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MR DEPUTY SPEAKER took the Chair at 9.00 a.m.

OPENING PRAYER

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER (T. TURA): Please be seated.

Greetings to everyone this morning in the Name of the Lord. We say thank you to our Chaplain for the words of wisdom from God and let that be our guidance throughout the whole day.

Kia Orana to everyone in this Honourable House this morning, Honourable Members of Parliament, the Clerk of Parliament and your staff, and our friend from WA, Australia – Peter McHugh.

Those in the Public Gallery – greetings to you all and May the Lord continue to bless each and everyone here today.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Honourable Members, I have good news for you all and for those interested in the Budget Book 1 and Budget Book 2. These are now available on the MFEM website under Treasury. These will also be available on the Parliament website today.

Honourable Members, I have a very special Kia Orana and acknowledgment to four very special Cook Islanders today who received the Queen's Birthday Honours. On behalf of the Speaker of this Honourable House, the Honourable Niki Rattle may I extend to them our warmest congratulations for their utmost achievements that we should all be proud of them today.

Firstly, the businessman, Ewan Smith of Air Rarotonga. He received one of the highest New Zealand Honours. Congratulations Ewan.

Secondly, to Mrs Rima David. She received the British Empire Medal. Congratulations Rima.

Thirdly, to Iro Pae Puna. He received the Member of the British Empire. Papa Pae Puna, I now extend to you our warmest congratulations for what you have received and achieved. I can't forget all the good things that you have guided me through the roads that I have gone through during my time with you.

Lastly, to Rau Nga. He was honoured for his contributions to sports and the community. Although he was not successful in his time with the Ngatangiia Rugby League team but today when the Member of Parliament, Tamaiva came in, then we saw the achievements.

Thank you. We look happy this morning but we are coming to the special part of today's Sitting – Question Time. The Question Time for today is for 30 minutes. The Floor is now open for questions.

QUESTION TIME

I can see the Honourable Member from Ruau, the Honourable Member William Heather.

MR W. HEATHER: Greetings to you Deputy Speaker and to all our Honourable Members in the House. I am posing my question to the Minister of ICI.

As I can recall last Monday, I was taking a ride and I came around Nikao and I saw a road that was newly tar sealed and painted and it was really nice on the backroad leading up into the valley. My question is because the roads of Nikao has been done, how come the roads in Ruau are not being done – sealed – from Ruau to Rutaki?

Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I can see the Honourable Minister.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Greetings to all of us in this House. Greetings to you the Deputy Speaker and to the Government side – greetings. Greetings to you the Opposition and even those in our Gallery – greetings to you.

Greetings to the Member that posed the question. Maybe he wants a short answer or a long answer.

I think you should be the one to answer that question because the seat I am holding is the same seat that you once held. May be not only you but also held by your younger brother after you. That is why I am saying this question should be answered by you two, but despite that I will answer the question.

Yes, Arorangi's turn will come but at the moment we are setting the leftover appropriation for the rest of this year. So, be patient we are looking at a month, yes the new funding is in this Appropriation therefore your support is needed to pass this Budget. This is why we call it the Budget of Love.

I would just like for everyone to be patient because there are a lot of roads that needs to be improved and we are doing the ones that badly needs repairs. I don't want you to think that because you are on the Opposition side I will avoid you. I can see the Members of Parliament for Matavera, Ngatangiia and Titikaveka smiling. It will come around to your time. So, it is all up to us to approve this Appropriation and the faster that happens, I will come and fix your roads.

Thank you very much.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you very much Minister.

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

MR W. HEATHER: A Supplementary Question.

If we really believe in the Appropriation for this year to be passed, I have a question to ask to you Minister. What is going on with the 2017 budget because we passed that budget during that time but the problem here is I asked for the roads to be done, paved and not chip seal the roads in Arorangi? I ask now what happened to that appropriation that we approved in this House.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member now I can see the Honourable Minister.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: There are many good questions being asked and I love answering them. When we go back to the past we will remember that on 4th June 2018, there was an election and that is when I became a Member. The Honourable Member spoke about the 2017 budget and that there was no work done on his roads, I think he is wrong what he is saying, I don't think that was me.

The Ministers in the past are different and this Member of Parliament for Tongareva is different. I don't like to talk but now there are questions being asked. In the American dialect, I will let my work do my talking and it's the results that I want and with your help the Members on both sides you will get what you ask for but also be careful what you ask for and the reason is that while we are talking, it is no use for us to argue.

There is no use for us to ask the same question today, tomorrow and onwards because if we work together it will be for the benefit of our Cook Islands people and for our country to move forward.

I really want the roads in Rarotonga to be completed because my island is waiting for their roads to be improved. If I was a different Minister I would probably take the work to Penrhyn. Nevertheless Member for Ruaau the work will come to your constituency. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister and I now recognise the Honourable Member from Ngatangia, Tamaiva Tuavera.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Deputy Speaker. Kia Orana to all of us this beautiful morning.

Last month I travelled to the Northern Group. I did not just go there for the purpose of the Infrastructure Select Committee meetings but I also took some notes on what I saw on these islands in the north.

The islands are beautiful but the problem that I saw there is about the water. I don't know who to pose this question to, which Minister because I have seen bad water over there. I have seen some water wells in Manihiki and the water is bad. The plastic water tanks that we are talking about and sending to these islands are no use when they are left in the sun.

Our people up North are not getting good water. My question is what are we going to do about the water situation in the Northern Group and the Southern Group. We are holding these two Budget Books, the Book of Love so what about the love for our people in the Northern Group and the Southern Group. If we are going to sit in here and boast about this, let's think about our people first.

So, my question is what is the Government going to do for our people in the South and the Northern group regarding water.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member, I now recognise the Honourable Prime Minister of the Cook Islands.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you, Deputy Speaker and thank you to the Member for the question. Because you mentioned Manihiki so I thought I will answer the question. You have given me the chance to give greetings to my people this morning.

The Air Rarotonga plane is flying to the island of Manihiki at this time and taking the body of our Mama Ruita Tamatona and I give greetings and condolences to the children and all the family on the island of Manihiki, Rarotonga and New Zealand on the passing of our Mama.

The sad thing is not all the family was able to get on the plane this morning but I believe that we were comforted at the family service at the hostel last night and there were many people from Manihiki and Rakahanga and all the Northern Islands that attended. Papa Tauturu in Tukao I send greetings to you the children and all the families for our bereavement.

Deputy Speaker, I am surprised at this kind of question because this Member has not lived on Manihiki, he was only there for a few hours. This was his first visit to the Northern Group and he is acting like he knows everything on these islands.

It is true there is a water problem on our island but on Manihiki now I am happy to say that we have a lot of water in our two big water tanks. Maybe the Honourable Member was just looking at the plastic tanks in the homes. That is our shower water. If we want to drink that water we will boil that water, we know that. We have lots of big water tanks on the island.

Maybe the Honourable Member did not see the two new buildings that is used for water storage in both Tukao and Tauhunu. If only the previous Government did a good job on the water from the aid that New Zealand gave, the water system would have been good.

You know who had the contract to do this work in the Northern Group, they were all Demos and they just build the tanks and the roof of the Demo supporters. You ask the people especially the island of Rakahanga that is the worst island.

MR T. TUAVERA: Point of Order.

HON. H. PUNA: Sit down.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: A Point of Order has been raised. Can we have order in the House please?

MR T. TUAVERA: He is going way off the question, relevancy.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

MR T. TUAVERA: He has gone off the question, he is now talking about the Democratic Party and so on and the roof. I asked about what they are doing about the water in Northern group and the Southern Group because the water is bad up there. I am not only talking about Manihiki I am talking about all the Northern Group.

HON. H. PUNA: You know nothing about the North.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member.

MR T. TUAVERA: Do I have to know about America to talk about America, no.

HON. G. ANGENE: Point of Order.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: A Point of Order has been raised.

HON. G. ANGENE: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. This Member is going further but I am happy because the time is up thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you very much Members, may I call on the Honourable Prime Minister to continue please and come to the point.

HON. H. PUNA: I just want to correct this Member. He is asking about the problem of water in the Northern Group. I want him to know the history of this problem and why we are where we are today. I know it does not make for good listening. Sometime the truth hurts.

If only the Honourable Member have asked the people of Rakahanga the reason the water is like that, they would have told him.

Never mind, this is what Government is doing today. Earlier this year, one of the high ranking officials from the Green Climate fund came here, for a round table meeting with us and our development partners. He asked us for a big project in the Outer Islands that would have an immediate impact on our people. Water for the Northern Group was the project that I raised with him.

You can check with the officials they have been briefed to make sure this project moves forward as fast as possible. And the thinking here is that we will not rely on plastic water tanks anymore and instead we will look at concrete tanks for each household. We are looking at a 30 thousand litre concrete water tank because if we can have two for each household that will guarantee them enough water through the dry periods.

That project will also extend to improving the catchment area of the houses. If it means replacing roofs so be it, the spouting and the pipes.

Thank you for the question, Honourable Member because it allowed us to tell our people what we are planning for them. Not just in this budget but especially from these outside sources of funding. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. I see the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera and you have the Floor.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister for your answer and that is the kind of answer you should be giving this House. Your plans for the Northern Group islands and not talk about my constituency Muri, otherwise I will use the comments made by the Minister of Infrastructure that those people are from the past and not today.

This is a question I am asking the Minister of Telecommunication. When we went to the Northern Group the Wi-Fi access was terrible. This issue is not isolated to the Northern Group only we experienced this when we were in the Southern Group islands. And my question is, you told this House in the past about the good things about this company, Blue Sky. However today the Wi-Fi services on our islands both the Outer Islands and here in Rarotonga are not good.

Today, we are talking about the Manatua Cable and we are spending a lot of money on that. I would like to ask that we fix this problem on our islands before we carry on with the Manatua project.

My question is are you going to fix this problem with Blue Sky with the Northern Group islands?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member I now see the Honourable Minister of Finance, Honourable Mark Brown.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The question is can we fix the problems in the Outer Islands before we do anything with the Manatua Cable. That is the consortium's name for the big cable running from Samoa through the Cook Island to Tahiti.

The cable that runs from the main the trunk line to Rarotonga and Aitutaki is our cable and that is called Avaroa cables.

The way to fix the Outer Islands is to first do the Manatua cable because it is this that will provide for us more bandwidth through the fibre and allow us to provide better services using both fibre and satellite to the whole country.

I announce in our Budget Speech yesterday the new telecommunications policy, and within that policy it will allow the legislation that we have been working on for quite a while now – the telecommunications bill and also the public regulators bill.

It is these two bills, once enacted that we expect will improve services for telecommunications throughout our country. Firstly, by allowing competition to take place in the Cook Islands and secondly, by the establishment of a regulators office to ensure pricing is fair to all the consumers of the telecommunication service.

I have no doubt, Mr Deputy Speaker that in the very near future, once the cable is commissioned in May next year that we will start to see some significant improvement in telecommunication service particularly for the Outer Islands.

Thank you, very much.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Deputy Prime Minister and we have come to the end of our Question Time.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Orders of the day, interrupted debate on the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill.

Honourable Members the Floor is now open for Members to speak on the principles and merits of the Appropriation Bill.

But first, let me invite our last speaker yesterday, Tuesday 4th of June, the Honourable Member for Matavera, the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa and you have eleven more speaking time, you have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker for giving me this opportunity to further speak on the Appropriation Bill, referred to as the “Budget of Love.”

Thank you to the Minister for giving us the opportunity to speak on the improvements that has been allocated to each of the Government entities. Yesterday Mr Deputy Speaker, I spoke on the road works that is currently being carried out and we know the allocation for this is \$8 million. I will speak on this issue when the ICI Vote Item is discussed.

The second point that I would like to highlight is the remunerations for public servants. My assignment last night was to look at the salaries and wages for all the public servants. As mentioned by the Minister, there is an increase in the public service salaries and wages. I believe it is due time for this increase as I have spoken about this in our last sitting of Parliament. My main concern here is providing satisfaction to our public servants so that they will be happy in providing the services to our people.

The Minister also mentioned that this increase in payment for salaries will improve the services and all public servants are accountable for what Government pay them. I am happy with this because all Government workers must perform their duties and responsibilities to the best of their abilities.

I would like to speak on our Health Department. I am happy to see an increase in the appropriation for our patient referral programme. I am happy with this Vote Item because there is an increase this year. I will further speak on this issue when we come to the Vote Item for the Ministry of Health.

I would also like to speak on the increase of payments for caregivers to our elderly and the increase of pay for the elderly especially for the 70 years and over.

As mentioned by the Minister of Internal Affairs yesterday, I gave him some recommendations to consider based on the views conveyed by the Member of Parliament for Ngatangiia, Tama Tuavera regarding the allocation for each age group. My intention here is to help our elderly people especially those aged sixty to one hundred years.

I also worked out how much money will be spent to do that. However, what I have concluded are my personal views because we have experts in that area that can provide us with the accurate figures.

I believe almost \$23 million will be needed to do this. This is what I believe we should pay our pensioners because when we look back during the years we became self-governing, and the year the first flight landed on Rarotonga, and also the year that our international airport was opened, this is the question I ask myself. These are the people that worked hard for our country so that our country can reap the benefit. I believe there is not enough recognition given to them.

Those were the recommendations I made however I will make further comments when we come to the Vote Item for the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Deputy Speaker, I would also like to speak on other things that the money is being appropriated for. The Minister of Finance shared this with the business sector during the Budget Breakfast. He also considered the fact that the expenditure should not only be the responsibility of our Ministers and Members of Parliament to make the decision, but he also considered the knowledge and expertise of the staff from the Ministry of Finance.

The Minister of Finance looked into this carefully and believed that what has been proposed for us in this budget is relevant for us for the next four years. The Minister of Finance also mentioned that if the responsibility for the budget was given to us Members of Parliament, we will rush things and fail to scrutinize the budget properly.

Those are the things I would like to say and I am very happy with the process carried out by the Minister of Finance in dealing with the Budget.

The last point that I would like to talk about is concerning the Vote Item for the Outer Islands. I can see there is an increase but I would like to urge Government and the

Minister of Finance to look at the remuneration for Island Council members, especially the Mayors and their Councillors.

I believe, and the Minister can correct me on this, that each Mayor gets an annual salary of \$8,000. Maybe it has increased now but my concern is that these people were chosen to head our islands in the Outer Islands. This also applies to the rest of the Council members on the islands.

I believe the increase in minimum wage was the reason for increasing their pay so that it matches the minimum wage. However, I believe Mr Deputy Speaker and Minister of Finance that we should look into this issue carefully so that we can help our people in the Outer Islands.

Those are my final words. I have exhausted my time. Thank you very much.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member Vaitoti Tupa.

I now recognise the Honourable Member for Teimurimotia, Selina Napa. The Floor is yours.

MRS S. NAPA: Kia Orana Honourable Members of this House, the Deputy Speaker and all of us here in the House, those on the Government side and those of us in the Opposition, as well as the staff in this House, Kia Orana.

Please allow me to greet my people of Teimurimotia. Firstly, Kia Orana to the various pillars in our village, the Aronga Mana – *pepe utu*, the different denominations, to all the Government workers, the sports people, the elderly, the youth and the children.

Like the Member of Parliament for Ngatangia, I would like to pay tribute and to congratulate the Titikaveka Pearls Netball Team for again being champions in the netball arena and also pay tribute to our Bulldogs Reserve Grade. They may be in the Reserve Grade but winning a trophy is major to the village.

I know this Parliament Sitting is going livestream so I want to say Kia Orana to every sons and daughters of Teimurimotia and all the Cook Islanders living in all four corners of the world.

When I turn to face you my Teimurimotia, the tail of Tangia's fish. To the beautiful black pearls, the women and girls of the Cook Islands – Kia Orana and may the sun always shine on all you beautiful women of the Cook Islands.

I want to make special mention of our people on Pukapuka, Penrhyn, Manihiki and Rakahanga for looking after us during the Select Committee visit for the public consultations on the Infrastructure and Crimes Bill. You have shown us by your good hospitality the Cook Islands way and in the spirit of the true Northern Group way.

I can understand why you all don't want to live in Rarotonga because you are all living in paradise anyway. Thank you for feeding us with coconut crab, with *paua*, with *pana uto*, with *korori* – *atawai wolo*, *meitaki korereka* and *meitaki poria*.

If I may come back to my people of Teimurimotia, we had our village meeting to raise awareness to the issues in our village and one that was very close to our heart was the use of the two passages. As agreed to by the village, the use of the Avaavaroa Passage and the Papua Passage has now been decided by the traditional leaders and the village leaders that there is to be no commercial activities in the passages based on the following:

One matter on this issue is the Sunday observance in respect of our religions who worship both Saturdays and Sundays. Secondly, the protection of the marine life in the passages and thirdly, and the most important one is the concern for the safety of the users of the passage, especially the tour operators who takes their clients into the passage. We all know how dangerous the passage is. Like one village leader said, the passage will not ask if you have life-saving qualifications skills. When he wants he will take you.

