workers. So, there needs to be a system and I acknowledge the point made by the Leader of the Opposition that sometimes these systems tend to lose the importance of value for service or we lose sight of performance.

When we look at the size of the numbers and as well they are spread throughout all the islands and so many different responsibilities for each one. It is a difficult task to manage them all. And it is difficult to entertain us looking into this.

In terms of remuneration, a Banding System has been established by the Public Service Commissioner and this wasn't created just by himself. We know a company was contracted from outside New Zealand and they are in the business of advising Government on how to manage their work force and they did establish all the banding within the Public Service through their review, study and knowledge of the different positions and their responsibilities they were able to establish these banding.

This is the arrangement system by the public service. It's no mean task. It is a very complicated task. I don't know how the Public Service Commissioner lasted so long in this position. However, when I look at him his hair has gone white.

Sorry, with a complicated system like that there will be mistakes or there will be oversights. That is true. Sometimes I consider an unfortunate incident when we lose an employee when I know that he should have been paid more. When I complain to the Commissioner he would say, he is in that band and cannot be moved up. There is no other means that is it. That is why I say sometimes there is a sacrifice. We lose efficiency in terms of classification of banding.

Madam Chair, the comments by the Member for Titikaveka is correct. We have a high number of women Heads of Ministries in our country today. I am not complaining, I am looking at one right now Madam Chairman. To me this is a positive development in our country and it reinforces our claim that we are appointing the best to the positions. So, just bear with us men we are not that good these days. The women folk are gaining all these positions.

However, to the Member of Titikaveka, this is the arrangement by the Cook Islands Party Government so if you truly believe highlighting women just move to this side.

In terms of our people qualifying overseas, I am happy with our education system especially the scholarship system because we are encouraging our youth to seek the

wisdom of the world. If they return to our country, praise be our God. If they do not they are still Cook Islanders to the end.

Right now there are Cook Islanders holding high positions in the world and we should be proud of them because their Cook Islands heart will never disappear. I remember the Governor of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand, this Atiu boy but when you look at him he looks European. I recall when we went to New Zealand on the state visit he was the MC at a function. This is all he did was to announce to everybody that he was a proud Cook Islander.

I tell you, he did a fantastic job in managing the superannuation fund of New Zealand. He took it from nothing to over 40 billion dollars and turned it into the best performing superannuation fund in the world, Adrian Orr, proud Cook Islander and we are always in communication because he wants to help us as much as he can.

Let us not fear if our students do not come back. They are in New Zealand like the brother of the Member for Amuri/Ureia. He is one of the most respected doctors in Christchurch. Even though he is not here, he does a lot of work for our people in New Zealand. In fact he comes back here regularly to pass on his knowledge and expertise.

So, when our students return, Member for Tamarua, if they end up being paid higher salaries than those of us who remain on the islands, never mind that is how the world is today. We do not make them angry, we have to embrace them and make them feel welcomed because the future of our islands and our country is in their hands.

I would like to commend our Public Service Commissioner today. He is trying to do a very difficult and challenging job in the best way he can. To me the vision of the public service says it all that embraces and expresses his vision, his personal vision for the public service. So be strong.

I am happy you travelled to New Zealand to meet our graduates and what they are doing in New Zealand. It is important to show them that we are thinking of them. More importantly we value them and we want them to come home and serve here at home.

So, Madam Chairman with those words I thank the Honourable Members for your expression of support for the budget of the Public Service Commission. Thank you very much.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: As there are no further speakers, I will put the Question and the Question is:

**That the sum of \$2,423,610 for the Public Services Commission
stands part of the Schedule?**

Motion agreed to

TOURISM:

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$9,274,662 for Tourism Corporation
stands part of the Schedule?**

I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you, Madam Chair greetings to you and all of us this evening. Those of our people listening in greetings to you in the Northern Group, Southern Group and Rarotonga.

