



FORTY-NINTH SESSION

Hansard Report

49th Session

Second Meeting

Volume 2

FRIDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2018

MADAM SPEAKER TOOK THE CHAIR AT 10.00 a.m.

OPENING PRAYER

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please be seated.

Greetings to all of us on this beautiful morning. Greetings also to our friends in the public gallery, as well as to our people listening in from the Outer Islands – Kia Orana to you all on this beautiful morning. We also welcome our media people in the public gallery this morning.

Honourable Members, may I say how very happy I am to see all of you go for your medical check-up this morning and what they tell me, only three people did not go for check-up. It is a wonderful, wonderful thing for our people to know that you, as leaders, are leading by example especially with the issue of NCD in encouraging our people to go for a health check-up. I know as a nurse that sometimes you do not know that you have high blood pressure.

Sometimes you do not know that you have diabetes until you have a stroke or a heart attack and that is the first time you will find out. And this is one way we can, at least being proactive, in being able to be treated. If you have it, they are both treatable conditions and you can manage it.

So, thank you very much for taking the invitation as we invited this wonderful bus and a big medical team this morning to come to Parliament. We will extend those many thanks to our Secretary of Health and the doctors and nurses who have come to visit us this morning.

MADAM SPEAKER'S ANNOUNCEMENT

I will extend again the invitation to everybody from our New Zealand High Commissioner for the luncheon that was going to be held at the Tamarind next week on Tuesday but it is now going to be held at the Crown Beach at 12.00 p.m. Please confirm your attendance today before you leave so we can give them the list of people for arrangement.

Honourable Members, we will now begin with our Question Time and that will be for half an hour.

QUESTION TIME

I see the Honourable Te-Hani Brown. You have the Floor.

MISS T. BROWN: Thank you Madam Speaker. Good morning to us all present here today.

My question is to the Minister of Finance. I am not sure if this has been raised before but it is based on students from here that go to University in New Zealand, especially those who go without scholarships.

In New Zealand, we are classed as domestic students so that means we qualify for financial assistance through Study Link. This is what students use to pay their University fees, student loans and allowances and we are also guaranteed interest-free student loans once we start working and our repayments automatically deduct from our wages as well.

But when the students from here graduate and they decide to come back home to start contributing to the economy here, they are then classed as overseas based borrowers and then they get charged a ridiculous amount of interest on top of their already high student loans.

So can we as a nation look at maybe negotiating an agreement with the New Zealand Ministry of Finance or maybe Inland Revenue so that we can still be classed as domestic based borrowers to avoid having to pay interest? And also maybe creating an easier payment scheme through our payroll here that can also be easily accessed by IRD in New Zealand so that our payments just go straight through there. We do not need to go through the struggle of trying to pay it because we have to do telegraphic transfers and all that.

Because I think this is one of the smaller reasons that students do not want to come back here to avoid having to pay the extra interest. I also speak from personal experience.

Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Minister of Finance.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Madam Speaker.

This is the second most intelligent question that has come from the Opposition side this week.

Thank you very much for the question from the Honourable Member because these are all important matters – student loans, the payment on student loans, the interest that is been attracted. This has been an issue for our people now for a number of years.

Honourable Members will recall that the Government undertook a State visit to New Zealand earlier this year where Ministers at the time for Education, Health, Finance –

amongst others and they met with their counterparts in the New Zealand Government. Our Honourable Ministers in our delegation raised important issues in this State visit with the New Zealand Government.

I am happy to say that since our discussions with New Zealand, work has been done, firstly, to look at ways for Cook Islanders with student loans living in the Cook Islands to be able to make payments through a local bank account to settle their loan instead of having to make those costly telegraphic transfers that the Member alluded to.

Also the matter of interest free, student loans was addressed and has been confirmed that Cook Islands students carrying New Zealand passports living in the Cook Islands should be attracting interest free loans and that anomaly has been corrected by the New Zealand authorities.

Further to that, Madam Speaker the Government is also looking at how we can encourage our students to undertake University studies to be qualified whilst taking out student loans and once they complete their degrees they come back and work in the Cook Islands for the term it took them to complete their degree and Government will pay their loan.

This Madam Speaker was a way that we could look at to incentivise our youth to get qualifications at the University level and to enable us to have a continuous pool of qualified graduates coming through into the local work force. This was the plans that we are looking at for students who are going to University now. However, we do still have an issue with past students who are carrying significant student loans.

Our discussions with the New Zealand Government also involve ways to prevent occurrences we experienced in the past where people are being stopped at the New Zealand boarder because of outstanding student loans that have not been paid back.

The Government also further investigated with New Zealand authorities to confirm the level of debt owed by Cook Islands students living in the Cook Islands and how we can make arrangements to make it easier for our people to service their student loans and to ensure we can remove the penalties and interest that has accumulated on some of these historic student loans.

I am happy to report that the New Zealand Government, Minister of Education, the Prime Minister of New Zealand herself and also the IRD of New Zealand are working closely with our Ministry of Education and our Ministry of Finance to find solutions and ways to implement these recommendations that we have made.

Unfortunately, we had a minor inconvenience with the General Election taking place which stopped some of this work from progressing but now that the Government has been confirmed, I am confident that our staff in the Ministry of Education will pursue this and push this agenda item as a priority for Cook Islands students. So, this is very good news.

Since the State visit and the initial discussions, already a number of important matters have been addressed essentially interest free loans for those Cook Islands students

who are residing here in the Cook Islands and also work to commence the pay back of any student loans if students come back and work here in the Cook Islands after the completion of their study.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Honourable Member Kitai you have the Floor.

MR M. KITAI: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to reiterate the question I posed to the Minister yesterday. I believe that he did not answer my question and my question is regarding widows if there is any assistance for them, not the men just regarding the women with children.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, I see the Honourable Minister for Internal Affairs.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Good morning, Madam Speaker and good morning to all of us this morning. I may have briefly touched on the response yesterday but have not been very clear in explaining the answers directed to the Member.

The question is, if funding is available to widows especially those who have young school children to look after and whether this support is available from Internal Affairs. I had a meeting with the staff of Internal Affairs particularly on this area.

The situation in the Outer Islands is revealing that there are some very old parents who are looked after by 13, 14, 15-year-old school children. And because the policy and criteria written by Internal Affairs has been specific, this is one of the grey areas that need to be looked at. My understanding is that the Ministry will look into this issue raised by the Member of Parliament on the elderly who are currently being looked after by young children who are still going to school. I am very positive that there will be a good outcome out of this discussion with Internal Affairs.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

MR V. TUPA: Thank you, Madam Chair. My question is posed to the Minister for ICI. I think this is a very important question especially for us in Rarotonga. This question is related to the recycling centre in Arorangi. I know, and the Minister also knows that the feasibility study has been done on the recycling centre in Arorangi.

During my employment in Government, a warning was given to Government regarding this recycling centre in Arorangi because it became obvious to us that this centre is full. I believe this situation remains with the centre and this was one of the issues discussed with landowners here on Rarotonga. They confirmed that they will not grant any more land for this purpose.

This issue was discussed during our consultations and we asked the landowners where they can dispose our rubbish. From that time, a plan was created as to what we shall

do with our waste here on Rarotonga. I am asking the Minister whether you are continuing with this plan or are there new initiatives to address this problem as well as to consider the waste from the Outer Islands.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Minister of ICI.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Madam Speaker, Kia Orana, Honourable Members of the House.

To answer the question from the Honourable Member for Matavera, we all know that rubbish is a problem worldwide and that is waste management. There are plans in place to rehabilitate the current landfill. There was also a feasibility study done in 2016 like the Member was mentioning, and in that report, it was recommended for us not to use an incinerator until about another ten years, but in saying that, we are in discussions and plans are in place to look at the next five or ten years as proposed by that report.

But going forward from today, we will roll out aggressive promos for waste reduction. We also have a Cabinet submission which we want to give to Cabinet after this and that is involving a ban on use of single plastic bags. This topic has been around for a while so I have taken it upon myself to make the hard decision to go ahead with this. It may not be a popular one but it is the way to go.

We also want to introduce disposal fees when we bring in cans, plastic bottles so it helps to pay for the shipment of these items off our island. We also want to promote the four “Rs”- Refuse, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. So, in saying that, I would also like to invite all the Members of Parliament to go to the Waste Management place and witness it yourself.

I hope I have answered the question from the Member for Matavera. Kia Orana.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Honourable William Heather on the Floor.

HON. W. HEATHER JNR: Thank you Madam Speaker. My question is to the Minister of ICI. I made some comments about the plan for ICI and whether Government or ICI has a plan in place for vehicles using our roads due to many vehicles in our country today. The plan is to enable traffic to flow freely on the roads.

The intention behind my question here Madam Speaker is whether Government or ICI has plans or ways to solve this issue before we get into serious problems.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Minister of ICI.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Madam Speaker, I think that will fall in another Ministry but I will answer that anyway.

I think we already have a plan in place. We have got mechanisms that we put across the road and that counts as a usage of that road so it also should count the amount of cars that drive on it. But ICI does not have a mandate to tell the owners that bring in

vehicles to stop importing the vehicles that they are bringing in. But I will take that into consideration and have talks with other Government agencies and see what we can do with this. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Honourable Selina Napa you have the Floor.

MRS S. NAPA: Firstly, Madam Speaker good morning to all of us this morning.

My question is directed to the Minister of ICI. My questions is regarding the WATSAN programme that was started in Ngatangiia and moved to Titikaveka. My question is whether Government has any intention of resuming this programme on the new homes that are being built on our island and also to renew the septic tanks of the old homes.