They have considered the *raui*. It is now just a matter of working with the various Government stakeholders on how a *raui* can be enforced and how it can be given some teeth for those who breach the traditional customary law.

I skimmed the new Marine Act and there is not enough clear pathways on the *raui*. Maybe it's something that the Select Committee for the Marine Act can consider and I am also hoping that the revision of the NES Act will also include some more provisions on the *raui* to give it some teeth.

The other main concern has been the drugs in the community. A meeting was held on Monday evening by concerned community members from Takitumu to raise awareness and to assist our Community Police in tackling this issue in Takitumu. We see just about every week in the newspaper an article on Meth. If we are going to sit back and ignore that we don't have a drug issue in our country we need to wake up before our country is ruled by the drug lords.

Under the Police allocation is the Serious Crime Budget of \$100,000. Is it enough to tackle the crime in this country? I know that we can only do so much at the community level but Vaka Takitumu is willing to work closely with the national level to tackle this issue.

I am sure the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera will have a lot more to say about this topic so I will end so for those of you interested in Takitumu going forward being a drug free Vaka there will be a meeting on Tuesday, 11th June at 6.00 p.m. at the Muri Meeting house.

I now come back to an area that's been very close to my heart that is the health area. I see \$100,000 has been allocated for a CT scanner under capital project. This is a great investment for our health system. The country is in need of one, in fact its way overdue for one.

Although reading through the Budget book that the installation of the machine is not until 2020/21 Budget, it is about time though that an allocation has been made to kick

start getting a CT scanner for our country. I just wonder why we have to wait that long for the installation.

Surely, if Government can bulldoze their way through some of the projects why can't they bulldoze their way through with this one seeing this project concerns the people's lives and in the next Budget maybe we can see that they can bulldoze their way through with an MIR machine because this is the other machine that we need in our country. However, we are all aware that the preparation of the housing of the equipment is the major part in the housing.

We have also been boasting of achieving certain millennium goals like reducing infant mortality to zero mortality. I am just wondering if the Minister of Health can maybe indicate how we are faring in this area of infant mortality. The reason being because earlier on in the week I have been told that a baby have died and how it happened we have yet to learn that from the Health. So, to the Mum and the family in mourning, God Bless.

NCD also is a real issue in our country and for Government to say that over 66 per cent of our population is overweight and having NCD morbidities, I think they are just being nice. Why don't they just come out and tell us what is our ranking in the Pacific in terms of NCD.

I know that all of us are trying our best to tackle this issue in our country and it is good to see that some politicians are leading from the front by exercising regularly, playing sports and keeping fit at least.

I used to receive the quarterly reports on the NCD report to tell us where our nation is in terms of NCD level whether it is going up or whether it's going down and even with the tuberculosis disease but today I am not sure maybe I have been taken off this report by the Ministry of health or if they can let us know what is happening with this report.

My recollection of TB is it is a rare disease in our country but we need to be mindful of the immigrants coming into our country whether they are, the Border security and the Health is vigilant, vigilant in the scrutinisation of these people coming into our country who may be bringing other diseases that is not being impacted by our people.

However, I am pleased to see the budget of the Health has increased slightly from \$16 million to \$17 million. So, to address all the issues that the people have issues with will be great maybe down the road somewhere that we will hit the main target of \$25 million to address all the health issues.

I see in the paper the other day that the dengue fever has gone up now to 55 cases and I see also that there is a deadly flu that is going around that is having its toll on people on Rarotonga. I think it would have been really good to see a little budget allocated to address these sudden illnesses like this so that we do not go out and just do knee jerk reactions to something like this when it crops up.

Now, coming back to capital projects, can the Finance Minister tell us how many of the capital projects in last year's budget was completed and how many were deferred to this financial year. He is saying at the back there, heaps so please tell us.

For example Te Mato Vai, I see a 9 million allocated for Te Mato Vai in the budget, can the Minister of Finance tell us what is the total expenditure on Te Mato Vai now and how much of it is in loan form. He is probably going to say, look into the Budget Book but because we have only been given these Budget Books a day to look at.

Coming back to the road fixing at Matavera and especially Ngatangiia it is a welcoming sight.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Your time is up Honourable Member. Thank you very much.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move:

That an extra ten minutes be given for the Honourable Member for Titikaveka

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member, is there a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable, Tama Tuavera

I will put the Question, the Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

You may continue Honourable Member.

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you, Honourable Members of this House. I am sure they are enjoying my speech that is the reason they allowed me to continue with 10 minutes extra. So, I better get on with it.

I know these are my friends, however I cannot understand why Matavera came into the picture first in the road fixing and Ngatangiia next and hopefully Titikaveka next.

It actually put a smile to everyone's face and yet, I and Captain Tama were the ones that has been screaming to government to please get our constituency roads fixed. I never once heard the previous Member of Parliament for Matavera asking for their roads to be tar sealed. It is not even his priority.

Anyway, you have to give in to Rangiatea because Rangiatea is the head of the fish of Tangiia. Now, my plea to the Honourable Minister of ICI because the trend has been started with the road fixing, please do not jump over Titikaveka to go to Kavera. Otherwise we will put a roadblock on our road.

The last topic that I want to bring to the Floor is the water disinfection. I have been to various consultations around Rarotonga in terms of the water disinfection and I just want to reiterate to the Minister of Finance's use of the word misinformation.

I am not quite sure who is misinforming who but when you listen to the consultations. There seems to be no other solutions to the disinfecting our water but chlorine. And yet the Opposition have had opportunities to meet with other consultants and one of them is our very own local boy and who also have an alternative to chlorine.

You have the UV treated water stations and then you have the ozone process system and these were all presented during the water disinfection meeting by the PMU TH group in our three Vaka. One of my main concern was these people telling us that the UV treated water stations installed by the Members of Parliament around Rarotonga is not even quality water drinks.

You also find in their presentation that chlorine does not kill all the viruses and germs produced in the water. I ask that government to consider carefully the best way for us to drink quality water and ask as to how government is going to address the position of the people when the majority have said no to chlorine and to look for another alternative.

I think for all of us as Members of Parliament seeing the best way forward for our people to drink quality water. If you could also please listen to the cry of the people as to what they want.

That is right, our water is dirty because even during the hard rain we still having dirty water coming through our taps. So, going forward that is just my view of the budget for the Internal Affairs allocations.

I am happy with the increases made to look after our vulnerable, especially in the special assistance fund because I have had dealings with trying to fix an elderly's home in terms of the iron roofing which is not part of the criteria of the special assistance funding.

We all know for our elderlies to live comfortably in their house this is one area of their house that is always requiring maintenance and that is the roofing. An area that maybe considered in the special assistance fund.

That is my views on the Budget and thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member. I recognise the Honourable Member for Ngatangia, Tamaiva Tuavera, you have the Floor.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I want to talk on this budget that has been referred to as the "Budget of Love". As I looked at this budget it looks alright. However, there are areas of concern to us on the Opposition side.

I have looked through the budget books and some areas the allocations are not enough, for instance the law and order allocation. I am looking at our front line agencies, like the police, and customs.

You have heard me on the radio talking about this new drugs. I had an email sent to me as if there is an accusation that Members of Parliament are responsible for bringing these drugs into the country. I just want to make a declaration to our people that Members of Parliament are not into these drugs and are not bringing it into the country. Later on I will speak on this subject when we come to the allocation of the Police.

I see today a lot of foreign workers that are being brought into our country by the private sector. It is part of their employment contract that once they break the law of the country they will be charged for the crime and they will be deported to their homeland. This is not happening because I have asked the immigration department and their answer was that they do not have the funding to apply this part of the law. After the Marumaru Atua arrives this will not be an issue because this is the vessels to return these people to their countries.

This is my understanding about the foreign workers contract. The individual who employs these foreign workers are responsible for paying the return fare of these people that broke the law of our country. This is my question, what are you the government doing? The law should be applied and these locals bringing in these foreign workers should pay the return fare of these law breakers to their countries.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will interrupt you Honourable Member, we will now suspend our meeting and resume at 11.00 a.m.

Sitting suspended at 10.30 a.m.

Sitting resumed at 11.00 a.m.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please be seated. Greetings again to everybody.

Before we took the break the Member of Parliament for Ngatangia, Tamaiva Tuavera was speaking. The Floor is open to you.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Deputy Speaker.

Before we took a break, I was looking at the Health. As mentioned earlier, that when we come back we will talk more on the subjects.

I have a few things to mention to the Minister of Infrastructure because there was a case against Government that was taken to Court for an incident that happened. I went to pick up a pizza from Trader Jacks last night. There was an accident that occurred on the slipway.

I hope my cousin Sam Brown is all right in the hospital. He slipped on the slipway and hurt his head. We had a good look at the slipway that was not properly laid out. We hope that the Minister will take a good look at it because I think this person may have a right to turn around and sue Government for what happened to him. This is my plea for that to be looked upon. We were laughing about it because he slipped on the slipway.

We are still looking at our people around that we do not have people with NCD. I had a good look that no matter how much money you put into NCD we are still gaining weight. I mean, look at me, I cannot hide behind my neck tie. I see the only two people that will fit well into this will be the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

So, this illness NCD is ours from home, if we continue to give money to fight NCD I can't see what further we can do. We cannot put food in the right hand, the right palm or the left palm and put food into our mouths. So, I feel for the nurses for the hard work they are putting into this to help our people.

I am happy looking at the roads and drainage. As you all know in my village there is always flooding every time it rains but we know exactly why this is happening with the flooding. I am pretty sure that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Infrastructure have had a good look at the situation. Probably this is already in the Book of Love to solve the problems in Muri.

I am looking at the Government salaries and I am looking at the private sector. I am not convinced that the 35 cents given for the public servants is enough because they are still on the \$7 and a few more cents. You know, eight years ago we talked about this. We had spoken that in four years' time it will reach to \$8.

Its eight years now and we haven't even reached \$8 yet. There's a saying "What about the Indians? The Chiefs are getting paid all right but the Indians are not." And this is what I am looking into in the case of the money paid to the public servants.

I bring us back because I feel sorry for our people in the Pa Enua. During my time I travelled to the north one problem that I noted was the regular shipping because during our time in Penrhyn I went to the shop and bought a drink, a bottle of Coke and the only few drinks left was the Mountain Dew. So, I had to settle for Mountain Dew. I asked the shopkeeper what was happening and the reply was there was no shipping at the moment.

I can see the record by the Minister of Finance, the regular shipping and airline services to the Pa Enua. My plea to the Minister is to start the work now and not to wait for next year's Budget. Of course I saw it. I read it in the paper and Government is deciding to buy a new ship. I hope it's not like the rust bucket we put money into.

Because this is a beautiful idea that is proposed by the Government and we need to have regular shipping as that is the main topic we are looking at. When we were in Mitiaro the boat arrived - Tapi's boat. It was low tide and it was not rough at the time and this is one of the problems in the Pa Enua - that is the wharves.

I have conveyed my thoughts about the wharves to the Associate Minister Patrick Arioka. Therefore Prime Minister, if you want it to be done properly you can hire me.

There is another problem that we saw was the runways that we went to because there were a lot of people driving on the runway and the end story is that there were potholes on the runways in Penrhyn and Manihiki but the good thing was the pilots had checked on it and advised where the areas are needed to be repaired.

I am very happy now that in the future these problems will be sorted out and the runways to be sealed again.

I am now talking about Manatua Cable. It says in here our country can look forward to faster and more affordable internet services. I will not tick the box on this until I see this happen because I see the two islands that will be involved will be Rarotonga and Aitutaki. It is saying in here the satellite will be okay when the Manatua Cable is brought in.

Turning to Infrastructure. Because we have gone into the Infrastructure Select Committee, I am happy to report that I was happy with this Committee during our recent trips to the North and the South under the leadership of the Member for Tongareva, Honourable Robert Tapaitau. We actually did work together and I think we have come back with the goodies and hopefully it will just be passed without being discussed.

I think then that all new Bills should be put to a Select Committee that comes through this House after the Second Reading. The people are talking about us. We are not working after Parliament have sat. This is a good way of showing the people that we are working after Parliament by sitting on the Select Committee and with the right people selected on to these Select Committees I am sure they will come back with the same result as the Infrastructure Select Committee.

Now, I move on again to the Law and Order sector. I am happy that the Secretary of Justice is advertising for more staff. That tells me then that the Budget that the Minister is talking about there's been money put into Justice for him to be able to do this.

As I was mentioning yesterday of the pension for our pensioners 60 years and over.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have to interrupt you. Your time is up.

I can see the Member of Parliament for Titikaveka, Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: Mr Deputy Speaker, if I may please put a Motion:

That an extension of speaking time be extended to the Honourable Member, Tamaiva Tuavera and also for others that are going to speak after him

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. Can I have a Seconder?

Seconded by the Honourable, Vaitoti Tupa

I will put the Question.

I see the Honourable Prime Minister on the Floor.

HON. H. PUNA: Mr Deputy Speaker, the request is fine but I think the important thing is, when we reach the individual Vote Items that is the time we need a lot of time to speak.

I stand to suggest that we should not all have half an hour speaking time. Only those who wish to have extra time only then we will support the extension. So, I suggest that this Motion be amended and to leave it only to those who wish to have extra time more than twenty minutes then we give approval but not in every case.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister. Can I have a Seconder for that Motion?

Seconded by the Honourable Minister, George Angene

I will put the Question. The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

MRS S. NAPA: Deputy Speaker, can I please ask what the Motion is?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Motion is what the PM just raised not to extend the original twenty minutes until we go into the Committee of Supply. Can you hold on please? Sorry, I have got advice that we will take the Prime Minister's Motion.

Those in favour say aye.

HON. H. PUNA: Put the Motion to the vote, just for clarification. My amendment was to propose:

That instead of giving automatic extension to every speaker, that we only give extension if required because not everyone will require thirty minutes

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I see the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Deputy Speaker, there are two Motions on the Floor. There is a Motion for the extension of speaking time for the Member of Ngatangiia.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member we will come to that later. First of all we will deal with the Prime Minister's Motion for amendment to the Motion. The extension should only be given to a Member who requires an extension. This Motion has been seconded and I will put that to a vote.

Motion agreed to

Now, I will come back to the original Motion by the Honourable Member Selina Napa for the extension. I look for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable, Vaitoti Tupa

I think that clears it. I will put the Question. The Question is:

That the Motion is agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Now I call the Member of Parliament for Ngatangia, you have the Floor.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you, Deputy Speaker, I have lost my trend of thought. I need fresh air.

I was talking about pensions earlier. I know the Minister of Welfare gave an answer to my question yesterday but last night many people told me they are not convinced with that answer. They told me when they go into the shops to buy things the prices are the same for 60 years old and the 70 year olds.

There is no difference in prices in the shops, it is all the same price. They are saying how come there is more money for 70 year olds than the 60 years. Some of these 60 year olds do not work and they are collecting the pension. When you go on the radio everyone from 60 years old upwards will hear you. That is what I am looking at in this Budget and that is regarding our pensioners.

I can see that the caregivers allowance has increased and I know soon we will need caregivers for ourselves.

Before I sit down, Deputy Speaker I just want to take some time to greet my league players for our win last weekend against the Tupapa - Panthers. I read in the paper that Papa Rau, the Patron for the Tupapa, Panthers and recipient of a Queens's award, is a rugby league person and a rugby union player. It said that he nearly played for the New Zealand Maori. Well done to Papa Rau.

I just want to tell the Prime Minister, because I think he is the one that gives out the Queen's awards that I played for the Canterbury Maori side. Maybe he will give me a Queens's award next year.

I want to thank the Papua players because when we read in the newspaper their game have improved and the reason for that is these three are so skilled. Their body is built for rugby league and that is all they do. If the game was changed, the way the game has changed in the Cook Islands nowadays it is because of these three.

The standard of our game as mentioned in the newspaper has improved. These boys are Ben Weyman, Stan Olo and Isaac Mel. They will be returning to their homes soon. And also the Terekia brothers, Tuan, George and Shelfan, and there is another young man by the name of Tereinga Maoate.

I am happy for what they have brought into our sport today. I hope that all our clubs on the island now know how to play the game of football properly. This group of young men have created history because this is the first team that played the game right through unbeaten. We should be proud of what they have achieved.

As president of the club and Member of Parliament for the village, I give them that honour. Let us not forget about our local players. It is a team sport and they played as one.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker and Kia Orana.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member. Now, I see the Honourable Minister Rose Brown and you have the Floor.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. There is this wise saying from my island.

(Minister recites the pee).

I believe the meaning of this saying is appropriate for our Budget for this new financial year. As previously mentioned this is the “Budget of Love,” for you our people of the Cook Islands.