Before I proceed with my thoughts I would like to offer my apologies to you, Madam Chair. During question time, I left the Chamber quickly and I heard over the loudspeakers outside of the Chamber the reply by the Minister of Finance to my question. The answer to my question did not serve to benefit only us in Rarotonga but also the Outer Islands.

Regarding the Tourism Vote Item as mentioned by the Minister of Finance on this appropriation and he was saying there are new ways of managing our funds. I have spoken about this Corporation and in my mind there are issues that need to be corrected within this agency.

When I look under sponsorship they are engaging in, it seems to me they do not know how to utilise their funds outside in the market. When I look at the areas they have supported, it is really appropriate that this should be the responsibility of the Minister of Finance or the Minister of ICI. On the matter of our roads and homes that needs to be supported. Maybe it is time for them to review how they are going to enter the market to attract visitors to our country.

It has been over ten years since we started into the area of internet. Methods of approaching the market have now changed and surely we can address all these issues because when I look at this appropriation there are funds remaining under utilised and surely we should not be remaining here.

Maybe these funds can be utilised for subsidising travel for the Outer Islands and for those intending to enter into tourism enterprises. Maybe this assistance can be allocated through BTIB or another agency. This agency should not be providing funds, this is not their responsibility. However, we do realise that this is the major sector in our country and it should not fail.

I and others keep asking why we should continue this subsidy for the airlines. Maybe it is time or maybe it is already time to review this and look at other airlines where we conduct these kinds of arrangements. We want better utilisation of our funds for the tourism industry.

We do have families and friends intending to construct homes for their families through the building of holiday homes for visitors to rent. This is one area we can look at for these funds to be expended on.

Our situation in Aitutaki on tourism, this is strong however we are mindful that we do not land into difficulties like in Rarotonga.

Regarding our environment and pollution in our oceans and lagoons, I would say maybe some of these pollution were the cause for the demise of our paua in Aitutaki. Today the benefits from tourism have brought our people from outside in constructing holiday homes so they can generate revenue for their livelihoods in Aitutaki. But what will happen in the future if we are not careful it will become a problem for our islands.

Regarding the tourism sector maybe this is one area where they should work closely with the Island Council and the Prime Minister's Office to establish a plan. A Master Plan for the country but we have not looked into ways that will not get our country into difficulties.

However, I ask the Government especially the Minister to look carefully into the appropriation because to me the time has come to look again at how we spend this money.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you and I see the Honourable Member Tamaiva Tuavera you have the Floor.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I stand here to speak about tourism in our country.

I am looking at the figures, it is looking healthy especially the number of tourists coming into our country. What I am worried about is the impact of tourism on our environment. I know when I speak on this subject you will say, look he has a business so, we do not know why he is moaning. I am not disputing the numbers coming but what I am saying we should be careful with what is happening in our country.

The first thing that came to my mind is the reticulation problem that we are having especially in Takitumu, and Ngatangia. When we look at Ngatangia there are lots of hotels. Some hotels do not have parking for their vehicles and this goes all the way to Titikaveka. When you travel through Titikaveka and Ngatangia at night time it is as though an event is happening and that is why, cars are parked alongside the road.

Yes, the road has been widened in Muri and the parking is better because the road is wider compared to the previous time but that is not telling me that this is the proper way of doing this.

I have seen surveyors on the road and I asked them what work they were doing on the road and they said they are surveying the road for parking and also the pipes that will be laid down all the way to Turangi. The area where they are thinking of putting the waste treatment plant. I am not sure which side of the road they will use for the waste.

We have heard that Pa Ariki has agreed for the land to be used to store the waste. I have heard also that it will go to the other side of the road because on the other side of the road there are graves there.

I am not sure if the family whose parents have been buried there have allowed this to happen. I have also heard that waste will be directed out into the ocean. I do not know if the people of Ngatangia have agreed to this. I have not been to a meeting where the pumping waste out into the ocean is allowed or not. If it had been approved then the Minister of ICI would have already told me “Captain it had been allowed”. I understand this has not been agreed to, so I will leave that subject for the time being.

