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MADAM SPEAKER took the Chair at 9.00 a.m.

OPENING PRAYER

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

Thank you to our Reverend this morning that delivered our message. May it guide us in our debates today.

Greetings to all the Honourable Members who have entered this Honourable House this chilly morning. Greetings to our people listening in on radio, on Rarotonga and in the Outer Islands. And our friends in the Public Gallery and also to Peter McHugh who I believe experienced some traditional cultural food and dancing last night with our Interpreter at the Edgewater. I am so glad that we haven't just worked him. We have also given him some cultural experience.

Honourable Members, we have a lot of work to do today as we look forward to completing our Appropriation Bill. So I will now open our Question Time for 30 minutes.

QUESTION TIME

And I see the Honourable Member, Tetangi Matapo. You have the Floor.

MRS T. MATAPO: Good morning Madam Speaker. Good morning all.

My question as based on our message from the Pastor this morning, my question is posed to the Minister of Health.

Yesterday, Parliament Members were given vaccination for the flu. When I rang my island of Mangaia I was advised the children there are falling sick and I was disappointed because I do not want them to miss their exams coming up very soon.

So my question to the Minister is, can the Ministry of Health extend the vaccination programme to the people of the Cook Islands out there since Members of Parliament have received that?

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

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Greetings to all of us on this beautiful morning. To all the people of the Cook Islands listening to our debate, and to the Member from Tamarua for your question, Kia Orana.

If you may please grant me time to seek further clarification on this from the Ministry of Health. I will come back with the answer.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Honourable Member of Ngatangia.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Madam Speaker. Good morning to all of us on this beautiful morning.

My question is to the Prime Minister. Yesterday, the Prime Minister spoke about how proud he was to travel to Noumea and to Chair a meeting for SPC. I would say that is an honour for the Cook Islands to Chair a meeting. However, this part tastes a bit sour.

Yesterday I talked about the outfall, the impact of waste that will be introduced into Ngatangia and I have heard that this will be pumped into the ocean.

HON. M. BROWN: Point of Order Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. What is your Point of Order?

HON. M. BROWN: The Member is merely speculating. We don't answer questions on speculation Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister.

Would you ask your question please Honourable Member?

MR T. TUAVERA: Okay.

Prime Minister, is the outfall going to go into the ocean in Ngatangia?

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

I give the Floor to the Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Good morning Madam Speaker. Good morning to all Honourable Members.

Just a few corrections before I answer the question. I did not say last night I was proud attending this meeting. However, I do agree that our nation should be proud of this honour. The reason why I will be Chairing this meeting for the South Pacific in Noumea is because it should be that we should be hosting this meeting here next week, here in Rarotonga. However, we became aware of the high costs of hosting this meeting and the work of Foreign Affairs with SPC resulted in Noumea hosting the meeting at the SPC Headquarters. This Organisation agreed to hold this meeting at their Headquarters. Then our commitment for costs will only be the uniform for

leaders and other incidentals. We are fortunate not to spend a couple of hundred thousand dollars. It is a very important meeting because at this meeting will be elected the new Director-General for SPC. This process will be conducted by us and I see some issues arising.

Regarding the question from the Honourable Member, this question cannot be asked because nothing has been confirmed. Experts and our officials are still reviewing the avenues of how this will progress but what I know is this waste that will be going into the ocean won't just be pumped raw. It will be treated before it will be pumped into the ocean. But at this point in time my apologies to the Member that I cannot answer because nothing has been confirmed.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Prime Minister.

I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: Greetings this beautiful morning.

My question is also to the Prime Minister and it's similar to the one by the Member from Ngatangiia.

I have asked this question to the Minister of Finance in the past week regarding water disinfection. We are aware of all the public consultations regarding this issue throughout the villages on waste management.

HON. M. BROWN: Point of Order Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: What is your Point of Order Minister?

HON. M. BROWN: Repetition Madam Speaker. This question was asked in this House last week and answered adequately last week.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes. My information is that you have asked that question.

MRS S. NAPA: If the Minister of Finance did not panic and waited for me to complete my question before he rose, he will know that I have not asked this question last week.