Kia Orana to all of us in this Honourable House, to our Deputy Speaker, the Clerk of Parliament and all the staff members and to the Prime Minister and your Cabinet and all the Members of Government and the Leader of the Opposition and all your Members – greetings to you all.

Kia Orana to all our women in Parliament and around the Cook Islands, young and old and to the many woman organisations in the country especially those listening on the radio and watching our livestreaming – greetings to you all.

Special greetings to the people of Nga-Pu-Toru, thank you for the hospitality extended to our team from the Ministry of Health. Deputy Speaker it was heart-warming to receive good hospitality from the three islands and the exchange from our team on health was received well. They were happy to receive the health guidance on cigarettes. I would like to thank the Ministry of Health for doing this program for the islands that was run last week.

Deputy Speaker please allow me to greet my people on Enuamano. Kia Orana to all the people of Enuamano, the three sectors of the island – greetings to you all. The traditional leaders, all the different denominations, the government workers, the island government, the Mayor, the EO – greetings. Kia Orana also to our elderly, the youth and the children.

I come back to our budget discussion and as previously mentioned this is the budget of love because there are so many good allocations in it for you our people in the Outer Islands. This is honouring the ideal of our former great leader Papa Arapati, no one should be left out of the blessings.

I want to let our people know that the government consulted with all government agencies and the private sector in composing this budget, so that no one is left out. Thank you to the Minister of Finance and all your staff responsible for putting this budget together. I wish to acknowledge Angeline William a relative of mine for her

hard work, as the Manager of this budget committee and also the Secretary of Finance, Mr Gath Henderson.

I come back to the allocation in the budget for the island of Enuamanu. The allocation for our island is a good figure of 6 million dollars and included in this figure are the projects that we are planning to carry out to develop our island. Foremost is the completion of the upgrade of our roads and many visitors to the island would notice the difference with the clay and now the sealed roads. More gravels are being made to be ready to move this work forward.

I thank the Minister of ICI and all those responsible for this project for your good and work for Enuamanu. There is another project which is our airport and this is in our island development plan even though there is no allocation in this year's budget.

Another project is the work on our schools. The ICI has looked at the requirements for the project and they are preparing to move this project forward with the allocation of \$480,000. This is a good project for the education of our future generations.

There is another project to improve the conditions of government houses on the island and the conditions of these houses are so bad it will not warrant a house permit. People cannot live in these homes and the allocation for this project is \$800,000 – to renovate the Doctors residence and also the house for the Ministry of Justice. These homes are to be renovated to accommodate the flying doctor and flying dentist programs.

The allocation for Enuamanu administration has been increased from \$1.1 million to \$1.4 million. Thank you very much for this huge increase which will help with the increase in salary and wages and enable us to employ new public servants.

There are allocations for our streetlights and other good projects for the island but I will end here on the subject of Enuamanu or else the islands in Nga-Pu-Toru will be upset.

I now would like to speak on the allocation for the Ministry of Justice. I will speak briefly on this and wait for the Committee Stage then I will speak more on it. I would like to thank all the heads of my Ministries, Agriculture, Justice, Health and Parliament.

The heads of these Ministries are new in the post. In the short time that they have taken over these Ministries they have proven themselves and have done a great job. Thank you very much for all the hard work you have done as we have worked well together.

As spoken before by the Members of Parliaments from Ngatangia and Matavera, the increase in salary and wages for the staff members at Justice Department. I do believe they have waited for this for a long time and therefore I hope this is a help to them as they complete all the projects that they had in the pipeline for the advancement of our people.

There are other issues to be spoken about but I would like to speak briefly on the Ministry of Health. This is one of the critical departments in our country that looks

after the health of our people. I would like to say thank you to the Members of the Opposition for all that you have spoken about the good work of this Ministry.

Our door is always open for you to come in and talk to us about the services and the things that we plan to do if you want to know and some of the questions you've asked, I would like to answer these when we go into each department's budget.

The Minister of Finance has outlined the different allocations for each different services in the Ministry and one service that needs to be improved is the electrical repairs that needs to be carried out in our main hospital, to include the work that needs to be carried out which is to change the roofing of our Out Patient in Tupapa.

Also to talk more about our mental health problem on the increase in our country and other small but critical services that we will talk about further. And to all the help that the Outer Islands have asked for. Although it's small I do believe this is going to improve all the services for you.

So, thank you very much to the Minister of Finance, to the Government for hearing our plea to increase the Budget for the Health. From last year's increase including this year's increase, thank you very much. Thank you very much for allowing us to improve our services especially with work on prevention, creating awareness on the issues with health.

We are aware of the problems we are facing especially with NCD. As we all believe or there is a saying that goes "each and every one is responsible for their own health".

So, here is a simple request to each and every one of us, please take responsibility for your own health. Take care of what you eat because in the long run it is up to you to ensure that you look after your own health. This has become a burden for the Ministry of Health and Government but it is our duty to support you.

I would like to talk about Agriculture. Although there is not a lot of increase in the Budget, maybe there's a good reason for this. There is a separate allocation of the Budget from outside of its own budget.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Your time has expired.

HON. G. ANGENE: I would like to move:

**That an extension of time be granted to Minister Rose Toki-Brown
so she can speak further**

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am looking for a Secunder.

Seconded by the Honourable, Terepai Maoate

I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

You may continue Honourable Minister for your ten minutes.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you, to the Honourable Members for this extra speaking time.

I would like now to talk about Agriculture. As I mentioned there is outside help available to our Ministry of Agriculture. This has started in the Southern Group. The area of growing seedlings for our agriculture sector for times that we need them.

There are many things to talk about but right now we are looking at the overall strategy of Agriculture. I am sure that we are aware that throughout the media we have requested for public submissions for any involvement in the overall Master Plan for the next ten years. We are inviting your input the people of the Cook Islands so that it's not only the Ministry of Agriculture that's drafting this Master Plan.

In the short time that our new Secretary Marama Anguna has been in this position there have been a lot of improvements in the Ministry, not only on Rarotonga and the Southern Group but also in the Northern Group because we have managed to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture.

We look forward to our visit to you to the Northern Group islands. You are not forgotten in the overall scheme of agriculture. In bringing you the information on Agriculture as well as seeking your thoughts on developments particularly in the area of training our staff in Agriculture as well as the work throughout the schools to promote agriculture, to revive the area of agriculture throughout our schools.

So, my plea to us, the people, as well as those of us in Government to work together and I stand to provide my full support as well as that of my constituency of Teenui-Mapumai.

Greetings to my people of Teenui-Mapumai in the Name of Our Lord, the people of Areora, Tenganangi, Ngatiarua and to all the people the length and the breadth of the island of Atiu. Our people support this appropriation. Our supporting verse says "Let us put God before us and on our right side and we shall never go wrong."

Thank you very much. God bless.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I can see the Honourable Member from the island of Nukuroa, Tuakeu Tangatapoto.

You have the Floor.

MR T. TANGATAPOTO: Thank you Deputy Speaker for this opportunity to speak in this House.

Greetings to the Leader of the Opposition and all your Members on your side, greetings in the Name of Our Lord. On the side of Government from the Prime

Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Cabinet Members and all the ordinary Members, greetings to us all in the Name of Our Lord.

Greetings to you also Deputy Speaker, the Clerk and all the workers of Parliament and all those preparing our food – greetings in the Name of Our Lord.

With your indulgence Deputy Speaker, please allow me time of my allotted ten minutes to greet my people on the island of Mitiaro before I come back to our Appropriation Bill before the House.

Firstly, to our traditional leaders on the island of Mitiaro, to the three paramount Chiefs, Temaue Teikamata Ariki, Tou Ariki and Tetava Ariki and all our people, greetings.

Special greetings also to the Kaumaiti because I believe he is still in Mitiaro. Before I flew over on Monday, he spent some time with me and asked if there is an opportunity for an increment in the appropriation for the House of Ariki to please support it.

Although he is a good mate of the Honourable Member William Heather, I suspect he is a Democratic supporter but I have to abide with his request because he is one of the Paramount Chiefs of the island of Mitiaro, Tou Ariki.

If you are listening to me Kaumaiti, I did not speak on the Appropriation but already \$120,000 increase has been allocated for the House of Ariki. This is above the normal allocation for the House of Ariki.

To the three denominations on our island from the Ministers, the leaders and all your congregation greetings in the Name of our Lord. Greetings also to the Island Government, from the Mayor, the Council Members, the Executive Officer and the staff of the Island Council, greetings in the Name of our Lord. Next to you are the Government workers who are directly responsible to the agencies on Rarotonga, greetings to you all as well.

I also acknowledge my supporters from the island of Mitiaro who are here on Rarotonga for medical referral in the hospital, greetings to you in the Name of our Lord.

I know this week is a week of preparation on Mitiaro for the arrival of a delegation led by the Paramount Chief of Puaikura, Tinomana Ariki. I would like to give my encouragement to our people on the island of Mitiaro to do as we have always done to beautify our island and to support any delegation that arrives so that they have a good experience on the island of Mitiaro.

Deputy Speaker, I will now come back to the Budget before the House. The first point I would like to mention is to you the Minister of Health. I have mentioned this before to you Minister. On the island of Mitiaro there is one nurse with an assistant but the assistant has not been trained in medical services.

During the last Parliament, I was requested by the nurse practitioner on Mitiaro to approach the Minister of Health and the Secretary here for a support for her because there are times when she will need support on the island of Mitiaro. The Minister was quick to endorse my request. However, when the Minister arrived on the island of Mitiaro with the Secretary of Health for the smoking workshop, I am afraid the impression I got was it is not worth the while to provide a support on the island of Mitiaro.

I do not think Deputy Speaker that these thoughts are appropriate. The people of Mitiaro are exactly like the other people on all the other islands and they should be treated fairly and equally like everybody else and not be treated unfairly. What encourages me is that I know the Member for Teimurimotia supports my proposal and this will happen after this Parliament sitting.

Another issue I would like to raise is that, since the time I became an Executive Officer and for eight years there's a position remaining vacant on the island of Mitiaro which is the Health Officer. I am concerned because the officer appointed on Mitiaro found a partner and moved to Rarotonga, but we currently have nobody holding this position on the island of Mitiaro.

However, early in the year two of our young people from Mitiaro were brought to Rarotonga by the Ministry of Health but unfortunately I have just been advised by the Secretary of Health that although two were brought from the island of Mitiaro, only one will return to Mitiaro to be a Health Practitioner. I am very happy to hear the Minister comment that no, we brought two young people from Mitiaro, we shall return both of them back.

In the paper today I noticed the advertisement for vacancies at the Ministry of Justice. My concern here is that I did not see a vacancy for the island of Mitiaro because I have already made a request to the Minister of Justice and I think Mitiaro is the only remaining island with no Justice Officer.

Therefore, I would like to announce on national radio and plead to you Minister that we would like this position to be filled because we do have young people from Mitiaro who want to go back and live if a job is guaranteed for them. I believe this is one of the most useful positions for the island of Mitiaro and any other island for somebody to act as the Registrar to register all the deaths, births and marriages on the island of Mitiaro.

The third point I would like to talk about is the Ministry of ICI. I would like to commend the Minister for ICI for his time on the island to discuss the ICI Bill and also the opportunity to take him around and to show him the situation on the island of Mitiaro.

I would like to also thank the Minister and the Secretary of ICI for the staff they sent over to address the problem with the airport on Mitiaro because we know the last two weeks there were issues leading to the closing of the airport on Mitiaro.

Special thanks to our workers from ICI, Amara and Tauii for their good work because I can assure you today flying over from Mitiaro the airport is once again open and

operational on Mitiaro. My only concern with the Minister is that we do have a tip truck here on Rarotonga and I did expect him when he came back to Rarotonga he will send our truck over to Mitiaro but this has not happen.

So, Honourable Minister, while our barge is still in port and have not set sailed, please place the truck on the barge and deliver it to our island of Mitiaro for our people.

Deputy Speaker, I want to ensure you and this House and our people that the island of Mitiaro is one of the island that saved government a lot of money because it has a lot of old vehicles but we have managed to keep these going without any problems.

This truck I am talking about is a very old rusted truck and it was taken up North and we thought it will be left up North but no, it was returned to my island of Mitiaro. In my thinking that since we have saved government a lot of money all these years and today it will be very easy to approve our request for project funding from Mitiaro.

Maybe the subject I will talk about will sound strange but I want to talk about water. In the financial year 2018/19, over \$300,000 was appropriated by government to improve the water on Mitiaro. This financial year is nearly at the end and there is only a small water tank on the island and I do not believe the piping for the current water tank will reach 2 kilometres.

I want to assure you that the people of Mitiaro are not happy with the progress of this project because it has stalled and taken over a year. Today I see an allocation of \$250,000 and I am not sure if this is on top of last year's allocation of \$300,000 or this is only for this year.

Today, for over seven months the people of Mitiaro have lived without water coming through their taps. Today 85 percent of the people use flush toilets. This means water is required for the use of this systems in the people's homes. The good thing about the people of Mitiaro is that they are a God fearing people and through their faith every time water is short the Good Lord provides by sending rain water for the people to fill their tanks.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member your time is up. I see the Honourable Member for Titikaveka, Honourable Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: Mr Deputy Speaker because of the exciting presentation by the Honourable Member for Mitiaro, I move:

**That the speaking time for the Honourable Member for Mitiaro,
Tuakeu Tangatapoto be extended for another ten minutes**

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Any Seconder?

**Seconded by the Honourable Member for Tamarua,
Tetangi Matapo**

The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Honourable Member you may continue speaking.

MR T. TANGATAPOTO: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker and the two Honourable Members that have allowed me to continue speaking.

The second problem that I want to raise is our harbour and I have accompanied the Minister to inspect our harbour. The design for the harbour is only for unloading cargos from the ships that comes to the island and not for fishing and yet cargo is received only once a month but fishing occurs daily. I believe if the design and construction was properly done it will include the locals use for fishing.

During the meeting with the Minister and the Honourable Tama Tuavera I believe that both have given their support for the upgrade to our harbour.

In Mitiaro we have a bowling green that received funding from an Indian agency. The Island Council chose me to head the project but I am not sure if it was the bowling club here on Rarotonga or the Ministry of ICI that demanded that it should be given to someone that is certified to do such task.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I would like to interrupt you. You are making an excellent presentation but I have to stop you. We are going to take a break and resume at 1.30 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 12.30 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.30 p.m.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please be seated.

Greetings to all of us this afternoon.

Our first announcement this afternoon. If you are feeling hot you may take your jackets off. If it gets cold just be patient.

Before we went for the break, the Honourable Member for Mitiaro was on the Floor.

Parliament is resumed and I would like to call upon the Honourable Member for Mitiaro. The Floor is yours.

MR T. TANGATAPOTO: Thank you to the Deputy Speaker of the House.

Before we came back here, I have just returned from Papa Tapi Taio shipping office at the wharf. I was concerned this morning because when I went and dropped some bags to be taken across to Mitiaro he told me that the boat will be departing on Sunday.

Well I shared my concern with Papa Tapi because the amount of luggage that I am intending to get across to Mitiaro is for the women of Mitiaro for their congregation and *teretere* on Sunday. As I did not finish my discussion with him he moved away from me.

And of course on my return and discussion again with Papa Tapi, now the boat is leaving earlier and my plea was for the boat to get to Mitiaro in time for the *vainetini* function and also to welcome Tinomana Ariki's Tere party that is intended to be there this weekend. Therefore, to the people of Mitiaro and in particular the women of Mitiaro, the Lady Moana will be there in time for our functions this weekend.

Now I will focus my talk on the Island Government budget. Before I returned to Mitiaro there are three major topics that I need to talk about for the people of Mitiaro.

Firstly, it's about our water. Secondly, our electricity and thirdly, the wages that is paid to our public servants.

I am happy that the Government has increased our appropriation; for 2018/2019, the amount allocated was \$557,374 and this year 2019/2020 it has increased to \$678,695. It simply means it's affordable for the families to buy goods from the shops. Looking at 2020 there is another increase that will be more affordable for the workers in Mitiaro.

As mentioned earlier by the Minister of Health, Rose Brown, although the increases are there but we need to abide and work accordingly. This is my wish as well as good wages for our public servants and also the use of their families living there.

I will end now but before I go I need to bring up another issue that I needed to bring up last time. I recall when I was sworn in as a Member of Parliament, I went home forgetting to acknowledge my wife. My wife complained to me and said, how come Vaitoti and other Members remembered to acknowledge their wives at the ceremony and you forgot about me. This is what I said to her. There are a lot of people on the island and I believe they are my supporters but you are the most important person in my life because you hold the wallet.

I give you my love my wife, a supporting wife in the home who supports me to make things happen. God bless us.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. Now I see the Member of Parliament for Tamarua.

Honourable Member Tetangi Matapo, the Floor is yours.