I want to also ask if there are any plans to look at not only the old homes but also the new houses that are being built on the island. And maybe you can explain whether the septic tanks that have been built is working properly and if it is not working, what help can this programme offer to make these septic tanks to work properly

HON. M. BROWN: Kia Orana Madam Speaker. This question is for me because this programme is under my management and that is the programme, “Mei te Vai ki te Vai”. There is no more WATSAN programme and now the programme is “Mei te Vai ki te Vai” and this programme deals specifically with sanitation and waste water.

The Honourable Member asked about five questions in her question time and I see I only have a minute and a half to try and answer them all. So, the answer to that Madam Speaker is the work is progressing well and we are on track. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and as we are almost nearing closing time, we will finish our Question time now and we will now go to Orders of the Day and that is on the Appropriation Bill in Committee of Supply on day four. As per Standing Orders 306, I now resolve Parliament into the Committee of Supply and we will continue with Schedule 1 on Agencies.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY – DAY 4

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We will now go to the allocation for Police.

POLICE:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$5,800,926 for Police stands part of the Schedule?

I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I would like to thank the Minister of Police and the Minister of Finance because I can see that the Police budget has increased. There is also an increase for the Maritime Division and the support

services but not on crime prevention. Maybe there is a reason why there is no increase for this division but the Minister of Police or the Minister of Finance can enlighten us on that.

I want to make mention in this House about a certain issue. I believe in the past years; some Police officers have left the force and I would like to know why they have left. I want to raise this because I know that several of our women officers are now working in different jobs. Some are working at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and I am looking at the knowledge and wide experience they have gained from the Police Force. Some have served for over twenty years but they are now employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. I am wondering why they have left to work for other Ministries.

This issue is not only targeted at our women Police officers but also male Police officers. They are now working for other agencies. I know these individuals and I have been chatting with them and I have asked them why they left the Police.

I was mentioning an area where there is an increase in the budget on the payment for our Police Force. Maybe it is time for us to really look into these individuals because they really know the work, they've been working in this Police Force for quite a time.

Secondly, regarding my views Madam Chair, I just want to see all the standards in the Police department develop and for the structure in the Police Department to advance. In this structure I can see that there are some areas that have not been filled like the Deputy Commissioner and I am happy to see that there is in this appropriation an initiative to find a Deputy Commissioner.

I know now in the Police Force there are four or five individuals that I am convinced that can take this post, for example, John Strickland, Solomona Tuati and Aka Ama. Madam Chair, this is not only for our Police Force on Rarotonga but also the Outer Islands and I really understand they are the ones that are going through these difficulties. That is all my views regarding this appropriation and I am happy to see there is an increase in the policing budget.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you and I see the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Madam Chair.

I would like to express my views on this allocation. I can see that there is a decrease in the area of Crime Prevention and Policing Operation. If we all read the introduction part of the allocation, we can see that there is a great need to put money back in the area of crime prevention.

We can see in this budget the allocation of \$405,000 for Administrative Services. This is a big increase compared to last year's allocation of \$250,000. Maybe this is one way of encouraging our Police Officers not to leave the Police force. I can see an amount of \$150,000 has been allocated for slipping for Te Kukupa in Fiji. When I first saw this allocation, I thought it was an increase to the Police budget but this is just a one-off case.

I will now talk about domestic violence. Domestic violence is now on the rise and it is now involving our young people. Most of domestic violence cases are caused by alcohol. Alcohol in the Cook Islands is the devil that is causing this problem. Alcohol has an impact both on domestic violence and drink drinking. When we read the local newspaper, there are re-offenders or people getting caught while they have no licence. What can our laws do to stop these people from reoffending? Most of these offenders do not live with their parents but with their partners.

Madam Chair, this is the reason I made previous comments that there is not enough money for crime prevention because it has been reduced.

In the past, we had a training programme where our Police Officers go to Porirua for training. I think the New Zealand High Commissioner will be in a better position to tell us about this programme where we send our police officers to the Police Academy in Porirua.

I strongly believe all our police officers who went to the Police Academy in Porirua brought back skills and knowledge that they have attained while they were attending Porirua Police Academy. I know this because my sister used to be a Police Officer and she had been going to Porirua Academy for a few years. She told me it was worthwhile and beneficial attending training at Porirua Police Academy because they were taught how to assess the evidence for murder, theft and other criminal activities.

Therefore, Minister of Police, maybe you can consider reviving this training again and talk to the High Commissioner if it is possible for our police officers to engage with this training again with the Porirua Police Academy.

One of my concerns is our youth programme. I think they had the Blue Light Youth Program in the past. I can see in this appropriation there is \$45,000 for youth programme but when I asked our Member of Parliament here from Matavera, he told me that youth programme is no longer effective because no one is driving the programme like it used to be. This is one area that we need to look at, whether we want to strengthen this programme or do away with it.

Another programme I remember that was introduced here was for troubled youth. This was administered by our local police officers with the help of soldiers from the New Zealand Arm Forces. My observation of that programme is that it was a really good programme for our young people. I supported this programme and assisted them by making them part of the crew on my cruise boat and also offered them with food. I noticed the change in these young people because of the end result. They initially joined the programme as problem kids but they come out as good kids.

The programme was so good that I thought that it should continue for our youth in the Cook Islands. Some of these young people became police officers and some became firemen and some went to New Zealand to join the army. So, when we look at the beneficial side of this programme to our young people, you cannot fault that program. I still see these kids around. They are young men now and they have nothing but praise for that program.

So, on that note I will leave that issue to the Minister of Police and also to the Minister of Finance. Please look after our young people because they are our future.

So, Madam Chair, those are my contributions to the Vote Item for Police.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Kia Orana Madam Chairman and all Honourable Members in the House. I stand to support this appropriation and also to support the thoughts of the Member from Ngatangiia that we find ways to support our youth. This is very important to all of us.

I was not surprised at his train of thought because he has been in the Army and he knows the good things that happen there. I want to tell our people that yesterday before I came to Parliament a gentleman arrived and he is a Veteran. This is a Mauke person Tinokura Tairea. He brought a message from his Veteran organisation in New Zealand and they want to bring help to our country. They want to bring people who can talk to our youth to tell them of the opportunities there are when they join the New Zealand Army.

The thought here is we have many youths who are not working and not earning a living. Our children are not all scholars and there are some children who are good with their hands and legs and it is our duty to find ways to help these children. That is the purpose of the trip of this gentleman who came to see me yesterday to let me know of their intention to help these children of ours.

The plan is for a person to come and explain to our youth what the opportunities are in the Army. Once you are accepted into the Army there are many courses that you can undertake like cooking, engineer, and mechanic whatever you want. We know that in the army they are very well disciplined.

As mentioned by the Member for Ngatangiia, when they return from the Army, they are changed people. In this plan they are not just training for the army life but they will train with a trade that they wish to learn and when the training is completed and I am told they will stay in the Army for three years to pay for the training. When this is completed, they will be required to return home.

I think this is a good plan but I have asked this person to come back again and discuss this again before a plan is set to meet the Government of New Zealand for their support of this plan and also to discuss this with the Ministry of Education how they can support this plan and also our Government. I just want to let the House know of this good plan that has been given by this person from Mauke. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. I see the Honourable Tetangi Matapo.

MRS T. MATAPO: Greetings to everyone here this beautiful day. I stand before you to share my views and after to support this appropriation. Firstly because the Minister has been a Policeman I think he will understand what I will say.

I see the appropriation for this Ministry is good. The first thought that I want to bring to the House is for my island Mangaia because the figure is good.

In the past and up to today the VIP's like the QR, the New Zealand High Commissioner when they come to Mangaia, the Police have no transport to escort these VIP people. My car on the island today is not suitable to transport these VIP because it is too old.

That is the view I submit to the Minister an official car is required for Mangaia and not a bike that a person will fall down on it. I do not want to talk about operational costs but what I know is the basic needs like laptops, printers, and other office equipment are required on Mangaia. They do not have a phone like yours. Sometimes when I am in Parliament the Police in Rarotonga ring me on a Member of Parliament's phone.

I support this appropriation because I am sure the Minister has heard the cry of the Police of Mangaia and it is good for our youth and of course Mangaia need some new Police Officers. That is all I have to say, thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member. Before you take the Floor please Honourable Member, let me just say that we will be breaking at 11.30 this morning and then we will be finishing Parliament at 2 o'clock this afternoon.

As you would have seen on your list of Bills that is to be completed, we must complete our Welfare Bill before 2 o'clock today. As it has to commence on Monday, it comes into action on Monday so today we must finish this by 2 o'clock. So, be aware of our time and the rest of the work that we have to do on this Bill.

So, if you have very important contribution please do so but be aware of our time. So you have the floor, Honourable Nooroa Baker.

MR N. BAKER: Thank you Madam Chairman. I stand to speak on this appropriation I am looking at some of the appropriation and I will be brief because of the time and I will speak on the youth programme. I can see that the appropriation for youth programme is \$45,000.

We are aware that there is a programme called the Blue Light. I have spoken two days ago to the person in charge and asked what is happening to this programme and he told me that it is not working well because there is not enough budget for the programme. Since this budget has been set at \$45,000, I would like to ask the Minister that maybe in the next appropriation next year if this amount can be increased.

I really have other thoughts to put before the House but because there is not enough time, I will stop here. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you and I see the Honourable Minister of Police.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you to the Members for comments that have been put forward.