MADAM SPEAKER: Can you just then ask the question when you get up, ask directly because it did sound like you were going the same way. Ask your question now please, Honourable Member.

MRS S. NAPA: Madam Speaker that is why I tried to explain because it does sound like the question from last week but the reasoning behind this is different. The request is, when we ask the question, can they answer directly to the question instead of talking about all sorts of things from all over the place.

My question is on waste management. If the public opinion is to oppose the waste management proposal, will the Government agree with this or not.

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

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, a question is like a little piglet. You can dress it up in nice clothes and different clothes but at the end of the day it's still a little piglet.

The Member asked if Government will agree to the opinion from the public to not allow waste management. To me this is just speculation. It is speculation, Madam Speaker because all the evidence we have had so far is that the public wants something to be done about waste management in the district of Takitumu. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

MRS S. NAPA: Madam Speaker, this is not speculation. I have never seen the Minister at the public meeting held in Takitumu on this issue. The opinion of Vaka Takitumu in that meeting is that they do not want this waste pumped into the ocean, but they have asked for Government to look for alternative options.

HON. M. BROWN: Point of Order. The Honourable Member is giving an opinion rather than asking a question. She is again speculating over things that have yet to be confirmed.

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

MR T. TUAVERA: I just want to answer the Deputy Prime Minister, Madam Speaker.

HON. M. BROWN: I did not ask a question.

MADAM SPEAKER: He did not ask a question, Honourable Member.

MR T. TUAVERA: Yes, but he keeps talking about speculation and purse seining was a speculation and look where it is today.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Member I think, this is question time not to tell stories, ask your question and it will be answered please. I see the Honourable Tina Browne you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Good morning to all of us and that's how the teacher addresses students in the class room. Good morning Madam Speaker, Prime Minister, your Cabinet Ministers and all the Members of Parliament, good morning. The hard working Opposition side good morning. To our people listening in by radio and livestream good morning.

I have made my question directly to the point. Prime Minister please answer my question the other day on purse seining costs and the Minister of Health please answer my question on paramedics. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Prime Minister you have the Floor.

HON. H. PUNA: Madam Speaker, can I just have a minute or two to dig out the details that I need to furnish, thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, the Minister of Health has the Floor.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you, Madam Speaker and also the Leader of the Opposition for the question you asked yesterday on the two paramedics. I think we need to be mindful about some of the comments that we make in this Houser. I will try and answer the questions but I will be cautious because this happened during the time when I was not the Minister for Health.

The first person decided on his own accord to return to his country. The second person was not satisfied with the salary given to him and what he sought was pay rates over or equal to junior doctors.

I am sure the Leader of the Opposition will understand that there are procedures in place that we must follow regarding staff remuneration. We also need to consider the service and expertise and other things. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I give the Floor to the Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Madam Speaker, and thank you Honourable Member for asking the question. It just so happens when the Honourable Member asked the question the other day, the Secretary for Marine Resources was listening in and in fact sent me the information that was requested.

It interested me that this letter writer in the paper, Papa William, wrote an article asking this same question in the newspaper about a month ago. So the Secretary forwarded me her response to that letter because the information is still current.

She is saying that no legal fees have been paid or incurred in relation to the High Court case and Court of Appeal proceedings by the Ministry of Marine Resources, no legal fees have been paid.

Second, no legal fees have been paid to or are owing to the Crown Law Office for both the High Court and Court of Appeal cases. No other legal fees have been paid or are owing to other lawyers or counsel.

Total disbursements for the High Court and Court of Appeal proceedings were \$16,618.76. Three staff members including the Secretary at the time were primarily involved in the proceedings. There are no records of the time spent by those three staff members on the case. In any event the staff involved were full time employees paid a fixed salary.

Finally this is an ongoing proceeding and the information is currently withheld pursuant to Section 8 of the Official Information Act. It was pointed out to the inquirer at the time that if he was unhappy with the response, then he had every right to request the Ombudsman to look into the matter.

So Honourable Leader of the Opposition, those are the responses to your queries. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: I see the Honourable Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I should indicate that if I was aware of the answer or had a copy of that letter, I would not have asked the question.