MRS T. MATAPO: Thank you to the Deputy Speaker. Greetings to all of us in the Name of the Lord this afternoon. Greetings to the Members of the Government Caucus and also to those Members that have not received Ministerial positions. And of course the Leader of the Opposition and all the Opposition Members on our side and to everyone, Kia Orana.

Greetings also to the Interpreters and also the staff of this House.

Mr Deputy Speaker, before I speak on the Bill, I ask you if you could allow me to say greetings to my people. Greetings to all the people of Mangaia, the three pillars on the island, greetings to you all.

To the people in the village of Tamarua, I have not seen you for about two months and I give you my blessings and my greetings. I have viewed all of the images and all that on television.

I have just returned from New Zealand. I also want to convey my best wishes to our own people in New Zealand and in particular our Madam Speaker, the Honourable Niki Rattle and your husband also the Member of Parliament Nooroa Baker and your wife. May God's blessing be upon you all and all those who are in the same situation.

Now the reason why I went to New Zealand is because of the illness of my daughter. Now I come back to our budget discussion and my talk today is on the Health budget.

What I see in the Budget, I am really happy. It looks so good and I hear that this is the Budget of Love. I am not sure whether I will agree that this is the Budget of Love but maybe through the discussions that we will go through it will give me an idea whether Mangaia is in it.

To begin, there is a proverb that says, *"You don't know what you don't know."*

I commend the Ministry of Health for nurturing our new babies that came into the world in the last month. One was referred to Rarotonga and the mother gave birth and was speedily referred to New Zealand, and because of this action taken, the mother and the families in New Zealand are happy and maybe this month they will return.

I will bring the issue of urgent referral because I can recall some of the incidents that had happened on the island of Mangaia.

Firstly, looking at our Budget, the Appropriation Bill for referral looks good and this is some of the issues that has been experienced in the past on Mangaia because of the delays of the doctor making the decision whether to refer the patient to Rarotonga. This has become a problem for the patient and in the past the patients have paid for their own way to the hospital in Rarotonga.

These are true happenings of what has been raised with you Honourable Minister of Health and I hope what happened has been resolved. The Minister of Health is telling me it has been done, so that is really good.

We have heard of our flying doctors and dentists program. Mangaia is a close island to Rarotonga but the flying doctors and dentists have not been to our island. What we want are stable doctors and dentists. I say to the Ministry of Health this is a very important issue.

I will now come back to the Ministry of Infrastructure. I have posed a question to the Minister of ICI on the first day in this House. The answer from the Minister was if

you were in Mangaia you will hear what I have said. Yes, *you don't know what you don't know*.

The Minister should have said to me if only I came back to Mangaia in January like I have told you in December the water situation would be fixed and I do not think we will reach this point. But I am happy to hear the Minister say that he will be back to do this work. What I really want is for the person that told us that he will be fix this problem to come and complete it. This is one of the areas that we need to listen to the voice of the people.

I can hear earlier speakers asking favours of the Minister and they have a smooth path but for our island it seems a bit different. I am humbly asking you Honourable Minister, I can see in the allocation there was \$250,000 in the budget and now I see its \$214,000 so where did the other money go.

Like I mentioned in the last Parliament Sitting, the report we received for our water in Tamarua was very good but the work that was done is different. I do not know where they got these photographs from. I want to thank the people working on this project, from the Mangaia Island Government and for their patience to work through the rain and sun and all these people are from Tamarua. God will help us and hopefully the Minister will feel sorry for us and give us good pipes and clean water.

Concerning our roads on Mangaia, those of you who visited Mangaia, if we tell you about the road conditions we have in Mangaia, you will not understand our language. I have found out from our Executive Officer the tar sealing machine that was in Mangaia has been taken to Atiu but we will wait and see if it will be returned to Mangaia.

Regarding the wharf in Mangaia, the former Minister started to do the work to strengthen it and now there is a new Minister the wharf is still the same. Today, we are still offloading our cargo onto the barge from outside the reef. The problem is that if we have big containers we need a crane to lift it. So, I ask that a crane for Mangaia be included in the Green Climate fund of \$10 million.

I want to thank our Prime Minister, even though the eyes of Thomas have not seen the bus yet and have not touched the bus, I still thank the Prime Minister and your workers for working hard and we are still waiting. I believe when I go back to Mangaia I will travel on this bus. Thank you to all the workers for doing your part.

Today the village of Oneroa is waiting for their water tanks so based on your claim that this is a budget of love, we await for results.

We can hear it being said that the water on Rarotonga will be chlorinated to make the drinking water clean. We are still drinking dirty water in Mangaia. The dust from the roads goes on the roof and then into the tanks and people drink that water and we are still alive but we are being patient and waiting for the day of love.

Minister I like the name of this Book, the Budget of Love and then you included our late Papa Arapati into your talks and yet this is an honourable man.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have to interrupt you because your time is up. I now see the Honourable Selina Napa.

MR S. NAPA: Mr Deputy Speaker I would like to move:

That an extension of normal speaking time be given to the Honourable Member of Tamarua

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do I have a Seconder?

Seconded by the Honourable Member, William Heather

Motion agreed to

Honourable Member you may continue.

MRS T. MATAPO: Thank you to all the Honourable Members who have given me this extension of speaking time.

I would like to speak on the allocation for Education. I was in New Zealand and I witnessed the teachers on strike and marching on the streets. I do not see our teachers going on a strike because the appropriation in our budget for Education is very good. This is my thoughts on how to improve our education especially in the Outer Islands is in the area of Telecommunications as most schools in the Outer Islands have computers.

I am talking about the villages especially during the out of school hours a place where our children can go to and use the internet to do their research. Not all the homes in Mangaia have internet in their homes and that is the difference between Rarotonga and the Outer Islands.

Also good materials to assist our teachers in their teachings their various subjects and I am talking about resources here. This school year has already started and there is this problem already. The schools do not have sufficient stationery and I would like to thank all the teachers in Mangaia for purchasing all the materials they needed to teach their school children.

I thank the teachers in Mangaia for your faithfulness in trying your best to teach our children regardless of many problems.

I wish to speak on our secondary school. Last year assistance was sourced to help in renovations to the school buildings to help the elderly and handicapped when they go for school activities. Last time I spoke to the principal, he told me that the project is still with CIIC and they will work on it.

What I know about my island of Mangaia. There are many projects planned for the island but when it came to the General Election that was the time a lot of these projects fell through and did not happen. I can hear the Minister say, that he will explain the reason for this – I know because, Mangaia people are Mangaia people. These figures to me are subsided not straight and true. If this is the budget of love

then love should be spread evenly. The Word of God says – unconditional love. As mentioned by an old woman – you think of yourself as people and think of us as dogs.

My time is up and I would like to thank this House for listening and I would like to apologise if I have angered you. There is a proverb that goes like this – you cannot make a fish climb up a tree. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member. I shall remember that quote. Now, I recognise the Honourable Member for Oneroa, Honourable Wesley Kareroa, you have the Floor.

MR W. KAREROA: Kia Orana, Deputy Speaker and all the Honourable Members in this Honourable House on the Government side and the Opposition side.

Mr Deputy Speaker, please allow me to highlight events that took place on my island of Mangaia. I would like to mention our official visitors to the island last week. The first was the Public Service Commissioner, Russell Thomas and one of his staff. They came to Mangaia to run workshops and he invited me to attend but unfortunately I was tied up with work commitments.

I only managed during the lunch time and I wish to extend my appreciation for the workshop they have done for the public servants in Mangaia.

The second official visitors are the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Infrastructure Bill, I believe you have successfully done your work on Mangaia. Even if Mangaia was the last on your list. The Good Book says, the last will be the first. I believe the Mangaia people have given the Committee some good directions for this Bill. When it is presented in Parliament it will have a smooth passage.

The third group that visited Mangaia was the Avana Fishing Club to take part in a fishing tournament which was a memorial competition to honour the late MP, Tony Armstrong.

So, I would like to thank Mrs Agnes Armstrong for sponsoring the prizes for this fishing competition. And also to Arthur Pickering for your sponsorship. Thank you also to captain Moko for bringing over your group. I believe they started leaving the island yesterday and the rest will be leaving today.

I would also like to say thank you to my constituency of Oneroa. To the traditional leaders, the different denominations and the government agencies and to all the people, Kia Orana.

I would like to speak on the Appropriation Bill now, especially on Agriculture. There have been a few times that we have asked for an increase. I almost gave up but I skipped through the Appropriation Bill and there is an increase. I didn't want to speak on this because I have given up.

We had a few pilot projects that has been put in place and we have requested financial support from Government, projects such as Climate Change Agriculture and the sad thing was that these young growers have now migrated to New Zealand due to

insufficient funds to support these young growers. I can see now that there has been an increase in this allocation and I think the Government now understands how important this program is.

If we look at Tourism, this is one of the major money making industry of Government. Because we have a big number of tourists coming into our country, agriculture is important because the industry provides the needs for tourism. I noticed in our Budget that the Vote Item for a lot of our Ministries has been increased.

With regards to our Ministry of Police, I can see there is an increase but I don't think this is sufficient because they are one of the crucial services in our country. The former Minister of Police before the Honourable Rose Brown and myself experienced some problems and we observed the great work carried out by the Police, especially during the night.

During that same year in this House, we gave our full support to increase their salary. There was certainly an increase but there was also a drawback in that increase because those collecting high salaries did not receive an increase except for those on lower salaries. The Police Officers on a higher band complained because the increase did not include them. Maybe the small increase in our Budget for the Police Vote Item this financial year will help to increase their salaries.

I would like to bring my thoughts back to the Vote Item for Tourism. I would like to thank and pay tribute to Ewan Smith for receiving the Queen's Award and maybe this will help us to perform the duties he requires us to do. I have worked in his business for 30 years now. I understand the many issues and legislation that we had to go through during my time working for him. So, he rightly deserves the award for all his good work.

With regard to the business sector in Mangaia, there are not enough people who are interested in accommodating tourists. Maybe the increase in the allocation here for tourism will enable them to go to Mangaia to convince the people that this is one of the money-making schemes. We understand that the income from tourism is very high and into the millions.

I do not believe the people in Mangaia realise the benefit of this industry. Most tourists prefer to go to Atiu and Aitutaki because I don't think our people in Mangaia are promoting us enough. I believe the tourists will soon get sick of going to Aitutaki and Atiu and this will be our opportunity to build our own hotels within the next five years. So, this is one area in tourism that we need to seriously consider.

My final thought is regarding the Vote Item for Parliamentary Services. Maybe the Members of Parliament are afraid to provide assistance to this area. I am not sure whether there has been an increase in this area or whether it is still the same. I don't believe there's enough allocation here.

There was a chartered flight for Parliament Select Committee to go to Mangaia last Monday. Air Rarotonga has a deadline for bookings on their flight. If you don't meet the deadline for payment, Air Rarotonga will cancel your booking. A rebooking was made for the Select Committee and the same thing happened again. The booking was

cancelled. Maybe there were insufficient funds to pay for the chartered flight. The process is that when you make a booking, you pay immediately. So, I am asking Government to increase the Vote Item for Parliamentary Services.

Those are my thoughts on the Appropriation Bill. Thank you very much.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member Wesley Kareroa.

I can see the Honourable Member from Vaipae/Tautu, Manuela Kitai. You have the Floor.

MR M. KITAI: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. Thank you in the Name of our Lord for granting me this opportunity.

I would like to thank the Clerk of the House and his staff members for all your good work to us Members of Parliament.

Kia Orana in the Name of our Lord to the Prime Minister, and all Cabinet Ministers, and all Members on the Government side. Greetings to the Leader of the Opposition and all the Members on our side of this Honourable House.

With your indulgence Deputy Speaker, I seek for some time to address my constituency.

Greetings to my people of Ngavaitau. To all the servants of God within your congregations and your spouses – greetings in the mighty Name of our Lord as well as greetings to Council Members and your spouses. I won't forget our traditional leaders and your good wives and spouses – greetings to you all. To our paramount chief Manarangi Ariki and your spouse – greetings.

Special greetings to two families that have come through bereavements in the last few days. The household of Aumaru Tuakeu who passed away two weeks ago. I would like to convey my condolences to the family and the children. One of the ladies in my constituency, Temata Ua, she was 93 years of age when she passed away.

Unfortunately, she will not be able to reap the benefit of the increased pension. Maybe if it was passed earlier she would have collected this pension. May God keep them all and give them strength for the way forward.

I would like to acknowledge my youth group the Midnight Strings. These are all young people and singers from my constituency. I thank them for what they are doing travelling back and forth between Aitutaki and Rarotonga. I am not sure why this team is always requested to come to Rarotonga. Maybe the Rarotonga people don't know how to sing in a string band.

My thoughts will not be long because I do not talk a lot. I want to touch upon agriculture. I notice an increase in agriculture this financial year. My thanks for this expression of love. So, it should be that once you make a request for funding the approval is already given.

I have asked the Associate Minister to please send a tractor to Aitutaki. Today the tractor serving the need of the people in Aitutaki which was provided by the Member from Arenikai is being used all over the island. Maybe it will not last long because it's been over used. That is why I asked for just one tractor but if there is two, what a blessing. So, my request to the Minister is to consider this proposal, not just look and leave it but look and move forward on it.

The second point I mentioned in the last Parliament is about our widows and solo mothers. I acknowledge the good support for the old age and the child benefit. But I ask for our widows and solo mothers because they give birth to the babies. I have spoken to the Minister of Internal Affairs and he nodded but I am not sure why the nodding.

So, please consider this request, like before don't just look and leave, look and action. Maybe you don't realize that maybe it's your own children going over to Vaipae and getting these beautiful woman get pregnant and giving birth to these children. There is a saying on the island of Aitutaki, remember the old lady that gave you the piece of coconut. If you don't know what it means, ask the Prime Minister he will explain.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member, short and sweet. I now recognise the Honourable Member from Ruaau the Honourable Member William Heather the Floor is yours.

MR W. HEATHER: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I would also like to give my thanks to all of us in this House from the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Members of Cabinet and the Members of the Government side as well as greetings to our Leader of the Opposition and all our Members on our side and all of us as we deliberate how to improve this Book of Love.

May I also Deputy Speaker, acknowledge my constituency and give my greetings to them. From Tuoro to Toreiva the edges of my constituency, the breadth of the village, I would like to give my thanks to all of you the traditional leaders of the land Tinomana, the Paramount Chief and all the sub chiefs, Mataiapo and Rangatira and all our Church leaders who are working hard in their areas for the benefit of our community.

Back to Ruaau, the Chairman of my Committee and all your members working hard to improve the situation of Ruaau.

Deputy Speaker, I would like to return to the budget that we are deliberating today. I would like to highlight to us the issue of the cost of transportation, to discuss this as well as the cost of living and the depopulation on all the Outer Islands. I would like to ask the Government for special consideration of the cost of transportation because this is one of the limiting factors for our people on the Pa Enua.

We consider the situation highlighted by the Member of Mitiaro in having to beg the ship owner to carry his cargo to Mitiaro and he is not even talking about the cost. I believe this is the situation faced by our people from the Pa Enua and in meeting the costs of these transport. Not only shipping but as well as the planes flying to the Pa Enua.

Thanks to Ewan Smith for his company and the service they provide to fly to the Outer Islands however Air Rarotonga requires payment for this service. And when we consider depopulation this is the factor that is affecting this issue - the cost of living.

We see our ships sailing to the Outer Islands with full cargo on board but when they return it is empty and that is why the Outer Islands are being penalised to pay for the trip back and forth.

I will come back and ask how we are going to develop the Outer Islands to become economically sustainable islands. This is all up to us to look at avenues and ways to improve the situation of shipping to bring cargo to Rarotonga. If there is no cargo on the return trip then those who pay for the first leg of the trip will be penalised to pay for the whole trip. There is no other option for the ship owner because he needs to be paid to return his ship to Rarotonga.

That is why I stand to raise this point because we know in the old days copra was the cargo returned from the Outer Islands. I believe the revenue from copra is increasing today. Maybe our youth are used to the handouts, funds in the Outer Islands and there is no use for them to go out and work. That's why I am asking the Government to really consider the prospect of creating business enterprises in the Outer Islands to make the cost of shipping more affordable to the Outer Islands.

That is why I have always said the answer is in the Agriculture sector to give grants to people in this sector to help them develop their agriculture and farming service because we were all born without money but the Europeans were born on money. I am not requesting for grants but for low interest loans around about 4 percent interest. Instead of our people going to the bank and getting an interest of 15 percent.

Today a new company was formed on the island in the building and construction of houses. This house has a price tag of \$31,000 and there are about 3 of these houses being built in Arorangi and I believe Captain Tama has one in Ngatangia. And these are two bedroom houses, with a kitchen, toilet and shower inside. This is what our people can afford and when we consider our current costing for a two to three bedroom house you are looking \$150,000.

That is the reason I am bringing this to the Floor to consider the situation of our people and looking to better the lives of their families. And now I highlight the area of food and our people need to eat and eat well and that is why I am bringing this forward to the Government.