In this appropriation for 2018/19, the increase is only \$73,000 for the Police. In this increase the Police have some good plans for the next five years. The Prime Minister have previously told this House of the new patrol boat that will be replacing “Te Kukupa” in 2022. We will need 22 Police officers to operate this new patrol boat. Currently we have only 14 officers on Te Kukupa and we need this number to increase to 22 officers.

In the police future strategic plan they proposal to recruit 30 new officers for the next five years. As mentioned earlier \$400,000 has been appropriated in this Budget for the salaries of the police personnel. This is to hopefully ensure that officers in the police department do not leave the force. The Member for Matavera is asking as to the reason the position of the Deputy Commissioner has not been appointed. I believe we will be doing this very soon.

I am pleased with the views expressed by these two Honourable Members of Ngatangia and Akaoa. The suggestion from Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera that our police officers should again be trained in New Zealand. And for a budget allocation to be in place to help our youth that are getting into trouble these days. These proposals will be considered for the next Financial Year in 2019-2020.

With regards to the proposals from the Member from Tamarua I hope the heads of the Police Department is listening to our broadcast. I have visited the Commissioner of Police and I will again meet with the heads of the Police next week. And these recommendations from the House will be presented to them.

Again, I thank all Honourable Members who have supported this appropriation and the work of our police department.

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

The Question is:

That the sum of \$5,800,926 for Police stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

We will now go to the Prime Minister’s Office.

PRIME MINISTER’S OFFICE

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,961,689.00 for the Prime Minister’s Office stands part of the Schedule?

I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you very much Madam Chair. Firstly, I have no problem with the allocation for the Prime Minister's office. Although it is in my view not enough I have no problem with that also.

My comments are on the operations of the office, the different agencies in this allocation such as – emergency management, which included climate change, renewable energy and Te Marae Moana, EMCI. For this section I wish to support the increase of their appropriation. All these agencies are very important especially renewable energy for our people. As well as EMCI because this is one of the most important department during our cyclone season.

Even climate change is important as mentioned by the Minister of Finance there is a green climate fund for this area. I would like to extend my appreciation for this special fund to help our country not only in Rarotonga but also the Outer Islands.

My last thought Madam Chair is in regards to Te Marae Moana. This is another area that we should reconsider next time with their appropriation as this should extend to all our island group. Those are my views Madam Chair on this appropriation under the Prime Minister's office. Thank you very much.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member and I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Madam Chair and thank you to the Honourable Member for Matavera. I agree that all the agencies in the Prime Minister's office are very important to our nation and people. Also, under this Vote Item is the important ICT division, Information and Communication Technology. They incorporate all the Information and Communication Technology system or network of the Government under one office.

Te Marae Moana also is an important division of the Government. I am very happy that in the month of November some very important business people is coming to give their support to our Te Marae Moana program. In this delegation is the wife of Steve Jobs the man behind the well know Apple Technology Company responsible for iPhones and iPads. She is one of the people in this group coming to the Cook Islands. We all know that Steve Jobs have passed away. So to all of you men that are now widows this lady is coming to our country I would like to ask you to prepare yourselves for her arrival. But first go up the hospital and have a medical check-up.

This lady and the TIANERO organisation want to deposit 10 million dollars to support our Te Marae Moana program. We are prepared to receive this group of people and to show them our Te Marae Moana program.

I apologise to the members of the Te Marae Moana Council as our programs have been interrupted recently with our general election activities. Soon we will be meeting again to further our programs.

Lastly, I would like to ask the Honourable Members to support this appropriation. I can see our heads nodding in support of this office and I thank you all.

I wish to convey my appreciation and acknowledgement to the Secretary of this department who has been heading this office in the past, Bredina Drollet. She just left the country this week as she fly over to Manila to work for the ADB office for 3 years. This is a great honour for her and our little nation. Garth Henderson our current Secretary of Finance has also served in this prestigious international office before taking his current Government appointment. I extended my sincere gratitude to Bredina and her family for great service to our Government and for her new appointment. I thank her and all the staff in this division of Government for the good work in the past.

This is enough Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. I really would like to put the question before we break. So, we will be slightly late and I put the Question:

That the sum of \$1,961,869 for the Prime Minister's office stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

Committee of Supply is suspended until 12.00 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 11.30 a.m

Sitting resumed at 12.00 p.m

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Please be seated Honourable Members.

I do believe you have enjoyed the spinach with the rice this afternoon.

Before we suspended, we were in the Committee and we resume the Committee of Supply again. We will now go to the Public Service Commission.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$2,019,852 for Public Service Commission stands part of the Schedule?

Are there any speakers?

If there are no speakers I will put the Question.

MR V. TUPA: Is this the Public Service Commission?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Yes it is.

MR V. TUPA: I have something to say.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: You may have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you Madam Chair. I do not have any problem for the appropriation of the PSC except I have actually spoken with the head of the Public Service Commission to have a look into the salary banding, especially the heads of each department because I am happy that they have actually put into plan areas concerning the heads of each department.

They have actually done payments in tiers – Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3. That is what I wanted to say. Thank you to the Commissioner of the Public Service Commission. There have been some problems concerning this area with some talks between staff complaining where some staff are collecting more than others and I stand here to support the appropriation for the Public Service Commission.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Is there a response from the Minister or all is fine?

I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Madam Chair. Thank you also to the Honourable Member from Matavera for supporting this appropriation for the Public Service Commission. Yes, these people have a lot of work to do because they are the ones that looks into how our staff of the Government is paid. Not just the heads but all the staff of the Government and for the heads in the Public Service. It has been actually looked into by a company from New Zealand.

As mentioned by the Member of Parliament, it has been arranged in steps of tiers. So therefore, it is clear for people that apply for these jobs where they stand in these tiers. My only qualm for this is I do not want the gap between the tiers to be large from the top to the ones at the bottom. When we became Government, it was quite obvious and we saw that there was actually a disparity between the gaps from the top staff that is paid to the bottom ones.

As you have mentioned during our Sitting in the past few days, today the Public Service Commission is going through some difficult times. As we all know that the Department is looking for six new Heads of Ministries. A panel has been elected to look into the people that applied for positions. The Cabinet has received their recommendations and we understand the laws that govern this and we are attempting to follow these laws.

Today there are two Heads of Ministries that are successful. It is not right that I announce who the successful applicants are. When the contract has been talked over and looked into, then it is the time to announce who the successful applicants are.

The good thing is there are a lot of our very own people who apply for these positions. We have the same concern and we want these applicants to be our very own people. We all understand that their knowledge is quite high and we decide for them to become leaders of ours one day. It will not be long before we find who the successful

applicants are. Then we will let all the people know through our television and our newspapers.

I am happy with the support for this appropriation, the hard working people at the Public Service Commission.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

I will put the Question. The Question is:

That the sum of \$2,019,852 for Public Service Commission stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

We will now go to Tourism Corporation.

TOURISM CORPORATION:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$9,617,536 for Tourism Corporation stands part of the Schedule?

I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

MR V. TUPA: I have something short to say about this appropriation, Madam Chair. Even if there is a decrease in the allocation but I will not talk a lot about that.

The one thing I would like to talk about, Madam Chair, as I have talked about in the past few days, the other departments that have a relationship or work in partnership with the Tourism Corporation, especially Ministries like Culture, Police, Agriculture and other departments that bring in tourism into our country. These departments that work together under Culture to do with our traditional ways, we understand every year we celebrate our Te Maeva Nui. We understand now during the time of the Te Maeva Nui the accommodation is always filled by our tourists. Therefore, we should look into other departments that help with our Tourism Corporation.

So, I stand here to talk about other departments that work closely with the Tourism Corporation and I do believe the Prime Minister wants all the government departments to work together. In days gone by, each department wants to do well so they work alone. For example, the Agriculture, the ICI. It is now pleasing to see today how each department comes together and works together.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I stand to support the Bill or the Vote Item. However, I would like to point out a few areas that I feel or have concerns about the industry in the Pa Enuu.

Regarding the marketing of our tourism international in the past we used to do road shows and I believe it is still happening today. Cook Islands groups would go to New Zealand and Australia on road shows organised by the Cook Islands Tourism and we would be part of the roadshow a group from Aitutaki but mainly from Rarotonga. But now it seems like we the Pa Enea are on our own. With the help of Air Rarotonga we teamed up to try and sell the products that we have and still today we in Aitutaki are doing this on our own.

While out there we were finding out from the wholesalers that Rarotonga operators were telling the wholesalers that the Outer Islands was a one day or two-day destination and they were selling the photos of Aitutaki. And what is happening, everyone thought that the photo of Aitutaki was the destination.

It actually impacted on the new accommodations and new operators in the Outer Islands when there is always a hindrance to create an economic base in the Outer Islands. People in business even locals in Aitutaki felt hostile against Air Rarotonga because they were bringing in day tours.

It was not Air Rarotonga's fault it was what was sold out there, what was sold on the Cook Islands website, it is photos of Aitutaki but it is a Cook Islands destination. Everybody thought when you land in the Cook Islands that is where the beach is that is where the lagoon is.

We struggled for many years to try and convince the wholesalers international what the true situation is. We felt that Tourism was not playing their part to support the Outer Islands. I personally have been on roadshow trips about five to six years in a row and every trip I note that our own people in Rarotonga are running the Outer Islands down.

We are now in the internet age and marketing before that was all done by roadshows. If you had the money you had to pay your trip overseas organised by Tourism and the accreditation. The quality control that Cook Islands Tourism had I think the whole of Aitutaki jumped on, we thought it was an opportunity to improve the situation. Three to five years later with every year operators in Aitutaki paying nearly two thousand dollars fee for their product to be showcased on the Tourism website, and yes our product was put onto their website but we did not see any improvement.