One problem that we have is with the rental properties and today private home owners are renting their houses to tourists. There are a lot of contractors being brought in from New Zealand and they have nowhere to live. Therefore they are living in some houses that are unliveable. I feel sorry for these people because some of them are in Ngatangia but sorry Prime Minister, money talks these days.

I am looking at the demise of the tourism industry and what we are going to do. We have looked at *Onekura* which is agriculture. I ask the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture to look at how we can revive agriculture in a big way.

I have been to all the Outer Islands. Mauke is beautiful for planting and I was there for more than five minutes Prime Minister. All these Outer Islands of Mauke, Mangaia and Mitiaro have very fertile land for planting and on these islands we can keep livestock on them as well and also aqua-culture.

Also to include the pearl industry in Manihiki. The Leader of the Opposition is asking that the island of Rakahanga to be considered. And one more thing we need to do in Rarotonga and that is to push tourism to the Outer Islands. If we bring tourists to our country they don't want to just come and live in the hotel. I would like to tell you the number one attraction in Rarotonga is the two cruises in Muri.

We need to find other activities to keep our tourists returning to our country especially if they come here for up to seven days. When it rains they do not go out so this is one area we need to look at, the tourism activities.

I support this Vote Item.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: You had finished Honourable Member? You'd finished that bit of sentence? Yes.

MR T. TUAVERA: If I have time I will stand up.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Yes, there is more time tomorrow because we will be finishing soon. You can have the Floor for five minutes tomorrow.

MRS S. NAPA: One small thought on this appropriation for our tourism. Looking at the number of tourists coming into our country, total arrivals for 2018-19, it is estimated at 166,209 visitors. The aggregate tourist arrivals up to March 2019 total visitor arrivals rose from 162,267 over this period.

We all agree that this is our number one money-making industry and as previously mentioned by myself, the tourism should be working closely with our National Environment Services and ICI. We are all aware that if our infrastructure is not well established and if our environment is not sustainable then this will have a negative impact on our tourism industry.

We have seen in our newspaper in recent times, the work to improve our infrastructure and work on improving the health of our lagoon, especially us in Rarotonga. I am also looking at infrastructure in terms of waste management, especially in Titikaveka with the new construction of a waste management facility. We are all aware of the impact it is having on our Takitumu area and we know this is one of the areas where tourists swim quite frequently.

We would like to acknowledge the work that has been done by ICI and with the program of Ridge to Reef and the great work being carried out by our tourism sector in ensuring our tourists are safe, especially with people stealing from our tourists. This is one area I feel ashamed when I hear that people are stealing from our tourists when they go swimming.

Speaking on the Destination of Sales and Marketing, I would like to say thank you to the tourism for renovating our public toilets in Titikaveka. Our public toilets were condemned by the Public Health. These facilities are frequently used by tourist when they visit our village and today one has been renovated and one is in the process of being renovated. I hope it gets renovated before the end of this financial year.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, may I interrupt your debate and you may continue tomorrow when we come back.

Thank you very much Honourable Members for a great evening continuing our work. However, it's time to go home and go to bed in preparation for tomorrow.

And I would like to call on the Minister Mark Brown to call for reporting back.

HON. M. BROWN: Madam Chair, I move:

That progress of the Appropriation Bill be reported back to Parliament

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

MADAM SPEAKER: Parliament is resumed.

I call on the Minister to report to Parliament please.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Madam Speaker.

I am pleased to report:

**That the Appropriation Bill is progressing very smoothly
through the Committee of Supply**

MADAM SPEAKER: I put the Question:

That the Report be adopted?

Motion agreed to

Honourable Members, thank you very much. May I ask a Member to close us in a word of prayer please.

CLOSING PRAYER

Parliament is adjourned until Wednesday 12 June at 9.00 a.m.

Goodnight.

Parliament adjourned at 10.30 p.m.