One matter that I would like to bring to the table is medical doctors for our Outer Islands. And this is mentioned by our Members in the Opposition and I would like to ask the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister because I am hearing the cry of our Outer Islands especially up North for a doctor assigned for their islands. This is not to look down on the nurses assigned to these islands but for a doctor to be there on the islands.

The telephones our telecommunications is unreliable, when you ring people in the Outer Islands sometimes the phones does not work. I am saying, if you were the sick

person lying in the bed and the nurse rings Rarotonga for the doctor to advice as to what to do to you as the patient and the phone does not work – what then?

This is one of the reasons we are bringing to you the government to consider. But we are asking you to look at these carefully. We are not talking about politic matters here but putting forward the cries of the people who are ringing us on things that really matter to them.

I now come back to our solid waste issue on Rarotonga. This is what the Minister of Finance have answered me on this issue. We will bring in an incinerator which will burn these solid waste and convert it to electricity. I fully support the proposal because it is a great idea. We can see the benefit that will come out of this project because it will get rid of waste and at the same time produce electricity.

Those are my views on our budget and it is not against you as a government but for us to work together for the benefit of our people.

I now come to a matter I raised with the Minister of Finance regarding the road upgrade to the roads from Pokoinu to Betela. This matter was approved in our Sitting of Parliament and the allocation for this was passed in a budget. I realise Minister that you were not there during that time but I would like to know as to what is happening to that allocation. If it has been used in another area to benefit our people that is alright and good on you for doing that. But I would like to ask today for something to be done for the road upgrade for my district.

I am not saying that you look at my proposal only but I put it forward for consideration after Ngatangia and Matavera then Pokino and Betela. That is my request to the Minister of Finance.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would like to interrupt you Honourable Member. Parliament is suspended until 3.30 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 3.00 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 3.30 p.m.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: All be seated.

Parliament is resumed.

Before we went for a break, the Member of Parliament William Heather was on the Floor but at the time his time was up.

Now I see the Member of Parliament Selina Napa. The Floor is yours.

MRS S. NAPA: Deputy Speaker, I stand to move a Motion:

**That an extension of speaking time is given to the Member of
Parliament William Heather**

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. I call for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member for Matavera, Vaitoti Tupa

I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

I would like to ask the Honourable Member to carry on.

MR W. HEATHER: Lastly, Deputy Speaker, I would like to bring up the issue on Agriculture – just the pineapples. We know that this particular person, Francis Smith, he has planted plots of pineapples in Aitutaki as well as Rarotonga and we have seen the progress of his work. There were many pineapples, and a lot of people have ruined his pineapples. We would like to acknowledge this young man for his efforts in doing this.

This Mr Deputy Speaker is the kinds of people in our country that we need to encourage. He has been to New Zealand and played rugby in the South Island for Canterbury. Upon his return this is what he did. He had put all his efforts into ensuring that he achieved it. He wanted to plant pineapples, huge plots at least 4 acres in Aitutaki and here in Rarotonga. This is my request to Government, for us to consider these youths and encourage them to do this type of initiatives for themselves and for the country.

Lastly before I finish, I ask the Deputy Prime Minister for an award because I played against the New Zealand Maoris and I should be granted an award. We played here and I know the Deputy Prime Minister has seen that game in those days.

This is our intention Government, for us to work together and please accept our ideas and dreams for us to work together.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. I think I will join in and ask for an award for myself.

I can see the Member of Parliament from Arenikau. You have the Floor now.

MR T. KAVANA: Greetings to all Honourable Members of this House and greetings to you Deputy Speaker for giving me the opportunity to have my say in this House. To all your staff in this House and to all the Interpreters, greetings.

I myself don't really like my talk to be translated into English because we have our own mother tongue and I would really like for us to talk in our mother tongue.

Deputy Speaker, I would like to give my greetings to my constituency. Greetings to my people of Araura tuning in to our broadcast today and I believe that it is coming clear to you in the Outer Islands. To our Mayor and to all our Island Council on the island, greetings to all of you.

Now, I want to give greetings to my constituency in Arutanga, Reureu and Nikaupara. Greetings to our old people and our children in our constituency. To all the churches in my constituency and I know there are six churches in my constituency. I would really like to thank all the churches in my constituency for supporting me as your Member of Parliament.

I went to listen to all these different churches as I am an SDA member. I put an effort to attend to listen to them and all they encourage me to be strong and to be a good leader for our country. To all the Religious Advisory Council on the island continue to be strong, maybe that is why there has been no hurricane coming our way. I would like to greet all the church Ministers in my constituency for guiding us in our churches on the island.

I stand up to support this Appropriation Bill in front of us. As requested by the Honourable Tina Browne yesterday, for time to be given to the Members of the Opposition to go through this Appropriation. I just want everyone to understand in this House that this Budget will be understood by people who are good in Mathematics. It is just like all the Pastors, their job is to preach the gospel and accountants their job is to know all the figures.

I would like to thank our Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and all his committees for the good Appropriation Bill that they have done for this Budget 2019/20. This is not an easy task and I know that they have worked together.

I just really want everyone to know that the Government of the day they don't dream alone. This Government they all dream together and this is what we can see today as a Government that works together. If we have different dreams that means we are not going to get anywhere and I humbly ask this House for us to have our views and dreams together. Like what this saying says, a man without a dream is a dead man.

Now I just want to take us back and highlight some events that happened on my homeland of Aitutaki. A while ago a group visited Aitutaki from the Climate Change, ICI, Environment Service and also from the Ministry of Agriculture. We can see the goodness of this Government as they did not just think of Rarotonga but they are also thinking of the Pa Enua as well.

While these teams were on the island we found some benefits that will come to the island of Araura. I know the Member for Mangaia is complaining that all the benefits are going to Atiu and Aitutaki and yes you are right. I think the right answer for you is that it will eventually come to you.

Not long ago the Ministerial Forum was held on Aitutaki for Winston Peters and his delegation from New Zealand. I thank God for the benefits that is coming to my island. We all know that Aitutaki is the second most developed island in our country of the Cook Islands. I also thank our Government of the day for all the help that you are giving for my island of Aitutaki.

In my constituency I will tell you what I am doing. Regarding agriculture we have an inspection for food crops that will be held in November of this year. My people are

planting as mentioned by the Member for Vaipae/Tautu/Vaipeka, this is what I am doing and I want Members to know we are planting.

In the past some people have always asked me, why is it that Parliament is not Sitting, and my reply to them is that we are going back to our constituency and doing the work that the Government has instructed us to do. If an Honourable Member has not gone back to do work in his constituency. I ask you to go back and work as you have promised your people.

I give thanks to the Ministers because the requests that I make to them they always answer me and that is why I am doing the work for my constituency and my people of Araura Enuu.

The Bible says, *“Ask and it shall be given, knock and the door will be opened unto you”*, and that is what the Bible teaches us and I am making use of that. If we do not ask and we just come into this House and blame each other then what will happen the Government will get angry and you will not get any benefit. But I thank our Government today and this canoe is called the canoe of love and this book is the Book of Love.

I want to mention in this House, maybe you know of the problem of our daughter who went to America and she was detained by the authorities. Today, I thank our leader and the Minister who is responsible for this area and I believe the family who have gone through this problem, this matter is solved and everything is sorted out. I just wanted to let my people know.

In the past few days I have presented some sewing machines to my mamas in my constituency and they are very happy. In this appropriation I can see some benefits that will come to you Araura Enuu and I want to mention this in this House.

The first is the water gallery in Vaitaparoro in Tautu/Vaipae/Taravao, 200 thousand dollars has been appropriated for this project. This water project has already been started but this is to be complete this year. When this gallery is finished the benefit will go to our people and also the tourist industry and agriculture.

Secondly, the Orongo Development Master Plan, 500 thousand dollars have been appropriated for this project. Thank you to the Government for this appropriation to develop the wharf site in Arutanga.

Thirdly, the building that houses the Justice Department which also houses the Police and the Probation Service this building will be renovated and 60 thousand dollars have been allocated for this project. I thank the Minister for this and also our Government who are thinking of our people in the Pa Enuu.

In the appropriation also I can see the Special Assistance from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Thank you to our Government of today as this assistance have already been given. I think in the past the people whose job this is to go through the homes of the old people, the infirm and the widows, the Government have given this help and it is still happening today.

As a Member of Parliament for Aitutaki it is my job to make sure that these workers are doing the work they are supposed to do, so we can move forward.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have to interrupt you as your time is up. I see the Honourable Member for Pukapuka.

MR T. ELIKANA: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. I was going to give my twenty minutes for the Member but I stand to move:

That the Member be given an extra ten minutes to complete his speech

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member, I seek for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Minister, Rose Toki-Brown

I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

You may continue speaking, Honourable Member.

MR T. KAVANA: Thank you, Honourable Members for allowing me to complete my speech and also to you Deputy Speaker.

I would now like to speak on the allocation for Aitutaki. I am pleased with the increase in this budget but I am saddened that there are other areas that will be increased to cater for this budget increase.

I am worried that our people may consider that the Government is supporting some and not them. I feel this way because there are public servants who worked for government for many years and the new ones are getting the benefit of the increase in salary and wages. I rather the increase in salary is given to someone that worked for years with benefiting experience than to someone with qualifications but cannot do the job.

I would also like to recommend an audit to be done for each Island Government every year. I believe that is the work of the audit office to report to Parliament on the work of government agencies but I do not know about the audit for each Island Government. I make this recommendation for the audit office to look at auditing the Island Government because money is allocated to them but the work is not being done.

I will end my speech here and give the opportunity for other Members to speak on our budget. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak a long time in the House as this is the first time I have spoken this long in our Parliament.

Thank you very much.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member and I can see that you are not happy with the work of the Aitutaki Island Council.

I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate and you have the Floor.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Kia Orana to all of the Honourable Members in the House, to the Prime Minister and your Members in Government and to us the Opposition Members.

Thank you to the staff and caterers who has done a great job in feeding us Members of Parliament and maybe we have eaten too much and now we feel drowsy.

Kia Orana to all our people listening in to our broadcast today and to those watching our livestream feed.

Congratulations to the Sea Eagles, to Captain Tama the president and your team. I will not ask for an award for myself. Maybe on our next visit to the Gold coast then I will put in a request for an award.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to convey my greetings to my people in Aitutaki. Kia Orana to those involved in the fishing competition on Queens Birthday. Appreciation to Ngapare and Morgan for successfully organising this event and all your helpers. The winning price is \$1,000 plus other minor winning prices and congratulation to the winners of the competition. For us that did not win we had a big feast and that was enough.

Kia Orana to the three pillars of our community, the traditional leaders, the Island Council Member and all the government workers. I encourage all the people of our community in their various activity in life to go forward. The village has a big event before us next month which is our Constitution Celebration.

Kia Orana to the islands Mayor and all your Council Members encourage you all to strive for the betterment of our people. This budget is referred to as the Love Budget but I don't see love in here because there is no increase in your Island Council allocation.

I come back to our Appropriation Bill. As mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition we need time to read properly the budget documents. I agree that we should be given ample time to scrutinise the budget because we are not mathematicians especially with these many figures. When I went through Book 1 and 2 of the budget I see there are 300 pages of each book and it is not just figures in these books but it also included the explanation on the budget.

I support the recommendation by the Leader of the Opposition because we need plenty of time to go through the budget papers to prepare us for the House debate. We received the budget books just after the Minister's budget statement and we had to struggle to grasp the content of the budget documentation.

We are therefore requesting the Minister of Finance for you to give us time tomorrow to go through these budget documentation so that we can fully understand what this

budget is all about. I have previously talked on the allocation of an emergency fund regarding a situation when the country has a disaster or downturn of economy.

It is fortunate during this recent time we have not experienced a natural disaster. In this Appropriation Bill there are areas making us aware of potential dangers in our economy. In the last Appropriation, we were able to put together over \$274 million and today we are looking to increasing this figure to \$276 million.

When we look in Book 1 there is a provision there in case we have an economic downturn. However in this Appropriation there is an allocation of \$56.7 million from an allocation of unappropriated \$111.5 million, this is in Book 1, 4.4 establishment of reserved funds. It is called the Stabilisation account and it is unencumbered cash. I am happy that an allocation has been made for such a situation.

I would like to speak on BTIB, to support the comments made by the Honourable Member for Ruaau on economic development. I see an increase of \$100,000 for the Revolving Fund. We know this allocation is to assist our people start their enterprise or to further develop their business enterprise but in my mind when we talk about development, we should be considering 3 per cent interest instead of 5 per cent. This is not a fund that is given freely as a grant. This is public funds. We do require returns and a revolving fund to assist further our people on the island of Rarotonga and in the Outer Islands.

When we consider the islands of Nga-Pu-Toru they do not have a revenue generation like the island of Aitutaki. I believe these three islands are proficient at agriculture and fishing for exporting to Rarotonga. I believe these funds allocated of \$100,000 will be spread right across all islands of the Cook Islands. If it is spread over \$5,000 allocation, each then that is twenty people who will receive this fund. This will all go to Rarotonga.

One limiting factor for our people and our growers in the Outer Islands is the question of transportation as mentioned by the Member of Ruaau earlier. I actually believe that the actual part of growing agriculture is working. However, the weakness is transportation and maybe it is time to consider subsidising transportation for agriculture from the Outer Islands. I believe a tourism subsidy has been adequate for some time maybe this subsidy should be used on the Outer Islands including Mangaia where there is no revenue generation.

I believe the young people on the island of Aitutaki are wanting to enter into these industries. Because of the high costs of banks charges these young people are reluctant to approach banks for a loan because this is the age group that we want to encourage to get into business so they stay in the country and we don't have to import labour all the time. I commend on the hard work the Member from Arenikau as he encourages the growers in his area.

This is what we are also doing on our part of the island – myself and the Member from Ngavaaitau and myself, the Member from Amuri/Ureia. We want to ensure that on Aitutaki it is not flooded with foreigners looking to set up a business from outside.

These young people want to get into the areas of lagoon tours and building gyms for health fitness, restaurants, business, fishing in servicing the growing tourism industry in Aitutaki. So, my request goes to the Minister for BTIB to send officials from your agency to the island of Aitutaki to explain to our people and to make them aware of the assistance and the potential from this revolving fund.

I hear my colleague from the island of Mitiaro. He is happy with the situation of the health in Mitiaro. In Aitutaki the situation with dentistry – I believe the Member from Arenikau had to fly to Rarotonga when he could not get treatment on Aitutaki. There are 26 people that have been proposed to be sent to Rarotonga to have dental services.

Fortunately the Minister for Health was able to address this by sending a dentist across to Aitutaki to address this problem. The population of Aitutaki is above 2,000 and daily the tourists arriving in Aitutaki raise that to above 2,500. This dentist that was sent to Aitutaki I believe this is his last day and when he returns we are back to the situation where we don't have this service on Aitutaki.

As mentioned before by the Member from Mangaia, we do require a permanent dentist for the island of Aitutaki.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have to disrupt you.

I can see the Member for Matavera.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you Deputy Speaker. I move:

That the speaking time for the Member from Amuri be extended

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can I have a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member for Ngatangia, Tamaiva Tuavera

I put the Question. The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

You can continue Honourable Member Terepai Maoate.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you to our two supporting Members and to all Honourable Members.

The next issue is not to lay blame, but to highlight to the Minister an issue as raised by Mitiaro for the betterment of our people. Our doctor is fine. I believe a woman in Aitutaki has been considered to work in dentistry. However, this is not the level we require from Aitutaki. We actually need a qualified dentist to come and train her.

An issue on dentistry is the fees being charged to the people. If we say that this Budget is to care for all Cook Islands people, Aitutaki is considered in this

Appropriation as the leader of the Outer Islands and the fees being charged to our people are either the same or higher than on Rarotonga. I ask the Minister to address this please.

The Seventh Minister. I heard the Minister of Finance elaborating on the amount of work that you are all doing and I understand this because we do know there is an increase in the agencies of Government and responsibilities. When I consider all the responsibilities that are not being met for doctors, and the water on Mitiaro was highlighted, and the assistance given to our people, I do not consider it appropriate for this allocation of \$290,000.

The money for economic development that is allocated for the people is \$100,000 and this is not enough for the people. If we allocate \$290,000 on top of this this is sufficient. I am not only speaking with regards to health, water and electricity for Mitiaro but I am speaking for all of us.

I am not supporting this Appropriation Bill on this allocation. Until everything is completed on the allocations for the Pa Enua and Rarotonga because you have Associate Ministers and also workers in the Government and as I mentioned before we need a Dentist. Therefore, I cannot support this Seventh Minister today.

With regards to the Police Service we need to work harder with road safety as we have some of our under aged youth driving. We have met with the Council and the Members have asked the Police what is happening but we did not get any good answer from them. It's been a long standing problem and we need assistance to resolve this problem.