Of course with the cyclone damages that came through recession that made it very difficult for anyone to get out there other than the big properties.

For my own set up we cut out being on the internet and the accreditation programme by Cook Islands Tourism. We tried to understand how the internet marketing worked. It became our working tool. Unfortunately, our set up was brought in at a late time when we had to pay quite a bit of money to set it up. We started complaining in those old days and complaint letters was sent to the Cook Islands Tourism either it was thrown in the box or forget about it. We learned the hard lesson when we got to the internet.

HON. M. BROWN: Point of Order. the

MADAM CHAIRMAN: What is your Point of Order?

HON. M. BROWN: Relevancy, Madam Chairman we are talking about the appropriation for Tourism Corporation and the Honourable Member is talking about the cost of internet and the personal issues surrounding his own business, I do not think that is relevant to the appropriation. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister can you please come back on the point please, Honourable Member.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I will come back to the point and my point is that the funds that was allocated has not gone in to help assist the improvements of the internet marketing of our local operators. To help assist our business people or existing people that is in the industry.

I hear the Prime Minister talk about a team of IT, it's the hope that our local entrepreneurs our young ones if wanting to venture into tourism could tap in and get that assistance instead of having to pay the high Bills.

I am talking about the international internet marketing and social media network of today like booking.com, expedia.com, tripadvisor.com. I do not think our people know how to utilise that. I believe tourism should be focused into moving among our people who own business instead of travelling overseas because the internet can be positive or have a negative impact on business.

So, I ask tourism to come in and help our people move forward. Thank you Madam Chairman.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member I see the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you, Madam Chairman. What I want to talk about, Madam Chairman is regarding the tourists coming into our country. We are happy to know that there are lots of tourists coming to our country. I am talking about the business that deals with the tourists that come to our island. I support this, Madam Chairman but what I am looking at is the sanitation.

I know the Minister for ICI has said that they have a plan and I am happy with that but everyday a plane lands on our airport full of tourists. So, this is one thing we need to look into whether we have actually put it into work the sanitation or we are just talking about it. I do not want us to get into trouble especially the Muri lagoon and yes, we have gone into public consultations and I just want us to do something about sanitation before we get into trouble. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I see the Minister of Finance.

HON. M. BROWN: Just to rise and clarify some of the issues raised by the Honourable Member from Ngatangia. There has been extensive consultations with business owners and the people particularly in the Muri area on the sanitation and the issues around our protection of our lagoon.

If the Honourable Member from Ngatangia could take the time to stop counting the number of passengers on his boat every day and actually attend the public meetings that have been held he might know what is going on instead of making all these noises in Parliament. He would know Madam Chairman that the extensive work done by our group involved in the project is looking at the best options to manage our sanitation issue and protect our lagoon in Muri which makes a lot of money for businesses but also for our country.

If he attended these meetings, he could have his input at the appropriate place and make suggestions to the consultants that are conducting these meetings and he would know when things are happening and what options are going to be taken to put in place the best septic systems to address this issue particularly in Muri.

But it is no doubt that this project will cost millions of dollars for our country, Madam Chairman probably to the same extent as Te Mato Vai in terms of the amount of money to put in place a modern sanitation system so that we can accommodate not just the domestic sanitation but also the increasing amount of tourism that is coming into our country particularly in Muri which can only help and assist our tourism businesses, the accommodators and the lagoon tour operators.

Already New Zealand has committed 20 million dollars towards sanitation upgrades that will be required and our country will be looking to secure further funding particularly through the Green Climate Fund to help meet the cost of this new modern sanitation system.

The allocation that has been put aside for Tourism Corporation there is a slight reduction in the marketing budget but this is because that money, Madam Chair has been put in to address the wider concerns of tourism around the roads and around sanitation and around providing better health care for our tourists.

Although we are reaping the rewards of increased number of tourists, it is putting stress on other areas of our country and that is where this money is being redirected to but the significant growth in tourists coming to our country has resulted in significant profits and income for all businesses associated with the tourism industry and businesses are quite capable of meeting the marketing needs and demands to ensure their accommodations are full and we encourage them to keep doing a good job.

So therefore, Madam Chairman this appropriation for the Tourism Corporation is in line with our tourism strategy and economic growth strategy and I see our numbers increasing further as a result of the marketing efforts that have been put in over the last year.

I also expect to receive the final report from the consultants who are doing the Mei Te Vai ki te Vai consultancy to give us the best option for sanitation systems throughout the Muri Takitumu area and I know that that report will contain the feed-back and suggestions and recommendations of those conscientious members of the Cook Islands public who have taken the time to attend these public meetings and make sure their views are heard. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

MR T. TUAVERA: Point of Order.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Order please, order, order.

MR T. TUAVERA: Madam Speaker, I was just going to correct the Minister over there I did attend all the meetings but there is no report that came out of those meetings.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you for clarifying yourself, Honourable Member. Perhaps you two attended different meetings and you did not see each other. Who is the Minister of Tourism, was that your final statement on this? Honourable Member Kitai – let me explain to the new Members when the Minister finish talking, we will not speak on that item but nevertheless because you are a new Member in this House, I will give you the chance to speak on this appropriation.

MR M. KITAI: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I want to speak on tourism. In the past few weeks I went to town to fill up my bike two tourists came into the shop and they had swimming togs on. When the tourists left the shop the owner of the shop came to me and asked what are you going to do about that? I told her that the law was not made by me but the Island Council and she told me to go and speak to those two tourists and I told her do not put me on the spot.

I did go and speak to the two visitors and this is what I said to them, where you come from, do you do this. They did not answer me and I told them our country is a Christian country and we do not walk around in public like that and I told them what you are wearing is for the beach not in public. They thanked me for telling them.

The thought behind this is for the tourism to actually tell the visitors coming here as to what is acceptable in our country as this is to do with marketing also. That is all that I have to say on this matter and thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

When I fly on the plane I did read a section in the publication on the plane where it explains issues like this.

I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you very much Madam Chair.

I see nobody in Government is standing so I might as well stand up.

I return to this appropriation on tourism in our country because I heard a small comment from the other side that I am against and would not allow tourism in our country. I therefore, want our people to hear my thoughts on tourism.

At this stage we have reached 160,000 visitors into our country. We need to ensure that the infrastructure situation is adequate like water, roads and in the case of waste management, that all the tourist accommodation that has been built it is proper and in place.

That is my view, if we want to increase our visitors into our country, we must review this area again. Today when this comment was mentioned in our media it came across that the Tourism Board will review this area again. It will be a combined work between our Tourism, Infrastructure and Water works departments. One important aspect I see for our tourism in our country is the use of water, especially on Rarotonga.

The accommodation places on our island in the case they plan to expand their capacity. They need to ensure that they have enough storage and ways of ensuring the water that they are tapping into is from off the roof and not from on the main.

That is my view in the case that we want to increase tourism levels in our country, we really need to reconsider the level of infrastructure to cater for this.

I come back to the appropriation. I can see that our Outer Islands wants the benefit of tourism to reach their islands. Therefore, I encourage you, the Members of Parliament from the Outer Islands, to really ensure that the level of infrastructure on your islands like water, roads, and sanitation are ready because the arrival of visitors on your islands will have an impact on your environment and it will be difficult to correct these areas when tourists come on to your island and it is not in place.

We should not only develop our infrastructure for the tourist we also need to ensure that our own people benefit from our developments on our islands.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

I see the Minister of Tourism Corporation, the Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Madam Chair.

Thank you also to the Members that spoke on this issue.

It is appropriate to clarify some of the comments made. When I listened to some comments it is almost like we are all only depending on the Government that Government will never run out of funds. This is not fair and we need some more and others.

When we look at the allocation for Tourism this is not the only funds allocated by Government for this Ministry and when I hear the comments of our Member from Amuri, it is almost as if there is not enough assistance from Government to their tourism on Aitutaki.

MR T. MAOATE: Point of Order.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: What is your Point of Order Honourable Member?

MR T. MAOATE: Just to clarify on one comment, Madam Chair. Like the Prime Minister says, I am not suggesting we need more money. What I am saying is the money is not being spent in country. It is being spent outside of the country.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for the clarification.

The Floor is yours again Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: It seems like it is the same thing.

We tend to forget that since 2010 Government started supporting these flights to LA as well as Sydney, \$12 million per annum has been allocated for this purpose and today there are bigger planes providing this service which is the 777 as well as the 787. It seems then there will be an increase in the underwrite for this service or if not, in the rise of the fuel price. There is no other option but for Government to support these two services. Please, let us not forget that this costs a lot of money.

Maybe there is a smarter way of spending money that has been allocated to Tourism but when I listened to the thoughts of the Member from Amuri/Ureia it is not appropriate to be brought here. Take it into the meeting of the Tourism Council, to the meeting of the Tourism Board and discuss these domestic issues. It is no good to be brought and put before everyone.

Those are my thoughts on the comments by the Member. There is a proper way and a proper place to deal with these domestic issues.

The thoughts of the Member from Titikaveka. Of course we all accept that with any increase of tourism we need to improve our infrastructure. Our roads, our water, our electricity as well as sanitation.

What I am happy about is our Papa in Titikaveka, Mr Iaveta Short. He has built a new hotel in Muri. He took me for a site visit of the hotel. What a beautiful concept and the layout of the hotel. He has his own electricity – solar – and it is on a waste system, its own water catchment from the roof of the house. We can say this hotel is fully self-contained. There is no burden on the country on infrastructure. That is how it should be. These are friends that accepted the notion that we need to be aware of conservation and we all need to make the effort to protect our environment.