I am not sure who is responsible for the road signs but there is not enough road signs. At the schools, I know in Rarotonga when you get close to a school there are signs to tell you to slow down and what speed limit you should be travelling. The Principal of Araura College stated that there were times when accidents nearly happened at the school. I would like to ask the Minister to talk to your Ministry and the people responsible.

With regards to tourism, there is a little drop in Aitutaki but it is still a steady growth according to the Bill but we are still required to look at it carefully. As I stated in the last budget it is time to look at the funds that is being used for this industry.

In the past we used to go outside of the country to promote our islands. Now we are using the internet and even though this is not really strong at the moment but I believe this is a good way to market our islands. There are many ways of promoting our island over the internet.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I will have to interrupt you as your time is up. I can now see the Honourable Member Patrick Arioka from Murienua, you have the Floor.

MR P. ARIOKA: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. Greetings to everyone in this House. Kia Orana to our Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, to the Ministers and all the Members of Parliament on the Government side greetings to you all this

evening. Kia Orana to the Opposition Members, the Leader of the Opposition, your Deputy and all Members of Parliament, Kia Orana to you today.

Kia Orana to the Clerk and all the staff of Parliament and also to the Interpreters who are doing their work very well. Kia Orana also to our people who are listening to the Parliamentary debate over the radio.

With your indulgence Deputy Speaker, if I may be permitted to give greetings to the people in my constituency in Murienua. Firstly, Kia Orana to the Queen's Representative, Sir Tom Marsters and as you live in my constituency you are a parent for us in Murienua, your wife and all your family, Kia Orana to you all today.

Kia Orana to the Aronga Mana, Tinomana Ariki from Tuoro to Toreaiva, the Kauarikirangi and all the Aronga Mana, Kia Orana to you all in the Name of our Lord.

A special Kia Orana to the seven Mataiapo of Rutaki, Kia Orana to all your families in the Name of the Lord.

Kia Orana to my Committee in my constituency because I know that you are working hard to look after our people in our constituency of Murienua. I also remember the old people especially our sick people in our village, Kia Orana to you all.

Kia Orana also to the Principal of Rutaki School and all the teachers and school children of Rutaki. I also greet our youth who live in our area, a big Kia Orana to you all.

I also want to greet our people in the Northern Group and Southern Group who we met in the past month when we conducted our public consultations on the Infrastructure Bill 2019. I thank you all for looking after us and for showing your love for our Government of today and also the things that had to be shown to our people. We were not surprised because we saw the richness of the land. You fed us from the first day up to the last and there were plenty of food from the land and the ocean.

I heard earlier the Member of Parliament from Ngatangia complain about the water. I know he got diarrhoea from what he ate in the sea as he forgot that the area he is eating the paua is not good to eat. This is to show that he is happy to see the richness of the land and the ocean that you have shown to us. We were surprised because the *raui* area was opened for us the delegation that arrived on these islands. You wanted us to enjoy our trip and that is why you did this. May God be praised that our islands are in good condition and let this be the same in the future.

I just want to tell you our people in the Outer Islands, both the Northern Group and the Southern Group that many of our Members of Parliament wants to travel to the Outer Islands for public consultation of Parliament Bills. We must remember that all the meetings that was held on these islands, were accepted and received by our people. The reason is that our people see the Members of the Committee working well together and doing a good job.

This is the message they gave us, what you have brought to us is peace and let that peace continue in Parliament. Thank you to all our people and we commend for your support during the consultation meetings on the Infrastructure Bill.

During that time, I took the Members to see the agriculture side of each islands and they were amazed at the agriculture activities on each of these islands. I think Mr Deputy Speaker we all admired the growth of our vegetables particularly on the Norther Group islands where vegetables are crucial of the diet of our people.

We have heard your request for assistance in the future especially from the Outer Islands and we will ensure that will be done. We also looked at the health issues on these islands that we visited. We were advised of some areas that required assistance and to be looked at seriously and we can find the assistance in this appropriation bill.

The Select Committee that went around the islands heard the people's concerns and the people have accepted what they presented to them. The allocations in this year's budget compliments the things set out in the Infrastructure Bill. We are certain that all that has been discussed with the Infrastructure Bill will allow this Appropriation Bill to pass through Parliament smoothly.

Deputy Speaker, I have not much else to speak on this Appropriation Bill but one important matter and that is in regard to government investment. Deputy Speaker we refer to the speech that was presented by the Deputy Prime Minister very eloquently how this Bill is important to our people. He was right in saying, that it is a budget that will care for all Cook Islanders and it is dedicated to the continued prosperity of our people.

It is very clear Mr Deputy Speaker because this Appropriation Bill focuses on investing on our people in the way they do their work as well as to be productive in the work they deliver in all our services. This Appropriation Bill helps uplift our young people particularly to grow further in their professional lives. And therefore, I have grown a huge interest in this area because it is a strategy that helps our young people remain in our country and to be part of a growing economy and to continue the engine of our economy to move forward to a modern future.

We are not to forget Honourable Members that time is changing and the demand on our labour is increasing and therefore we must have the right people to cope with the load of work that is needed to be served today. I do not believe with the increase in our tourism that there is no work for our young people today – I do not believe that. Now tourism is growing and our young people needs to be part of that growing industry.

We must be encouraged that in this growing industry that we do not bring people from outside of the country to do the work that we must be responsible for and to do. And that is the investment that this government has made so that our people become employable as well as professionals in driving the future of our economy.

In this Appropriation Bill we can see that our government is trying to increase the payment of our public service and it is because our government believes that our economy is going to be a challenging one as it grows further. But we have work to do

and that is our young people to be employable but at the same time to be trained and be part of University students and reach further qualifications in the future.

In the past few weeks the Ministry of Health held some workshops to upskill our youth in the area of Health. My daughter from Mauke was a participants to these workshops. This is the surprising fact, only two young people from Mauke that attended these workshops, and one from Mangaia and two form Mitiaro and none from Aitutaki and Atiu.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: May I interrupt you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Rose Brown.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Mr Deputy Speaker I wish to move:

**That extension of normal speaking time be given to the
Honourable Member, Patrick Arioka**

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do I have a Seconder?

Seconded by the Honourable, Tingika Elikana

The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Honourable Member you may continue speaking.

MR P. ARIOKA: Thank you Honourable Members for extending my speaking time so you can get more of the story that I want to present in this Honourable House.

Earlier, I mentioned about the Health workshop for nurses that was held last week on Rarotonga. I hear us making complaints about our Health service and yet we forget to look at this very key area that should be our focus in this Honourable House. It is really sad to see some of these things happening to our youth and to see them not interested in serving their country.

Maybe we should ask ourselves who is responsible for this. What I mean is it's not the Government. It should be us, our own people on every island. We want our parents to support all our youth for them to get into this training and for them to get into Government work positions so they can be a leaders in the future.

We leaders in the Pa Enua are required to look for youths who are capable to carry out these responsibilities so they can go back to their respective Pa Enua and be doctors, dentists, nurses and other work. I don't think we should just sit around and do nothing, this is important and crucial to ensure that our economy as well as our social livelihoods continue to grow in our country. We want our youth to get into this area for them to grow and gain a good education. For them to grow up as professionals in their area.

So, this Bill as tabled by the Deputy Prime Minister is appropriate in that there is an increase in the wages and salaries of public servants. Money is not going to make things change but we as leaders of this country as well as our people in our community needs to be part of that change.

To all of our Honourable Members in this House today we know there are shortage of expertise in areas we need to improve on. I can see this in the agriculture area, the planters are aging and there are no young planters to replace them.

So, Deputy Speaker, I like this Appropriation Bill because it encourages our youth to improve in their areas of expertise. We don't want to bring any expert from abroad because our youth can still fill in these positions. We also don't want our friends from the Philippines and other countries to come and take up most of the work positions in the Cook Islands as we can see today.

We can see for ourselves that the youth of today are different. However, we can see the smartness and cleverness in our youth therefore it is up to us to fit them into employment positions they are keen and interested to be successful in the future.

So, the thought of the Book of Love is fitting because we want our people to be successful and also in serving our country and to be in line with the Appropriation Bill as discussed today. So, to encourage us, the people out there, our children, and to us the leaders in this Honourable House we have a duty to support our labour force in the country.

Deputy Speaker, this is all that I want I have to say on our Appropriation Bill today.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member.

I now recognise the Honourable Minister, George Angene. The Floor is yours.

HON. G. ANGENE: Greetings to you Deputy Speaker. Greetings to all of us in this Honourable House and to our people listening in. The Southern Group islands, the Northern Group islands, to all the leaders of our community, the young and the old, to all our children – greetings to you all.

Deputy Speaker, I would like also to greet the people in my constituency of Tupapa-Maraerenga – greetings to you all. To those that voted for me, to those that didn't vote for me, to those that love me and to those that don't love me- greetings to each and every one of you. And to all of you people in my constituency I love each and every one of you.

Enough, not too much time for greetings. I would like to talk more about our Budget, the Budget of Love. The love of the Government. The Government gives freely to make the people vision a reality.

As a Minister Deputy Speaker, and for all of you listening in, I do not like attending meetings. You probably observed that I am always going in and out, my body is not used to staying put, people that visits me at my office are only given 10 minutes, you will be lucky if you reach 15 minutes. When you come to my office, do not come and

tell me a story. You come and tell me your intention or problem and what you would like to be assisted. I will then do what I can do to help you.

Deputy Speaker, I would like to talk about what has been discussed yesterday up until this moment on this Appropriation Bill. Although I don't have any formal education to show but my formal education is from the Almighty above.

I believe our ultimate motive for entering this House is to support this Appropriation Bill. In my time as an Opposition Member from 2014 to 2018 I have never ever declined the Budget.

For this reason, I know that the children will get the benefit, the youth will get their benefit, the elderly will get their benefit, and my workers will get their pay. S, that's the reason why I support the Appropriation Bill.

The Government of the day does know that when I stand I stand to support the Bill and after I support the Bill I leave the House. That is the reason why I support the Bill because I know it will in turn help the people of the Cook Islands but mainly the people in my constituency.

During this time I have sat here Mr Deputy Speaker, I heard complaints, pointing fingers and making negative comments on this Budget. When you come to Parliament, your purpose is not to come and complain and blame the Budget, but rather to enter and support this. If you have any issues, go to the Minister and see them and raise the issues with them individually.

Since yesterday, I have looked at the Budget Book and the Opposition is claiming that they were not given enough time to read the Budget Book. They have been listening to the speeches since the morning and have not looked at the Budget Book.

Maybe they are looking at me and they are observing that I am always on my phone. I do that because there are people that's giving advice when to speak or what to talk about. To those of you that have text me I have now shared what you have text.

I would like Mr Deputy Speaker to let the House know, if I am allowed, if anyone has a request to come and see us the Ministers responsible in our departments. Mr Deputy Speaker, we must do this in the right way and with honour. In each of the departments I am responsible for I have told them we must work together, work in peace and be able to work with one another with love so that we can give back to our people.

So, I would like to mention again to the Members of Parliament if you have any issues come and see us the Ministers. If there is no peace in your heart then whatever comes out of your mouth is not true love. With peace and love everything will be joyful.

Deputy Speaker, I know that I have a lot of time left but in the further days we sit then I will share more of my thoughts.

I have a last request to Government and the Opposition to leave my Department the Corrective Services alone. I am the one who have experienced the place and not you.

I know what is happening in that Department. I have asked for them to be humble and respectful so that there is peace with the work we do.

So, I would like to extend my greetings to our inmates, the staff members and your Head of Ministry in the Ministry of Corrective Services. To the Ministry of Culture, from the staff members to the Secretary, to the BTIB staff members and your head and all the departments that I am responsible for, thank you very much.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I hope the Members of this House will take your advice.

I now recognise the Honourable Member from Pukapuka Honourable Tingika Elikana you have the Floor.

MR T. ELIKANA: Greetings to you Deputy Speaker of Parliament. May God give you courage for the good work you are doing for our country and also to your staff members. There is a reason why I spoke in the Pukapuka dialect and to ask the Clerk if he can employ a person who can speak the Pukapuka dialect to translate my speech because I always get jealous of the Member of Penrhyn when he speaks in Penrhyn and the Interpreters can translate his speech in this House.

It is not right that when the Prime Minister speaks and Sonny can translate the Prime Minister's Manihikian language and also the Honourable Leader of the Opposition's language. That is why I spoke in the Pukapuka dialect as something for you the staff of Parliament to consider.

To the Prime Minister, his Deputy and all the Members of Government, Kia Orana in the Name of our Lord. To the Opposition side, the Leader, Deputy and all the Members, Kia Orana in the Name of our Lord.

I was waiting for seven o'clock so my people can hear me talking but I think they are listening and I trust they can hear our deliberations on the island of Pukapuka. I will put aside my greetings to them because nobody is able to translate in our Pukapukan language.

I stand in support of this Appropriation for this fiscal year 2019 and while we deliberate on the principles and merits of this Appropriation Bill before us. I haven't got much to add so I won't take too long because most of the views has been expressed by those speakers before me.

I rise to highlight a section in this Appropriation, appropriately given to the name for this Appropriation, the Budget of love.

First, when we look at the Appropriation, Government have not entered into another loan because when we look at the loans incurred over these years these are being paid off as we move forward.

We have talked about the Te Mato Vai and the Manatua Cable as over the years as we progressed through with payments. I think this highlights Government's intention today to not increase the burden of taxation upon our people and the love for our

future generation so that they are not burdened with further debt repayments in the future. I think we should consider this within the Appropriation this year.

Second because of the love of the Government for its people today and the future, Government has conducted a good business which is right and I would like to give my appreciation to the Minister of Finance as well as the workers within the Ministry of Finance and Development for what has been made possible through this Appropriation.

We are aware that we have a very good situation with the economic development of our country and because it is doing well that means that the revenue is coming into the country and because of Government's love for its people within this appropriation they have done something good. Government have not just shared this money out but they have created something beautiful.

Government has created a fund for rainy days because we all know when heavy rain falls there is flooding, there is mud everywhere and we need funds to address this to purchase machineries to clean the roads. I believe we should really pay attention to this fund created by the Government so that when our country gets into trouble our people have funds to assist them to address these problems.

Secondly, the Sovereign Wealth Fund because when it comes to the time that we shall reap the benefits on our seabed, we must not waste these benefits. Government's philosophy is to deposit all these wealth to look after us in the future. Maybe in the future this fund will be able to assist our people from the young to the old. This is one area that I am very happy with in our Appropriation before the House.

Let me touch upon other subjects raised previously. I would like to give my thanks to all the heads of government that I have met with, like the Police, Justice, Environmental Services, Ministry of Health and the Prime Minister's office. I believe my people are listening to our broadcast. Meeting with these heads of the government we were able to secure assistance for my island people. Like my colleague from Penrhyn elaborated through meetings and discussions you will receive good assistance.

Through these meetings we were able to get assistance in the form of two policeman, one for Nassau and one for Pukapuka. Two health inspectors, one for Nassau and one for Pukapuka. A meeting with the office of the Prime Minister we were able to secure funds as allocated in this budget to appoint a Government Representative for the island of Nassau when in the past we were not able to do that. We know the situation for Nassau it is hard and difficult to reach the island of Nassau. Only the good sailors on ships can get there.

We can see in this Appropriation through discussions with those responsible we were able to secure funds for a boat to travel from Pukapuka to Nassau. This is not political but about the lives of our people. One of the important factors for this boat would be when someone on Nassau falls ill there is only one means to get them to Pukapuka is by this boat and they are then flown to Rarotonga for medical treatment.

Maybe this will be able to help Papa Tapi with his ships where he can just go directly to Pukapuka where we are able to pick up our cargo for Nassau.

When we look at the Appropriation and the allocations for large agencies of government. And when we look at the allocation for Environmental Services we were able to secure two workers in this agency and there is one for Pukapuka and one for Nassau. And the aim here is for our young people to be able to secure employment to remain on their islands and serve our people.

I will make my speech short and leave my other points for when we come into the Committee of Supply. I would like to commend the government for the allocation for the Law and Order sector. We see the vacancies in the newspaper seeking for people interested in working for the Ministry of Justice. Maybe the people in the Outer Islands are thinking that only Rarotonga is considered here, no your turn will come.

My request to the Ministers in this area to please start with Pukapuka first and then the other islands. These are the only points that I wanted to speak on Mr Deputy Speaker and I will further speak on the Appropriation when we go through the Committee stage.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member for Pukapuka and Nassau. The Floor is still open. I can see the Honourable Minister of Finance, the Honourable Mark Brown.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. I was going to stand and talk on behalf of our island Mauke as you are sitting up there in the Chair, but I am mindful of the time, Mr Deputy Speaker. I think most of the Members have spoken and I think there is only one left from the Opposition side and then our team.

We have the rest of this evening session to get through but perhaps it might be an appropriate time to have an adjournment now until our evening session to give us a little bit more extra time to go home and have a shower before we come back at 7.00 p.m.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Deputy Prime Minister and I call the Leader of the House.