So, Mr Iaveta Short has set a very good example for the rest of the people in the tourism sector to follow.

So Honourable Member from Ngatangiia, it is in your constituency the hotels that do not abide with sanitation. These are big hotels. It is in your hands. Do not depend on the Government. But the point is this is all our responsibility. It is not our people that are damaging our oceans. It is the people that are making revenue from our country.

Please, let us all work together to comply with the requirements to prompt these hotels to follow. They should not say it is too expensive. They have had plenty of years to make money out of our tourism. So let us work together and let us force them to do something about it.

Thank you Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you to the Tourism Corporation Minister.

I will put the Question. The Question is:

That the sum of 9,617,536 for Tourism Corporation stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

We will now go to Transport.

TRANSPORT:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$704,214 for Transport stands part of the Schedule?

As there are no speakers I will put the Question and the Question is:

That the sum of \$704,214 for Transport stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

COOK ISLANDS INVESTMENT CORPORATION:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$9,690,772 for Cook Island Investment Corporation stands part of the Schedule?

I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: Madam Chair, I will speak on the effective management of public assets by SOE's and also on the overall position of the CIIC in terms of the SOEs. I see one of the SOE, Te Aponga, social responsibility, there is an allocation there for \$380,000 for street and amenity lighting which we have been tapping into to assist with the lighting of cross roads, back roads.

I am not sure whether this allocation is for the colour lights on the roads also. If it is then I am not sure about this amount today. I feel every year it can be increased and I will give my reasons why. It has been the same amount every budget tabled in this House.

We can see that new roads and new houses are being built on the back road and there is an increase of people seeking assistance to install lighting for their roads into the hills.

One of the main reasons they are requesting this because of the increase in burglary on the island and these new and dark roads have become escape routes for these burglars when they are chased by the Police at night.

One area I want to touch on is the subject of staff remuneration as there is no clear clarification on the salary caps of our Ministries. For example we have been told how many workers are there and their level of remuneration but when it comes to the SOE there is no clear information on the salary range. There is no clear indication of the allocation of the remuneration in the SOEs at the various levels. Even though we are advised that the SOE does not come under the jurisdiction of the Public Service Commission, we can see that the State Owned Enterprises the Government pay for the workers. Maybe the Minister for CIIC can clarify this. Those are my thoughts on this item.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you and I see the Minister of CIIC.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It is well known in the region that the Cook Island State Owned Enterprises of power company, airport and even our bank are the most well performing SOEs in the Pacific. And one of the reasons for that, Madam Chair is that the operations, the direction and the goals of these SOE's are not interfered with by politicians.

I have spoken to a number of SOE Chairs from other countries and they are really impressed with how our country especially our Government does not dip its fingers into the finances of the SOEs that generate income.

There are numerous stories of failed SOEs right across Pacific countries, Madam Chair so our ones who are performing well are regarded in the highest respect and our Government has taken great efforts Madam Chair over the last five years to ensure that the governance by the directors of these SOEs has been strengthened and improved.

Every Board director of all of our SOEs has undergone board and governance training under the institute of directors from New Zealand to help them in their duties but also to ensure that they understand their obligations as directors on these boards and this has been much appreciated by the board members because the role of the board members is vitally important and it is important that when they are working on these boards they are working for these SOEs that they contribute to the growth and development of these SOEs.

There was mentioned, Madam Chair on the social obligations or the community service obligations that these SOEs provide our community and one mentioned by the Member from Titikaveka in terms of the street lighting and also now the coloured lighting that we see starting to be seen more often right around the island instead of just in town.

Each year there is an allocation set aside for street lights and as each year goes on Te Aponga adds more street lights to the roading network around our island. And of course for many years now the Government policy on uneconomic power lines running to people's properties has been amended so that this again is a community service obligation to the SOE and not a cost to landowners.

Of course running a power line up to remote lands up in the hills is not a cheap exercise it is costly but from an economics perspective the Government is of the view that if we supply the power lines and the water lines to these remote areas it will encourage more development and make it easier for people to build on their properties.

There was one comment I recall made by the Member from Amuri regarding the subsidy or the amount of money that is allocated to the BCI of around \$120,000 a year. Some of our Members might recall, Madam Chair that when there is a deduction or when there is a withdrawal made on pensioner's accounts or children's accounts, that the Bank deducts \$1 for these transactions, a bank fee. And this, Madam Chair, is what this subsidy is for.

It is to replace that \$1 fee that the Bank charges as part of its business and the Government pays that money back so that it is returned back to the account holders. And that is what we have to do, Madam Chair, when a Bank – an SOE like the Bank of the Cook Islands – must operate on a commercial basis. It needs to charge fees to cover its costs.

But the Government, Madam Chair, is not beholden to those same commercial principles and we show our humanity side by replacing that money so that the Bank can operate commercially but the people do not really lose their money. And it is a bit funny, Madam Chair. When a dollar is taken out it is a large amount of money but when a dollar is put back in, oh, it is not much.

But it is in the spirit of things, Madam Chair, that when we provide a pension or a child benefit to be paid out through a commercial bank, they should not have any of their money deducted and that is why we provide that subsidy to the Bank of the Cook Islands to assist them in recovering their fees but also replacing the money we deduct from pensioners and children.

If I can go back to our SOEs Madam Chair and the Board Members and the governance of these Boards. Our Members will be aware that because our country has been performing so well economically, we are on the verge of being declared a developed nation by the OECD.

So, the way we operate as a country, Madam Chair, has to be more modern, has to take into account that operating as a developed country is a lot different from operating as a developing country which is why we are taking the time and the effort to ensure that agencies like our SOEs do have the best possible support in their governance and in their management structures which is why we will continue to support the development of our Board Directors to ensure they contribute fully to the operations and the governance of our State-owned Enterprises.

Thank you Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you Minister.

I will put the Question.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$9,690,772 for Cook Islands Investment Corporation stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

We will now go to Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$293,105 for Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority stands part of the Schedule?

I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa. You have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you Madam Chair.

I stand to speak on the Bill and also to offer my support.

I would like to touch upon the area of licensing required by businesses from overseas. In the case of ships intending to explore the minerals in our oceans, their intention Madam Chair and Members of the House is to ensure where to look for when they want to develop in this area. Even though we all know there is a report compiled some years ago, there are areas already marked out where these deposits are. I want to advise you, Madam Chair, because I was part of that report.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Assistant Minister in those days responsible who is the Member of Amuri-Ureia today and also for the establishment of an Agency for this area. Within those arrangements we also established how we will utilise this resource.

However, I would like to clarify to Members of the House and our people listening in, there is a big difference between exploration and actual mining. As I explained before, I was part of that process before where I spent six months on a Japanese survey ship. The name of this ship was the Grey Maru II as well as my friend Teariki Rongo. Through our inspection we provided this report in those days.

However, I can hear that some of these companies from outside are beginning their exploration work. They intend to enter our waters to explore our seabed. I would request our people listening in as well as Members of the House to support this exploratory exhibition as they are only looking for areas for mining because this will confirm to us whether this resource will be mined or not.

And that is why, through this, I support this allocation under Seabed Mining because all Governments intend to do this and at the initial stages it was the Democratic Government as we all look to utilise this resource because the depth of this resource in the ocean is around 5,000 metres.

We must also be mindful of the natural environment in this situation. However, I would like to clarify to us all on the aspect of exploration because this will then confirm to us whether we are able to utilise this resource or whether there is actually machinery that can achieve this for us without an impact on the environment.

Madam Chair, those are my thoughts I would like to share on this Appropriation.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. And I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you Madam Chair.

I will just carry on from where I left off. In 2012 the Minister, Tom Marsters established the Seabed Minerals Authority and appointed the Mineral Authority Commissioner.

Now, reading through the Budget and what is in the policy, one of the areas that I picked up was information publication and public consultation. And what the Member from Matavera is saying, the exploration that is in the news or the Minister has indicated.

There is information of past surveys which I have been involved in the survey of proving that our minerals are actually on our seabed. Not only for the Japanese but the Americans, the Russians and the last one that I was involved with was from Norway. They confirmed the bulk of the mineral lies between Aitutaki and the Northern Group. Valued to the tune of \$1 trillion American dollars in the era of Papa Albert Henry, and it increased around ten years to maybe \$4 or \$5 billion.

Our team, the committee that the Member had mentioned, had some of our HOMs check it out on the internet the value of the product. During that period, we were also looking at trying to achieve an extra economic zone additional to our existing. There was also information that showed that the minerals in that part of the ocean seabed were also similar to the value or more than what we had in our ocean EZ.

During that period, we were working with the Opposition. In the event that there was a change of Government, which it did, they would carry on the work to achieve what was planned to assist and benefit our people.

The exploration - Oh I am sorry.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, please continue. We will just give you a bit more time.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you Madam Chair.

I believe in the ten years that have gone by, I do not see anywhere that we are going to achieve the potential in this area of mining. Not yet. I think it is going to take us a few more years. There is a fair bit of years to come but there are other ways of achieving and realising the potential of this.

Yes, if it has not been looked into, we should try and look into this area again. As I said before, we are here to try and put things together so we can realise the potential of this for our people.

We can make it happen, bringing new money in to pay our debt and get our debt out of the way. Build the infrastructure in place without doing any loan, provide cheap money to our people. Everything that we could do plus give our 10 per cent to the religious council. I will leave that to you the Government to decide on.

However, I look at this Budget and I believe this Budget is not enough to move this project ahead. To go adventuring into other areas we will need to engage professionals. There is the old saying: “Money makes money.”

I am pretty sure the Queen's Representative is listening and I hope we will make it realise for him because he was on that ship when he was told you may see it.

So, to the Minister and your team, I hope that we can work together to make this happen.

Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you and I see the Honourable Minister, Mark Brown.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Madam Chair.

This allocation before us is for the Seabed Minerals Office and this Office is the regulatory authority for seabed minerals activity. Their job is to protect our waters and to protect our country.

The engagement with companies wishing to do exploration is more aligned now to the Investment Corporation because the Investment Corporation is responsible for all Government assets including our mineral wealth.

Members of Parliament may be aware that in 2015, we put out tenders for selected blocks in our EEZ for exploration licence and despite a lot of interest, there were no applications received.

However, since that time our country has entered into a joint venture partnership with a Belgium company, GSR – for exploration activities in the international seabed area which is under the management of the United Nations. However, in January this year we had approaches from four companies who were wanting to put forward applications for exploration in our own EEZ and the single biggest factor which drove their interest was the increase in the price of cobalt.

Cobalt is one of the minerals that is inside our nodules and in very high quantities and cobalt is a mineral that is used particularly in the production of batteries and the increase globally in battery technology has been driven by the increase in the production of electric vehicles. This, Madam Chair, has led to the significant increase in the price of cobalt on the world market.

So, the Cook Islands plan, Madam Chair, is to look at reopening again the tenders that we had made available in 2015, to allow us to accept applications for exploration in selected blocks within our EEZ. And just like the Member from Matavera said exploration is about gaining knowledge and information but exploration, Madam Chair, costs tens of millions of dollars and the good news is that through our tender process, we will not have to pay a cent of that tens of millions of dollars.

But the exploration will include the mapping of the sea floor to determine areas that are flat and identify areas where there are hills and sea mounts. It will allow for the sampling of certain areas for the minerals so that testing can be done and confirmed on the quality of the minerals in these nodules.

It will also involve environmental work to determine what impacts any sort of activity on the sea floor will have on the life forms that need to be identified at 5-6,000 metres depth and, probably most importantly, it will allow for the testing of the technology that is going to be required if we take the next step towards harvesting of our nodules.

And let us be clear, the activity that we are looking at is not adequately identified or described as mining. It is harvesting because these nodules sit on the surface of the ocean and really you just need the technology to be able to pick them up.

The delegation that I led to Norway just a few weeks ago, Madam Chair, was very important for us. Fifty years ago, oil and gas were discovered off in the oceans of Norway. For the first 25 years of revenue earned from their oil and gas to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars, Norway directed all of this money into building their country's infrastructure, their country's services to their people and their standard of living.

In the early nineties, only 25 years ago, Norway established their Sovereign Wealth Fund. Today that Fund sits at over \$1 trillion.

This year Norway has tabled its own Seabed Minerals Act and it will start its own industry in the seabed minerals area. They will do their own exploration because they can afford to do their exploration to the tune of 100 million dollars very easy.

But Norway also has a thriving fisheries industry in its ocean, side by side with its oil and gas. Norway's fishing industry is worth 6 billion dollars a year. They are one of the most environmentally conscious countries in the world. They provide a road map that we can look and look to aspire to it and we have been invited back to Norway to engage with their authorities, their areas of seabed minerals, environmental practice to help us go down similar path as we look to move towards our seabed minerals.

The most important thing about this first step to exploration, Madam Chair is that all of the information that is gathered from exploration belongs to the Cook Islands. It will help us make good decisions if we decide to take the next step which is moving towards harvesting of our nodules.

There are a number of good lessons to be learned from Norway but I think one of the ones that really attracted my attention was in how they deal with foreign companies

and they have a very simple rule, Madam Chair that if you want to do business in Norway your company must be registered as a Norwegian company and I like the idea of that, Madam Chair and probably something that we will discuss more with stakeholders that if anybody wants to come and do something in our country, then they need to register as a local company and be subject to our local laws.

And really we have to pay tribute to those who came before us in this particular sector because these nodules were first identified way back in the sixties and seventies and our Seabed Minerals Act was tabled and passed in 2009 under the previous Government Administration, the first such legislation in the world which we are now having to undergo a revision and a review of this Act because of new information that we have today we can identify the loopholes and the areas of weakness in the current Act that we need to strengthen.

So, those stakeholder consultations and public awareness programmes, Madam Chair will begin very shortly and carry on right through to the New Year period.

Thank you Chair.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much Honourable Minister. As I see that our time is getting very close to completion and may I ask that you put a Motion to report back to Parliament to resume Parliament to put the Motion for the time extension please.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move:

That Parliament resume and time be extended for the debate

MADAM CHAIRMAN: There is a Motion on the Floor and I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

MADAM SPEAKER: Parliament is resumed. May I call on the Leader of the House to make the Motion for the time extension please?

MR T. TURA: Madam Speaker, I rise to move:

That Standing Order 54 (3) to extend the sitting from 2.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m. to enable the Orders of the Day in the Committee of Supply on the Appropriation Bill complete all stages before 2.50 p.m. this afternoon.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I call a Secunder for the Motion please.

Seconded by the Honourable Prime Minister, Henry Puna

I put the Question on the Motion:

For the suspension of the Standing 54 (3) to extend the Sitting from 2.00 p.m to 3.00 p.m to enable the Orders of the Day in the Committee of Supply on the Appropriation Bill to be completed all stages before 2.50 p.m this afternoon?

Motion agreed to

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We will now resolve Parliament to return to the Committee of Supply. We will go back to the Cook Islands Seabed Mineral Authority.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY – DAY 4

COOK ISLANDS SEABED MINERAL AUTHORITY:

I will put the Question and the Question is:

That the sum of \$293,105 for Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority stands part the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

We will now go to Total Ministries Crown and Statutory Agencies.

TOTAL MINISTRIES CROWN AND STATUTORY AGENCIES:

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$115,155,574 for the Total Ministries Crown and Statutory Agencies stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

TOTAL MINISTERIAL SUPPORT OFFICES:

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$2,203,945 for the Total Ministerial Support Offices stands part of the Schedule?

I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you, Madam Chairman. We can now see the appropriation under the Support Offices and I stand to talk about the appropriation for the Opposition. I would like to tell you Madam Chairman that amount is not enough.

HON. H. PUNA: He has finished talking, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay you have the Floor Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: I stand to explain to the Honourable Member that I have had a discussion with the Leader of the Opposition yesterday and their appropriation has

been changed and it looks as though it is too much but even though it is not in this Appropriation Book but we will change it afterwards through Executive Council. I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition have not informed your team.

The Leader of the Opposition is right because their appropriation is the same as the lowest appropriation for a Minister and to please them for the next four years, they will be in opposition we have agreed that their appropriation should be increased to the same level as the Minister of Internal Affairs and their appropriation will be 290,000 and they can afford to pay for James Beer to write their articles.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I see the Honourable William Heather.

HON. W. HEATHER JNR: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I stand to thank the Prime Minister for giving this appropriation for the Opposition.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I will put the Question and the Question is:

That the sum of \$2,203,945 to the Total Ministerial Support Offices stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

We will now go down to the Total Outer Islands.

TOTAL OUTER ISLANDS:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$10,068,189 for the Total of the Outer Islands stands part of the Schedule?

I beg your pardon do you want to speak to that. It is unusual to go back after the question has been put.

MR T. MAOATE: You did not see me stand up.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Well it was too noisy and I am sorry. You really do need to control yourselves while I am doing this because this takes a lot of concentration and the interpreters are also having a problem with the noise. I will give you a bit of time Honourable Member. Please take the Floor Honourable Terepai Maoate.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you, Madam Chair I will be brief on this, this is the budget for Aitutaki. Because tourism is also a big part of the national budget a big portion of that comes from Aitutaki which includes the airline of Air Rarotonga.

My understanding is the formula for the distribution of the wealth for the Pa Enuā including Aitutaki is according to our team in Aitutaki does not support the impact of tourism increase and demands on our infrastructure. In saying that we do support the budget and thank you to ICI for the road works that is going on and the support by the

Prime Minister to keep the staff there for another month or two. We will make sure that they do their job so that they will move on to Atiu.

There is a request we understand the Government has a new tar truck that's arriving, if we can sit down with the Minister of ICI with their assistance to leave us the old truck.

Moving on to waste management as was discussed earlier with the tourism it is one of the biggest area we need to look after, protect, prevent and not cure after. With the amount of revenue that we are achieving from tourism if we can as Aitutaki is growing fast not only Government would be looking at a similar sanitation programme in Rarotonga but one in Aitutaki. In the meantime, we could do with a waste truck.

The Mayor is complaining about their pay but I am not sure whether it comes under this budget. I got a phone call from Atiu and they have the same problem. They are boss on the island but they are under paid. They are asking for a pay rise. Maybe we can consider this in the next budget. If we can afford this time please accommodate next round. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members you have tasked the House by motion to finish our work by five to three and we do have another Bill that we must finish before we finish today so if you are going to speak only for a very brief time because I have a job to finish. I see the Honourable Tetangi Matapo.

MRS T. MATAPO: Madam Chair, I stand to talk about the appropriation for the island of Mangaia because even though I can see there is a slight increase in the appropriation for 2018/19 from 1,618,363 to 1,683,183.

For our appropriation I will talk about the tourism and community development I think this is a small appropriation for the tourism and community development because there are three workers in this department. When you look at the amount that they are being paid I do not agree this is enough.