MR T. ELIKANA: Mr Deputy Speaker I rise to move:

That the House be suspended forthwith until 7.00 p.m. this evening

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is there a Seconder?

Seconded by the Honourable Minister, Rose Brown

The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Parliament is suspended until 7.00 p.m.

Parliament suspended at 5.42 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 7.00 p.m.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please be seated. Kia Orana again to all of us Honourable Members this evening. I am happy to see all of us this evening.

For now, I will call further speakers to debate on the Motion for the Second Reading of the Bill on its principles and merits.

Now I can see the Honourable Albert Nicholas from RAPPa on the Floor.

MR A. NICHOLAS: Deputy Speaker of the House, Honourable Members of this Honourable House, Clerk of Parliament and your good staff, good evening. To the wonderful people in my constituency, the people of RAPPa, who are listening in to this wonderful programme this evening, good evening to them. Last but not least Deputy Speaker, to all the wonderful people of the Cook Islands listening to our programme this evening, Kia Orana.

Deputy Speaker, I did not stand to question the Bill before the House this evening, and may I clarify why Deputy Speaker, because I was not educated as an economist or even an accountant for that matter. That is why it confuses me sometimes when I listen to individuals who know nothing about accounting querying figures and numbers in the Appropriation Bill.

But Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak in support of our very educated people and most of them young ladies, and my daughter happens to be one of them at MFEM, who are well versed in the areas of economic development and accounting who we as Government Members have entrusted the process in crunching the numbers and figures that most appropriate works for our country. Deputy Speaker, if you ask me one plus one equals what, I would say eleven and that's how bad I am in accounting.

So, on that note Deputy Speaker, with the utmost heartfelt thank you I bestow upon those young Cook Islanders who are working at MFEM led by a very young Miss Williams and guided by my very own uncle who is the Secretary of Finance and with the wisdom of the Minister of Finance I rise here in this House, Deputy Speaker with utmost pride and one thousand percent support behind the Bill before the House this evening and that is me in a nutshell, Deputy Speaker. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for RAPPa. It's good to hear you tonight. Now, I can see the Honourable Minister Robert Tapaitau, you have the Floor.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Kia Orana to you Deputy Speaker and Kia Orana to all of us in this Honourable House, both on the Government side and the Opposition, greetings to you all.

Kia Orana to the Clerk and all the staff in the House. Kia Orana also to our people listening to our debate tonight not only here in Rarotonga, but also in the Outer Islands, greetings in the Name of our Lord.

I don't think I will be long. I think I will just be ahead of the Member for Palmerston. Firstly, Deputy Speaker, if you will allow me to send my greetings to my people.

Kia Orana, to Tongareva. To the servants of God, the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, the Council Members, the EO and all the workers on Tongareva greetings from myself and my wife. To all the Tongareva people everywhere in the world, greetings in the Name of the Lord.

Before I speak on the Appropriation of love, and because I am also the Minister for Environment, it is World Environment Day today. This week is Environment week and our theme is "Our biodiversity, Our food, Our health". Eco friendly stalls will be opposite the Banana Court tomorrow so please go along and give your support.

Regarding the Budget of Love, that is why it is called the love for the people. I would like to thank the Minister of Finance and his workers for the good work they have done for this Appropriation Bill.

I am not going to go further on all the allocations but I will speak about my constituency. Tongareva, you have four million dollars allocated for your cyclone shelter, there is \$500,000 for your new hospital, how about that. This is showing the love for the people.

I want to speak on what the Member of Matavera said earlier. He knows that this Appropriation is for love, we haven't had the meeting and he already supports it. He was talking about the roads earlier and if he moves here, his road will be done with hot mix.

One thing that we really need to talk about, I want to give thanks from myself and the Committee of the Infrastructure Bill to give appreciation to both the Northern Group and also the Southern Group for looking after us when we travelled to their islands. We all need to support this Budget of Love so we can show our love and support to our people.

The Select Committee visitation was well received by our people in the Northern Group and the Southern Group islands and this is the public consultation of the Infrastructure Bill.

I now would like to touch on the allocation for Infrastructure. There are some talk by our people about the slow progress of the up grading of our roads, well Rome was not built in a day.

I want to humbly ask our people of the Cook Islands to please be patient because when we start our road works. There is a program that we must follow. Not when you are given the money then you jump straight into it.

The project for our roads will definitely go forward and we will fix our roads. I am talking about all of us working together and not just me on my own. When our workers come into your constituency please show your support.

If you do not give your support the allocation set for your area will be redirected to another area. When we consider this the roads on Rarotonga will be fixed even the Outer Islands. The problem with the roads in Atiu is that there is a petition on this project. If there was no petition this road project would have been completed already.

Now the work would have advanced to Mauke and Mitiaro, so to our Cook Islands people, please be patient. On the issue of drainage, I assure you that this is an easy job. The problem is the section of land to where the water is channelled into that is the problem.

I would like to ask the Honourable Members to please talk to your people if drains are required for your roads. If the landowners does not permit their lands for the construction of drains there will not be any progress in this area.

This is a plea to the people of the Cook Islands to stop complaining about ICI on the radio and the newspaper. I also ask the Members of the Opposition to please stop your accusations of ICI. All I ask of you Honourable Members to do is give me your support so that our work can move forward.

I would rather be working on the road instead of butting heads with people. I am like you and it hurts for me too.

Every time it rains, if you do not believe me ask my wife. I get up because of the rain and I know what it can cause. You may say that this man is not worried but I am one person that is troubled when it rains. While you people are sleeping I am going around the island checking the roads and drains.

I do this because of my love for our people. I will always say this because I hear people saying, why is this not done and why is this not completed – a lot of complaining.

You are so lucky that there are projects assigned for your island. From the last time I left my island of Penrhyn only one project was done for the island and that is the solar project. In those days you the Opposition was in government and then later the CIP. It is sad that this project was done some 16 years ago.

You should be happy instead of complaining about unfinished projects. We leave that behind and let us move forward. This Minister standing before you, he will do the right thing and complete all the unfinished projects.

I will come back to the topic of our roads and drainage because a lot of our people are really concerned about this. For me I want to thank the government because many parties and government have come and gone. Our roads are still the same and no change have been made until today. I would like to thank the government for they have changed the road sealing into hot mix from Nikao to Tupapa. At least they have tried to change our roads.

We can see the work that is done in Matavera and on to Ngatangia. When we come to Tupapa it will be chip seal. This is laying the ground foundation for the hot mix sealing. We are always jumping the gun and asking why the hot mix. So please calm down and keep talking to us. This is the advice given to me – Robert please be patient. Therefore I would like to say to all of you to be patient.

Mitiaro, Mangaia and Mauke there is only one project assigned for each of these island. Again please be patient and remember this is the budget of love. You can say what you like and this is my own opinion. As previously mentioned by the Honourable Member for RAPPa some of you will not understand what is written in this budget.

The good thing is the Minister of Finance and I are always talking together a lot. My office door is always open to our people all time. But only three of you have visited my office.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would like to interrupt you Honourable Minister, your time is up. Before I give the Floor to our Prime Minister I just want to say that Honourable Member we are happy with your speech because you have spoken in your island dialect in the Parliament.

Now, I see the Honourable Henry Puna the Prime Minister on the Floor.

HON. H. PUNA: Mr Deputy Speaker I stand to move:

**That normal speaking time be extended to the Honourable
Minister, Robert Tapaitau**

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. Is there a Seconder?

Seconded by the Honourable Member for Pukapuka/Nassau, Tingika Elikana

The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Honourable Minister you may continue speaking.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Like I said before, my doors are always open. If you have any problem no matter how small you may think it is, please come and see me. Not come in here and then during Question Time you ask me about an issue you have. I think it is much better if you come and see me and we sort the issue out in my office.

Further, on the matter of the airport mentioned earlier on, we are looking into that. When we eventually tar seal the airport of Tongareva, Manihiki, Pukapuka and Rakahanga the only problem is when we seal the roads over there, there won't be any more people travelling to the Southern Group islands.

Everyone will be going to the Northern Group islands because the team that went to the Northern Group they were amazed. They saw that this is paradise. Penrhyn there you are. Any food you want to eat. It doesn't even take five minutes to get paua. There's Penrhyn for you.

Maybe people can't see into my heart and within this Budget of Love is the money allocated to us. Maybe if there were many of us earlier on then I would have cried. From the beginning when my father was not around everything stopped there. It doesn't matter. I am here. I can start again.

Therefore, please I ask for patience to allow us to work. Maybe sometimes you wonder and say further bad things because I am not replying. Please don't make me reply to your comments. I'm a better person when I just sit and work because it's important for our people.

I will keep repeating this. This is for our people. I am here to benefit the people of the Cook Islands. It's the results I want. I say this all the time. It's the results. To get the results we need to work together. When I say work together not me doing all the work and you just talking. I think this is enough from me. I will try and reach the end of my time.

One project that is being planned for Penrhyn, Manihiki, Rakahanga and Pukapuka for a proper wharf to be built. We are aware that when there is no wharf it becomes hard for the islands. Furthermore in the next following years when the money is given please don't be surprised because as we all understand we fight for our own island.

I would like to further speak about some of the things mentioned by the Member of Parliament for Pukapuka. I understand he is quite troubled because if his boat is not finished it will become a big problem for the people of Nassau and Pukapuka. I think most of you won't understand or take to heart the things that we speak about here. For example, when one person gets sick in Nassau how is this person possible to be referred to Pukapuka.

This is one of the things that we must understand. Don't just think of ourselves here. Don't just think about the islands close to us and we must think of the Northern Group Islanders. I think we are the real Cook Islanders. We are Cook Islanders ourselves. Not just you. We are Cook Islanders as well in the Northern Group islands. There is always mention about the boats not reaching the Northern Group. Now we can see that this is going to happen in the very near future.

I have just one more minute. That's okay. I can end here. Just one more thought. To all my people in Cairns who are going through a bereavement at the moment. May God bless you during this time. You, the family that is in bereavement, greetings and good luck.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I can see the Honourable Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, Henry Puna.

HON. H. PUNA: Greetings have been extended before the House today. I would just like to endorse that and to greet all our people listening in.

A special consideration to my island of Manihiki, the family of Mama Louisa who was buried this evening. My condolences to the family, the children, the in-laws, the grandchildren, all the families. May God keep you all. Special thanks to Aunty Nitika for your live feed on the internet for us to be part of this occasion. Our condolences also to all the families and households that have been part of this bereavement.

To the family of Papa Errol Young during his unveiling of his tombstone this evening, our words of condolences to you as well.

To this lady from the island of Atiu – Moe Nio who passed away recently and a strong member of the Golf Club of Rarotonga. I am happy to be part of her memorial service at the Golf Club this evening at 6 p.m. while we were on our break.

I come back to the Appropriation before us in this House. The essence of this Appropriation has been touched upon by other Members, especially from the Minister from the island of Penrhyn. He has completed elaborating the essence of the spirit behind this Appropriation. I remember the chant from the island of Aitutaki. It talks about people coming together because of love, because of love.

I am surprised with the Member from Tautu. He recited his chant yesterday and yet left it to me to explain. I suspect he is not a full Aitutakian. He is Pukapukan. Never mind. One day we shall be enlightened.

Deputy Speaker, I would like to dwell on some points that have been discussed many times over the past few months because our people are still in the dark as to what is the truth.

First of all, the issue about the Joint Ministerial Forum between the Government of the Cook Islands and the Government of New Zealand last Friday on Aitutaki. I want to assure our people that this platform has resulted in the strengthening of our partnership and friendship between us and New Zealand.

Last year, the new idea that we proposed was so our agencies can contact New Zealand ministries and agencies directly. Before that we had to go through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and if the thoughts do not combine, well it gets all struck there. Right now, no. Our communication is open with our friends in New Zealand.

The Secretary of Health is calling directly her Health counterpart in New Zealand as well as the Head of Immigration and Customs. So there is no longer any bottleneck in us seeking communication with our counterparts in New Zealand. This is the same with our Forum in Aitutaki. Even though Aitutaki did not bless us with good weather, their excuse was simple.

They said that when it rains and there is wind that is a blessing for a delegation. But I think the truth is that it is sin that have been bestowed upon them but this did not cool down the warmth our meetings with the New Zealand delegation.

The topic deliberated on was pension. We know our people are collecting this from the 1st January. Our only request please inform us as to who are the Cook Islanders collecting this in New Zealand so they do not double dip with our pension. However, this is going smoothly.

On the assistance to the Police we have been given assurance from the Minister of Police in New Zealand they will assist us in addressing all the problems including the drugs have been discovered on our island. The real urgent problem is we hear it is being discovered in schools and we need to stamp it out.

The problem with us is everybody here knows who the Police on the island are so there is no way for them to infiltrate into the centre of these people conducting this. The only way is the assistance from outside that is coming.

But I was also surprised with the complaints from our friends from the other side. I read in the paper that the fault is being blamed on Government for cutting their meeting with this delegation. But it was explained later that due to the change in the programme of the Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters he arrived on Thursday instead of the planned Wednesday, and it was too late

He could not arrive then as he was the Acting Prime Minister while the Prime Minister Ardern was in Paris. But I am happy that they did manage to organise a meeting with the delegation on Saturday morning.

Law and order, this is a priority in this appropriation and it is right because our hard working Police works day and night. They have been blamed by the blamers and yet they do not have adequate payment. They are happy with this appropriation for them.

I see that included in Law and Order, is Customs, Police, Justice and Crown Law. We Cook Islanders are holding on to high posts within these sectors in the Pacific. We are the Chair of these associations.

Immigration is right now meeting at the Edgewater today. Our daughter Kairangi is the Chair. The Pacific Law Offices, our Solicitor General is the Chairman of this group this year. So the situation with our country is good so this increase in their allocation will give them encouragement especially Police in working hard to address all these issues before us.

Regarding the Seventh Minister, please do not be mean. There has been enough explanation that the load of the work is increasing today. If we consider not long ago we had nine Ministers reduced down to six and today things are changing here and all over the world and it keeps changing today.

The world is changing unfortunately for the worst and we need to stay on top of it and we can only do Deputy Speaker if we have enough resources, manpower to man all

that needs to be manned. We are trying our best today. Our Associate Ministers are helping us but even then the load is still heavy to carry.

The Ministerial numbers were reduced for economic reasons we were broke and we could not afford it and it made sense then. And yet today milk and honey is flowing freely and we need to increase our Minister numbers. It is not because we are greedy to raise it up to nine but maybe we will raise it to ten but this is very important, it is a serious matter.

When we started this session I did ask this House to progress our meeting because on the 14th two Ministers will be departing to attend meetings and I myself will be chairing the SPC meeting in Noumea, New Caledonia. As I was saying this I could hear one of my colleagues saying there's too much travel. Travel is not fun especially when you travel for work. There is no time for rest. Sometimes you arrive in the middle of the night and the next morning the meeting starts.

You know when you travel around to the other side of the world your body clock is turned upside down and yet we have to put up with it. It is our job. More importantly people expect it of us.

Outer Islands, I have heard some comments that sounds like scientists from the Opposition Members as if they have lived in the Outer Islands. Some of them have only been on the island for Select Committees for five minutes and think they know a lot about our islands.

None of the Northern Group islanders have said any negative things in this House. There is only one that complained and that is Tamarua. So, therefore the Member for Ruaau, this is the person that you need to speak with. But thank you for the thoughts. For now I think we are relying too much on the Government. We don't just rely on Government for money but other things, the work that we do we are relying too much on the Government.

I am very proud of my Island Council in Manihiki because they do not rely a lot on the Government here. They have the big machines that we have sent to the Outer Islands and they are using it.

Now there are new things in place on the island. The BCI are giving small loans to people to improve the houses and this is ten thousand dollars. The people are working together on the island helping each other and it's making the ten thousand dollars go much, much further.

I will ask us not to rely too much on others. That is why these big machines have been given to each of the islands so we can learn to be independent. The Government's job is to start the machines.

Transport, yes it's true that's one of the obstacles in the Northern group islands, is proper transport. My time is up.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Prime Minister your time is up. I see the Honourable Member Tingika Elikana.

MR T. ELIKANA: Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to move a Motion:

**For an extension of speaking time for the Honourable Prime Minister,
Henry Puna**

I know some of the things he will say will comfort me.

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

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tama Tuavera

Thank you, Honourable Member. I will put the Question and the Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

You may continue Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you, Deputy Speaker, thank you Honourable Members.

Yes our big problem is transport. If we are able to overcome this obstacle together, our life will be much better in the Northern Group.

Well, that is why we have beautiful islands in the Northern Group because it is far away from Rarotonga. My concern however is that when the sealing of the airport is completed, there will be no difficulty in paying the airfare and you will all travel to the Northern Group and eat our paua until there is nothing left.