The infrastructure and amenities have decreased from 528,000 to 461,000. This is the appropriation I want to bring to our attention for the island of Mangaia. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Just be brief please Honourable Member from Nukuroa.

MR T. TANGATAPOTO: Thank you Madam Chair. Greetings to all in this Honourable House. I stand to support the appropriation for the workers of Nukuroa. In 2016 when I became the EO for the island \$480,000 was paid for staff salaries. In 2017/18 this increased to \$541,000. This year it has also increased to over \$587,000 and this is a big increase.

This is one of the problems I see on our island where there is not enough pay. Like all of us if you are not paid well then you do not work well. If you are paid well then you will be willing to work hard.

I have also asked the Public Service Commission to please increase our wages. They come back to us and ask us for further clarification whether it is aligned with our living conditions, our lifestyle. I would like to tell you today you cannot compare Mitiaro with you living here on Rarotonga. We, the ones living on the Outer Islands can only understand our living conditions. So, I therefore ask the Minister of MFEM or the PSC to please leave that with us. Do not interfere.

I can assure you this appropriation will ensure that we can do a better job and that our children that has gone to 7th Form can actually live on the island and work there.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, I am going to go through the Bill without any further debate.

So, I will put the Question:

That the sum of \$10,068,189 for the Total Outer Islands stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

We will now go to Gross Total for all these Agencies and the Outer Islands.

GROSS TOTAL FOR ALL THESE AGENCIES AND THE OUTER ISLANDS:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$126,785,558 for the Total Gross stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

I put the Question:

That Schedule 1 stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

We will now go to Schedule 2 and that is on Payments on Behalf of the Crown (POBOC's).

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$25,127,361 the Grant Total stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

I put the Question:

That Schedule 2 stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

We will now go to Schedule 3: Total Capital Spending.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$44,518,794 for Total Capital Spending stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

I put the Question:

That Schedule 3 stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

Schedule 4: Total Official Development Assistance.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$53,453,757 for Official Development Assistance stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

I put the Question:

That Schedule 4 stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

Schedule 5a: Other Expenses and Financing Transactions.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$9,659,001 stands part of the Total Other Expenses?

Motion agreed to

I put the Question:

That Schedule 5a stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

Schedule 5b: Loan Reserve Fund Appropriations.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$9,362,000 stands part of the Total Contribution

to the Loan Reserve Fund?

Motion agreed to

I put the Question:

That Schedules 5a and 5b stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

We will now go to Summary of the Total Appropriation.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$268,906,471 of the Total Appropriation stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

Honourable Members, we will now go to the Clauses of the Bill.

Clause 1: Short Title.

I put the Question:

**That the Short Title of this Act, the Appropriation Act 2018,
stands part of the Bill?**

Motion agreed to

Clause 2: Application.

Clause 3: Grant and appropriation out of the Cook Islands Government Account.

I put the Question:

That Clause 2 and Clause 3 stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

Address:

I will read the Address.

“Most Gracious Sovereign: We, Your Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Parliament of the Cook Islands, towards making good the supply which we have cheerfully granted to Your Majesty in this year, have resolved to grant Your Majesty the sum specified in this Act and humbly ask Your Majesty to assent to the sum. And be it enacted by the Parliament of the Cook Islands in Session assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows.

I put the Question:

That the Address stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

Long Title: An Act to appropriate certain sums of money out of the Cook Islands Government Account to the services of the year ending on the thirtieth day of June 2019 and to appropriate the supplies granted in this period.

I put the Question:

That the Long Title stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

May I call on the Minister to move a Motion to report the progress of the Bill to Parliament please?

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Madam Chair.

I move:

That we resolve into Parliament in order to report on progress on the Bill?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: There is a Motion on the Floor and I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

MADAM SPEAKER: Parliament is resumed.

I now call on the Minister to report the progress of the Bill.

HON. M. BROWN: Madam Speaker, I am happy to report:

**That the Appropriation Bill has passed through the Committee Stage
with no amendments**

MADAM SPEAKER: I put the Question:

That the Report be adopted?

Motion agreed to

Now we will take the Third reading of the Bill. May I ask the Minister to move the Motion for the Third reading of the Bill?

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I now move:

That the Appropriation Bill be now be read a Third time

MADAM SPEAKER: I call a Secunder for the Motion please.

Seconded by the Honourable William Heather Jnr

I put the Question:

That the Bill be now read a Third time?

Motion agreed to

DEPUTY CLERK AT THE TABLE: A Bill Intituled: An Act to appropriate certain sums of money out of the Cook Islands account to the services of the year ending on 30th day of June 2019 and to appropriate the supplies granted in this period.

BILL READ A THIRD TIME

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Members, that completes the First, Second and Third reading of the Appropriation Bill.

Thank you very much for your hard work and we will now go back to Orders of the Day and I call the Leader of the House.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR T. TURA: Madam Speaker, I move:

That the Orders of the Day be amended as follows:

- (1) Welfare Amendment Bill and**
- (2) Justice of the Peace Amendment Bill**
- (3) Law Practitioners Bill**
- and lastly for Address in Reply**

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

Seconded by the Honourable Member Vaitoti Tupa.

I will put the Question. The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Orders of the Day have now been ordered to begin with the Welfare Amendment Bill and I see the Minister responsible.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to move:

That the Bill be read a Second time

I will be very brief on the merits of the Bill. It is the will of this Government and the House that this Act be enacted on Monday, 1st October which is next week. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Short and sweet, is there a Seconder for the Motion? I see the Honourable Kitai.

Seconded by the Honourable Member Manuela Kitai

The Question:

That the Bill be read a Second time?**Motion agreed to**

DEPUTY CLERK AT THE TABLE: A Bill Intituled: An Act to amend the Welfare Act 1989.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I now resolve Parliament into the Committee of the Whole to go through the Clauses of the Bill.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We will now go through the Clauses of the Bill in the Committee of the Whole House.

Clause 1: Short Title. This Act is the Welfare Amendment Act 2018.

The Question is:

That Clause 1 stands part of the Bill?**Motion agreed to**

Clause 2: Commencement and that is this Act comes into force on 1st October 2018.
The Question is:

That Clause 2 stands part of the Bill?**Motion agreed to**

Clause 2 (a): Application

Clause 3: Principal Act amended

Clause 4: Child benefit.

The Question:

That Clause 2 (a), 3 and 4 stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

Clause 5: Period for which the child benefit is payable

Clause 6: Amount of advances

The Question is:

That Clause 5 and Clause 6 stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

Long Title: An Act to amend the Welfare Act 1989.

The Question is:

That the Long Title stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

I call the Minister to put a Motion to report the progress of the Bill to Parliament.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Madam Chair, I move:

That a report be passed to Parliament

MADAM CHAIRMAN: There is a Motion on the Floor and I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Parliament is resumed and I ask the Minister to please report to Parliament on the progress of the Bill.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to report:

That the process has gone through smoothly

MADAM SPEAKER: The Question is:

That the Report be adopted?

Motion agreed to

We will now take the Third reading of the Bill. I ask the Minister to move a Motion for the Third reading.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Madam Speaker, I move:

That the Bill be now read a Third time

MADAM SPEAKER: I look for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera

Thank you very much. The Question is:

That the Bill be read a Third time?

Motion agreed to

DEPUTY CLERK AT THE TABLE: A Bill Intituled: An Act to amend the Welfare Act 1989.

BILL READ A THIRD TIME

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Members.

That completes the First, Second and Third Readings of the Welfare Amendment Bill and I imagine there will be many, many parents out there who will be very happy.

(Applause)

Because on Monday this will be enacted. I call the Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Madam Speaker.

Yes, our parents will be much happier next year with the increase of the age of the children qualified for the benefit to 16.

Madam Speaker, before I move the Motion, may I just take this opportunity to thank all the Honourable Members in this House for the wonderful spirit in which we have debated the Appropriations Bill. This was the very spirit that I was looking for when I made my speech a couple of weeks ago. Where there have been differences of views, Members have been free to express those differences but where our views have converged, Members were brave enough to agree and to support.

So, I really want to say thank you to all the Honourable Members from both sides of the House for the wonderful spirit in which we have debated the Appropriation Bill.

Madam Speaker, I rise to move:

That in accordance with Standing Orders 315 and 318 that this Parliament appoint a Special Select Committee as a Public Accounts Committee with the following persons to be Members of this Committee:

Chairman – Tingika Elikana, Member for Pukapuka/Nassau and Associate Minister of Finance;
Member – Tai Tura, Member for Mauke;
Member – Toka Hagai, Member for Rakahanga;
Member – Patrick Arioka, Member for Murienua;
Member – Terepai Maoate, Member for Amuri/Ureia;
Member – Te-Hani Brown, Member for Tengtangi/Ngatiarua/Areora;
Member – Vaitoti Tupa, Member for Matavera
and that the Public Accounts Committee shall be responsible for the scrutiny and review of (a) the public accounts, annual reports and audits of financial statements of the Government; (b) the estimates of expenditure of the Government and its entities; (c) Ministerial and Departmental financial management and performance; (d) any legislation or petition relating to public finance, revenue or taxation; finally (e) any other matters within its subject area and that all the provisions of the Standing Orders apply to the Public Accounts Committee as if it were a Select Committee

That is the Motion Madam Speaker. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Is there a Secunder for the Motion?

Secinded by the Honourable Minister, Vaine Mokoroa

The Question is:

That the Motion as just read out for the establishment of the Select Committee be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

And I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Madam Speaker, I am being kept very busy this afternoon.

Madam Speaker, I rise to move:

That in accordance with Standing Orders 315 and 318 that this Parliament appoint a Special Select Committee on Bills which shall be responsible for the scrutiny and review of any Bills referred to it and that the following persons are to be Members of this Committee:
Chairman, who will be in line for a pay increase – Tingika Elikana, Member for Pukapuka/Nassau;
Member – Toka Hagai, Member for Rakahanga;
Member – Tai Tura, Member for Mauke;
Member – Terepaa Maki Kavana, Member for Arutanga/Reureu/Nikaupara;
Member – Selina Napa, Member for Titikaveka;
Member – Terepai Maoate, Member for Amuri/Ureia;
Member – Vaitoti Tupa, Member for Matavera
And all serving for love and that all the provisions of the Standing Orders apply to the Special Select Committee on Bills as if it were a Select Committee

That is the Motion Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. There is a Motion on the Floor. Is there a Seconder

Secinded by the Honourable Minister, George Angene

The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Honourable Prime Minister. You have one more Committee but may I ask you to put a Motion for the extension of time just to get through that.

HON. H. PUNA: Yes. Yes.

MADAM SPEAKER: Maybe to 3.30 p.m.

HON. H. PUNA: Yes, Madam Speaker.

In light of the business yet to be completed before this House, I move:

That Standing Orders be suspended to allow this Sitting to carry on until the completion of business, in any event, not later than 3.30 p.m.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Is there a Seconder for the Motion?

Secinded by the Honourable Minister, Mark Brown

The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

You have the Floor again Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: There is one more important Select Committee. That is the Standing Orders Committee, Madam Speaker.

I rise to move:

That in accordance with Standing Order 360 that this Parliament appoints the following persons to be Members of the Standing Orders Committee:

As we are all aware, this is an important task that we have already embarked on at the last Sitting and it is a job that needs to be seen through to completion.

The Members of the Select Committee are as follows:
Honourable Niki Rattle – Speaker of Parliament;
Honourable Toka Hagai – Deputy Speaker;
Honourable Henry Puna – Prime Minister;
Honourable Mark Brown – Deputy Prime Minister;
Honourable Rose Brown – Minister responsible for Parliamentary Services;
Honourable William Heather Jnr – Leader of the Opposition and Member of
Parliament;
Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera – Member of Parliament for Ngatangiia
And that the Standing Orders Committee is to (a) conduct a review of the
Standing Orders, procedures and practices of Parliament; (b) consider and
report to the Parliament on any matter relating to the Standing Orders,
procedures and practices of the Parliament; (c) recommend to the Parliament
the amendment, revocation or addition of any Standing Order or the alteration
of any procedural practice of the Parliament; finally, consider and report to the
Parliament on any matter referred by the Parliament or otherwise under
Standing Orders

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Is there a Secunder for the Motion?

Secundered by the Honourable Minister Rose Toki-Brown

The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

I see the Honourable Minister, Mark Brown.

HON. M. BROWN: Madam Speaker, I move:

That Standing Orders be suspended to the extent necessary to allow me to move
a Motion that is on Notice before the House on confidence in this Cabinet

With the completion of the Elections and the Petition period, Madam Speaker, it is timely that we now go through the process to confirm the Government of the day and I hereby move:

That this Parliament expresses its full confidence in Cabinet

MADAM SPEAKER: Is there a Secunder for the Motion?

Secundered by the Honourable Member, Toka Hagai

And I will put the Question.

I see the Honourable Member, Selina Napa would like to speak to the Motion. You have the Floor.

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you Madam Speaker.

I just want a bit of clarification here whether any particular Standing Order was mentioned during the Motion. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: In actual fact there was no need to suspend any Standing Orders because this has been on the paper for over 24 hours.

When a Member makes a Motion on Notice it is for two full days. When a Minister makes a Motion on Notice it is for 24 hours. If the Clerk would look up what exactly that Standing Order is, 106. If you look at 106, this has been on Notice for more than 24 hours.

I think you would have noticed that it was on yesterday morning's Order Paper. If you check your Order Paper of yesterday it was on the Order Paper and it is over 24 hours now.

MRS S. NAPA: Madam Speaker, I am just wondering if I could get clarification that any Minister who moves a Motion of Confidence, that they must tender their resignation.

MADAM SPEAKER: I see. Yes.

You are referring to the convention of 397, is that right? You are referring to that?

MRS S. NAPA: Yes. All right.

Madam Speaker, I just want to make a point of clarification. I am not sure whether this vote of confidence is a Motion that is in reaction to the Leader of the Opposition's vote of no confidence that has been put on the Order Paper and whether the Prime Minister is willing to make this vote, a vote of confidence pursuant to Article 14(3)(b) of the Constitution. In other words, if the Prime Minister is willing to test the provision in this true sense of a confidence vote by going to a division.

And I also want clarification if this goes to a vote of division, if it can be explained whether the majority of the Members in the House that that will be the final count, that is, by the majority in the House or by the majority of Members of Parliament.

HON. M. BROWN: You will have to join us if that is what you are asking.

MRS S. NAPA: That is all I want to put on the Table.

HON. M. BROWN: Then join us.

HON. H. PUNA: Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, Prime Minister.

I was just looking to clarify the Constitution number, the Article that was considered to by the Honourable Member, but you have the Floor.

HON. H. PUNA: Yes. With all due respects, Madam Speaker, this is not the place to educate the Honourable Member on these matters. The rules and the laws are set out very clearly in our Constitution and also in the Standing Orders of this Honourable House. The Honourable Member should not be asking for somebody to guide her on these issues, very important issues at this point in this House.

This is a Confidence Motion designed to confirm the status of the new Government and also to dispel any uncertainties there may be in the minds of our people out there and this is the best opportunity to do that Madam Speaker. And of course, whether we do it by division or not is entirely up to the Members or we can do it in the usual manner that is provided for under our Standing Orders. But no, it is not a reaction to the filing of the Motion of No Confidence by the Leader of the Opposition. We respect that that is entirely their prerogative and their freedom.

So, the Motion is very clear. All the Members are in this Honourable House and I suggest that we get on with it.

Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Right. As there are no further speakers, I will put the Question.

And the Question on the Motion is:

That this Parliament expresses confidence in Cabinet?

Motion agreed to

Honourable Members, there is no further business today and we need to adjourn.

I see the Leader of the House.

But before you do that, may I just say how very happy I am with the work that we have done since we started Parliament. I am particularly also speaking to the new Members in Parliament. It is very hard to know that you are very brand new in this House because you seem to have landed running. It is been very, very impressive the debate from the Floor, from everyone – the new Members included and especially the fact that we have done double shifts in your first week in Parliament. It is very impressive. I am very pleased with that.

And I also want to thank our new Interpreters. I think you will agree they are new but they have been really excellent.

(Applause)

Yes. Just to say before we break up. We have a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference that the Cook Islands Branch of the CPA is hosting from 22-25 that is going to be held at the Edgewater Resort. We have 55 people coming from Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island countries. The Cook Islands Branch of the CPA is very popular amongst our friends because we are very friendly people.

They love to come here and so if any of you would like – in fact, I would encourage you to come and observe. There will only be a couple of Members who will sit as our representatives to the conference but the rest of you are most welcome to come on those dates. There is a lot to learn. There will be lots of people from overseas coming to make various presentations. In fact, our Clerk should send you our program – all of you – send you the program. You look and see when you would like to come and just turn up at the hotel.

And I also thank the staff of Parliament. From the beginning from our Day One to today and the double shifts, I thank everybody for their attention to the business of Parliament.

Prime Minister, you may have the Floor.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Madam Speaker.

I have previously said thank you to our Members of Parliament for the hard work they have done and especially to our new Members including our new Ministers. They have done a great job doing their jobs.

It was not really plain sailing but it was good because we have discussed everything and we have reached the end of the Budget. For the very first time we have actually completed debating the Budget.

I thank all of us for agreeing to the double Sitting this whole week. I know that you are aware of the reason for this. Next week the Minister of Health, Honourable Rose Brown will be attending the meeting of the World Health Organisation in the Philippines. She is the Chair of the Pacific Health Ministers this year.

At this meeting the election for the top person of the World Health Organisation in the Pacific, the WHO Regional Director General. In the past for over thirty years this position is always filled by Japan or Korea. At the meeting of the Pacific Health Ministers that was held in Rarotonga at the beginning of last year when the Cook Islands was elected as Chairman for the Pacific Health Ministers, we put in a nominee to contest this position.

This suggestion was agreed to and the person who is head of the SPC now, a Niue person Dr Colin Tukuitoga and he is the nominee for the Pacific for this position.

The Japanese lobbied strongly in the past two months for us to support their candidate but I told the Prime Minister of Japan, sorry I think this is our turn. There are more Members from the Pacific in this organisation than the Asians. He laughed at what I said so I believe we will be successful and this is the first time a person from the Pacific to hold this position.

So, our prayers and good wishes go with our Minister and we hope that this will be successful for the Cook Islands and all the Pacific countries. So, thank you and I ask that you agree that we adjourn today.

On that note, Madam Speaker I move:

That this Parliament do now adjourn *Sine Die*

The reason for this so that Government can arrange for the commitments that have been confirmed for the remaining months of this year and then we will come back to you and to Members for a suitable time for us to meet again.

That is why we are trying to update our Standing Orders so it does not interfere with the work of the House. Thank you, Honourable Members and thank you Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I seek a Secunder for the Motion please?

Secoded by the Honourable Minister Mark Brown

I put the Question:

That Parliament do now adjourn *Sine Die*?

Motion agreed to

Prime Minister can you say the closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

Sitting adjourned at 3.24 p.m.