Nevertheless, this is the boat Papa Tapi bought to help service our islands and that's what we depend on. Only he knows how to run his business to become successful but for me it's not ideal because his boats are too small. It cannot carry enough cargo to go around all of the Northern Group islands and we have the same problem over and over again of cargo being left behind and when it's perishable foodstuff, hey presto.

But never mind because the Japanese Government have agreed to build a ship for us. The ship is not for all of us but only to service the Northern Group islands. This dream will soon become a reality but we will wait.

I heard some of the complaints raised by my friends in the Opposition about some issues in the Northern Groups. Some of those comments were right, such as the issue with water but what I am taken back by the fact that when we brought our people in the Northern Group to Rarotonga on a nice and comfortable ship to celebrate our 50th Anniversary, you people criticised Government through the local newspaper and everywhere else. You can't do that. This is only a one time opportunity where we can spoil our people.

With regards to the Cook Islands Consulate in Auckland, some of the Members in the Opposition criticised this office. My friend admitted to be one of those people who

complained. This office does not belong to Government. The office belongs to our Cook Islands people and it is a place where our people can go to.

We all understand that the majority of our people in New Zealand live in Auckland. This is their only channel to reach us and that is through the Consulate Office. This office has been operational for six years now. Our people in New Zealand informed us that they are currently faced with problems concerning our referral patients to New Zealand because sometimes when these patients go to New Zealand they have no families to go to and this office takes responsibility in looking after them but charity can only extend so far.

After six months, one year or two years, it becomes a burden and it's becoming more and more often these days. We cannot close our ears to the problems encountered by our people because these are our people and they are our blood and bone.

It is now time for Government to review the office and to see how we can better improve it to help our people. Therefore, I would like to inform this House now that the Cook Islands Consulate office is now located at a new place close to the old office but it is much bigger.

Now there is a joint conversation between Immigration, Justice, Crown Law, OPM, Foreign Affairs to talk about how we can move forward to improve the services provided by the Consulate Office. Captain Tama please understand that there is no concrete decision made about this. The officials are still looking into this.

Let's be careful with what we say. If we use information without the complete information, we will say wrong things. I was a bit shocked that my friend the Honourable Member for Ngatangia seconded the Motion to extend my speaking time. I will now turn around and bite him.

I am reminded of the parable about the nine lepers that Jesus healed. When they were healed they ran away and only one came back to thank the Lord.

When the road in Muri was completed by the Minister of ICI and his staff, the Honourable Member quickly conveyed words of appreciation to Triad and everybody else but Government. Maybe he conveyed his appreciation to Government on radio but it was not put on Facebook because that's a faster way.

But I like the comments made by the DPM, he said, you are welcome. The message here is we are all working together for each other and for our country. There is no politics involved in the work we do. We all want to do the best for our country and that's what this budget sets out to achieve.

So, I commend strongly this budget before us and our people.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister. I now call the Minister responsible to conclude the debate on the principles and merits of the Bill.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Firstly, I would just like to thank all the Members of Parliament for your useful comments that you have made in regards to the Bill. Before I speak to the Bill and the principles and merits let me take this opportunity because I didn't have the chance earlier to give a warm welcome to our listeners of the Parliament session.

Firstly, greetings to all our people in the Outer Islands listening to the radio. I extend special greetings to my electoral Takuvaine and Tutakimoa and to all the parents and families listening to the beautiful presentation of our budget. And of course to our people overseas who messaged me because they are following our debate on Facebook.

Mr Deputy Speaker, because you cannot address your people in Akatokamanava as you are sitting in that chair, please allow me to speak for you to our people in Akatokamanava.

The appropriated allocated this year for our island Akatokamanava is just under four million dollars. I can see the different allocations given for the island and soon the renewable energy project on the island will be opened.

And also allocated is payment towards the caregivers, the elderly, and the child benefit. It's almost half a million going to you Akatokamanava and this is a huge assistance going out to our island.

I can see also that the increase in the Island Government - there is an increase there of nearly \$200,000. How beautiful. And there you are Deputy Speaker, the good news for our people on Akatokamanava. I believe this is not the end of it.

Now Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been looking through our comments from Day One and coincidentally I was reading through the Cook Islands Newsletter by John Scott and I saw that John Scott's letter was almost word for word with the Leader of the Opposition's comments regarding the Budget in Day One and I was just wondering who was advising who? But the Honourable Member made some comments regarding the legal procedures of the Appropriation Bill that I felt it should be addressed.

She mentioned about some legal issues for the MFEM and I note the Clauses in the Bill – Clause 13 regarding Estimates and asking that the Estimates should accompany the Appropriation Bill. Well as I explained, the Bill itself is the statement outlining the total appropriation of the Crown and the Estimates are the numbers that we saw that accompanied the page of the Bill which outlines the revenues and expenditures for the Crown.

Part 5 of the reporting requirement of the Bill is a forecast or Statement of Account required by this Act and it shows the total operating expenses, the total operating revenues, the balance which is either surplus or deficit, the level of debt and the level of total net worth. It is also required to supply the financial position and the financial performance, cash flows and borrowings and I am happy to report that all of that information is here in Book 1.

There was also reference made to Article 26 of the Act about the Statement of Accounts. That by the third month of the next financial year we should have sent to the Government Auditors a financial statement covering the previous year and that we have failed to do this.

Let me point out though because the Government was accused of duplicity and duplicity – the definition is to be deceitful or not be truthful. Because the Clause 26 of the MFEM Act Statement of Accounts says “the Financial Secretary shall as soon as practicable after the end of each financial year and this qualifying clause basically means that if it cannot be done then it will not be tabled and we know that our audit accounts have been behind for a number of years since the 90s. But they do eventually get done and do get tabled before this House.

This Government has done something about it by investing millions of dollars in new financial management information systems which is currently being rolled out now throughout Government Ministries and once this is in place the days of outstanding audit accounts will be a thing of the past.

The simple fact of the matter is we have a very manual and very fragmented financial system that exists across the whole of Government agencies which makes it a very time costly manner to compile the information required for the Audit Office. But the good news is that it is happening.

There was also a statement that we were required to introduce the Bill before the last day of the first month of the financial year which is the 31st of July. Well, this does not mean that you have to introduce the Bill by the 31st of July. It means that you have to introduce it before the 31st of July and this is very consistent and similar to the wording in Section 12 of the Public Finance Act of New Zealand and the fact is as we’ve seen in previous years New Zealand will introduce their Appropriation Bill in the month of May.

So, we are doing nothing wrong in introducing our own Appropriation Bill in the month of June.

It gets a little bit, I guess, moving into a job like a Member of Parliament as opposed to spending quite a considerable number of years in the Judiciary where in the Judiciary their job is to interpret the law but here in Parliament in the Legislature our job is to make the law and that’s what we are focused on. That’s what our job is, is to ensure that we make the law and most important law that we pass every year is the Appropriation Bill. And it is this Bill, the appropriation of money that allows our Government Departments and allows the function of Government to continue in serving our people and delivering the outputs that the Government has prioritized.

Now the Opposition may want to sit in Parliament for three months and interpret the Bill and go through every legal aspect of it. I’m sorry the Government is far too busy and our people want us to pass this Budget and get out and do the work. We cannot delay that work because we have been through periods with the electoral term every four years when the elections coincide with the Budget tabling and delays the passing of the Budget.

Ministries and Departments are forced to sit and survive on monthly allocations which are drip fed to them and have no way to carry out their long-term work programs until and unless the Budget has been passed. And this was the way the Democratic Government operated before we became Government. It was not unusual to have a Budget passed in late September or November of the financial year.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will interrupt you Minister of Finance.

Our meeting will suspend for 30 minutes.

HON. M. BROWN: If I may Mr Deputy Speaker, as I think I am the last speaker in this particular part of the debate on the Budget for the principles and merits. I believe the Members of the Opposition would like some time with the Budget team tomorrow to go through in more detail the Budget Books before we enter into the Committee of Supply.

May I ask the indulgence of the House to continue on to finish my particular aspect of the conclusion of the principles and merits without having to have a half an hour break and return for the remainder of my turn. In that way we can adjourn the House until tomorrow's sitting if that is acceptable to the House.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Deputy Speaker, I stand to support the Motion of the Deputy Prime Minister and also because of what I am going to move after his speech.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Tina Browne.

I see the Leader of the House.

MR T. ELIKANA: Thank you Deputy Speaker.

As is normal practice in this House, I as Leader of the House move:

That the Minister continue his speech and to continue our deliberations

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Leader of the House.

I seek for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Minister, Vaine Mokoroa

I put the Question. The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

You may continue Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. I think in light of this consensus from the House I will cut my comments short.

But let me just say this in wrapping up, this Budget that we have tabled before the House today is a transformational budget. It is transformational in the way that we now manage our money as a country with the establishment of the Stabilisation Fund mentioned by Members of the Opposition that they have seen of \$56 million.

The Members would have seen in the Budget Book and those who would have attended the Budget Breakfast would see that in the coming years in our forecast in the medium term that our economy will generate some further significant surplus and there are two factors in this Mr Deputy Speaker. One is the growing economy that we have.

Secondly, a large number of our capital projects will come to an end so the fiscal space available to our country in future years will be quite substantial. But I would caution our Members and also our people that during the good times we must ensure that we put aside some funds because inevitably we will come across some bad times and we must be prepared for that.

This is an ancient lesson Mr Deputy Speaker. It comes from the Bible during the time of King Nebuchadnezzar. An interpretation of his dreams by the Prophet Daniel who said that he would have seven good years and seven lean years, also known as Joseph. So this is the lesson for us, Mr Deputy Speaker why we have established the stabilization fund firstly.

We are not locking this money away but there are rules around how we can use it. If our prosperity continues then the excess surplus funding that we receive we can use it either to fund without borrowing additional large capital projects or we can use it to settle existing debt. However, when we do hit hard times or we are struck by natural disaster we will be able to draw on these funds to ensure Government operations continue uninterrupted.

The second fund we have established, Mr Deputy Speaker is the Sovereign Wealth Fund. So, far there is no money in this Sovereign Wealth Fund but we anticipate that in the event our Seabed Minerals programme gets under way and we realise the treasure of our country that sits deep in our ocean then we must make sure we protect that wealth, that new income that we will receive and that is the role of the Sovereign Wealth Fund income derived from any mineral activities in the future will be put into this Sovereign Wealth Fund to ensure its protection and its use not just for this generation but also future generations.

As the Prime Minister alluded to, we live in a changing world. It wasn't that long ago when our only real foreign development partner was New Zealand. Today it's not just New Zealand but also Australia has announced that it will be setting up a diplomatic mission in the Cook Islands. We engage with China, we have diplomatic relations with Japan, Korea and numerous other countries around the world totalling nearly fifty countries.

Of the top six economies in the world, we have diplomatic relations with five of them. Unfortunately the USA is looking to close its borders while the rest of the world is looking to open its trade borders.

However, the way we do business now as a country that is regarded as high income status and I recall the last Parliament sitting our Honourable Member from Ngatangiia was asking about the fake news about us being a graduated country. Well it's not fake it's true.

By January next year we will definitely be classified by the OECD as a country that has graduated to developed status. So, how we do business with other countries in the rest of the world will change and that is why we are positioning ourselves with the people that need to work in the public service with the requirement to have more representation at Cabinet level to be able to meet these challenges of the future.

Coming back home, Mr Deputy Speaker, this budget took quite a bit of work with our Government agencies and also the Ministers, the Associate Ministers and our Caucus Members over a period of months since October last year. I can understand the Opposition feeling a bit that they miss out but the preparation of a Budget and Appropriation Bill is the job of the Government. That's one of the Government's key roles that it must do every year is to produce a fiscally responsible budget.

So, I would like to pay tribute really to the new Cabinet Ministers that we have had in our Cabinet since the elections last year who I have to say along with our Associate Ministers who were very, very active and also our Caucus Members particularly those Members who have chosen not to live in Rarotonga but chosen to remain in their island and to be with their people.

The total involvement of our team was exceptional and it is this team spirit working closely with our officials at the Ministry of Finance and our Budget Committee that we have been able to not just prepare a budget that is fiscally responsible and forward looking but we have changed the way that Government agencies now prepare their budget statements and their business plans.

You recall our election was in June last year and we had an electoral process that dragged through to November and we had new Heads of Ministries that were appointed in the new financial year. So, really these Government Ministries and the Ministers only had about six months' worth of work that was available to them from a confirmed budget. But boy did they hit the ground running.

One of the biggest constraints to the Government expenditure has been the domestic capacity of local companies and Ministries themselves to actually implement a lot of the work. However, more work was completed and expenditure was undertaken by the Ministry of ICI in six months than has been taken in any previous financial year by the Ministry. Which is why we were confident that the appropriation of \$8 million for roads which is an increase by four times what we normally expend on roads. We are confident this year that the Ministry working with our private sector partners will deliver.

We are confident that over \$4 million we will spend in the construction of cyclone shelters this year will also be delivered and it will be a huge challenge I know for the Minister of ICI and the Government Ministry but there's \$40 million worth of capital projects that need to be delivered just in this financial year and they have that challenge ahead of them and I am very confident that they will be able to meet that challenge.

So, all in all Mr Deputy Speaker, this Budget has increased the Budgets of every Government Ministry. It will increase the salaries and wages of every public servant and the minimum wage increase will ensure the increase of every private sector minimum wage worker as well. I note that the only I guess comments coming from the Opposition is asking for even more money. So, I can only summarise that they support this Budget because it's increased it but they want it further increased. Well, further support is required.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, I look forward to the discussions that we will have once we enter the Committee of Supply and have more detailed discussion over the Appropriations across our Government Ministries.

And I will be more than happy to request the Financial Secretary to provide whatever resources he can to ensure our Members of Parliament both on the Government side and the Opposition side are fully briefed, fully informed of the content of this Appropriation Bill. Because that is one thing that this Government has done over the years Mr Deputy Speaker and that is to be open and transparent.

There is no requirement under the Ministry of Finance Act to provide quarterly financial reports and statements on Government expenditure but we do it anyway and we have been doing it now Mr Deputy Speaker for the last seven years. There is no requirement to put out a public statement on the Appropriation Bill, a simplified statement for people to be able to understand but we do that every year.

So, when people say that oh, we're trying to hide things or we're not being honest, there it is. All on-line. And if you don't believe the Ministry of Finance then go and download the report from the Asian Development Bank or from Standard & Poors or now from the International Monetary Fund which has a clear analysis of the financial health of our country every year.

I would like to thank the Members of the House, yourself Mr Deputy Speaker for allowing this continuation of my wrap-up of the Budget to enable us to close up earlier tonight and have a full briefing with the team tomorrow on the Budget before we get into Committee of Supply. So thank you very much and goodnight.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister of Finance.

Honourable Members, I put the Question.

The Question is:

That the Appropriation Bill be now read a Second time?

Motion agreed to

DEPUTY CLERK AT THE TABLE (H. MAUNGA): A Bill Intitule: An Act to appropriate certain sums of money out of the Cook Islands Government Account to the services of the year ending on the 30th day of June 2020 and to appropriate the supplies granted in this period.

BILL READ A SECOND TIME

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: As per Standing Order 306 (1) the Appropriation Bill has been read a Second time. It stands committed to the Committee of Supply.

Now I can see the Leader of the Opposition.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Mr Deputy Speaker, yesterday I requested for extra time for us, the Opposition, to give us time to discuss more on the Appropriation Bill.

As previously mentioned by the Minister of Finance, this Budget has been prepared for over a month and he has given acknowledgment to all the people, to all the different Ministers that were part of getting this Appropriation Bill together. I didn't request that we become part of preparing this Appropriation Bill.

The only request I made was for us to be given maybe one or two nights to look deeply and go over the Budget in detail. I am very happy that I am able and given the opportunity to adjourn the meeting so that it allows us time to meet up with the staff members of MFEM, for us to be given the opportunity to discuss more and to go into detail on the Appropriation Bill.

Now, I can see maybe the Government understands that we need to look into this and help with understanding this Budget.

So, I now stand here to move a Motion:

That this meeting is adjourned now until 1.00 p.m.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. Can I have a Seconder?

I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Deputy Speaker, I stand here and fully support this Motion.

May I also ask and remind us to be present at the *turou* and welcoming in of our beautiful *Vaka Marumaru Atua* tomorrow morning at the Avatiu wharf before we go to our meeting at MFEM. I do understand and I have heard that St Joseph's School and also Avarua School will be part of this welcoming party.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Seconded by the Honourable Prime Minister, Henry Puna

I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Our meeting is adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday 6 June at 1.00 p.m. in the afternoon.

I now request the Prime Minister as you were the last speaker to say our closing prayer for tonight?

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you Honourable Prime Minister and thank you Honourable Members.

Parliament is now adjourned until Thursday 6 June at 1.00 p.m.

Goodnight all.

Parliament adjourned at 9.00 p.m.