During Question Time yesterday, I was about to ask a question and we had run out of time and this is in relation to Cook Islands Investment Corporation. I know that we are going to deal with that in the next two hours. But I am not sure that this question touches the question of the Budget.

So, I want to put it in a context, I had inquired or asked the Investment Corporation to provide me with details of all the Government houses and the occupants of those Government houses. The reason why I asked that question was because I was aware that one of my Members of Parliament who does not have a house in Rarotonga has been asking for a house for a long time.

Almost a month later I got a response, the response was interesting and that is what I want to ask about. I was told that I was not going to get the details because of some privacy issues. When you talk about transparency what exactly do you mean?

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Member would like to ask your question, please.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I just did.

MADAM SPEAKER: We have not got enough time.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: When you talk about transparency what exactly do you mean? When I am faced with a privacy issue?

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

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the Leader of the Opposition in rising to show his Members the kind of question that should be asked in this House.

To put simply, Madam Speaker transparency does not mean pulling down your pants in public. There are somethings that should be kept private.

I am aware that the Government housing there is currently a waiting list of close to 45 people wanting homes. And rightly so even I as the Minister of Cook Islands Investment Corporation does not know who are all the people that are occupying Government rental homes.

I am certainly provided with the number of how many properties are available and how many are on the waiting list for homes. But the list of the tenants themselves is a matter for the Investment Corporation and the officials rather than for politicians to play around with.

And I am well aware of the request by a Member of the Opposition for a Government house for rent and I believe it was due to some misunderstanding about Investment Corporation incorrectly thinking that she no longer required a rental home which is why this process has now dragged out.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: What is your Point of Order?

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I asked a direct question and the Minister did answer. He has gone on and I do have a supplementary question that I want to ask.

MADAM SPEAKER: Alright.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: How can you allege privacy when we are dealing with property belonging to the public?

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, I see the Minister.

HON. M. BROWN: There are many issues that involved the public that have privacy concerns not least being issues around taxation. I guess around housing as well but if the Leader of the Opposition is so adamant to learn the names of people who rent Government properties, I am sure that can be provided to her. But I am concerned that they may be used for political purposes.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Members, our Question Time is over. We will now go to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

That is the Committee of Supply – Day 5, on Tourism.

Before we suspended last night, there was an interrupted debate on the Question:

That the sum of \$9,274,662 for Tourism stands part of the Schedule?

Under Standing Order 306 (1), I now resolve Parliament into the Committee of Supply.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY – DAY 5

MADAM CHAIRMAN: To continue with the Schedules and Clauses of that Item. We are now in the Committee of Supply.

TOURISM:

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$9,274,662 for Tourism Corporation
stands part of the Schedule?**

When we adjourned last night the Honourable Selina Napa had the Floor and you may continue.

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you Madam Chair. To use up my last few minutes I just want to raise a need in this area of the Tourism Sector especially on our tourist accommodations on Rarotonga. I do not see any allocation in this Budget for Destinations Marketing to help the current accommodations operating that are accredited to tourism.

We can see today that a lot of our lands here in Rarotonga has been taken over for building more tourist accommodations. Today there are many tourist coming into the country and our accommodations are full. What we are asking here is for the Government to assist these current accommodations to increase their capacity so that there are more rooms available.

It is true that this industry is the top earner of our country but there is also a lot of hard work behind the tourism industry in working the market and ensuring that these people in the beds of our accommodations pay the maintenance and tax and so on.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member and I see the Honourable Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you Madam Chair. As we all know Tourism is our mainstay for this country. Aside from tax we rely on tourism for revenue. Today we are debating the allocation for this agency.

I will indicate at the start that I support the allocation. But I think it is also important that we now having gone through the week and last week connect the reasons for supporting the other allocations.

We supported the Infrastructure allocation because we accept that we need a comprehensive infrastructure plan to allow for the next phase of Tourism. We supported the allocation for Foreign Affairs and Immigration because we accepted that we need a pathway for investors to keep the tourism growth going.

Members will recall that I had a concern with the delay of bringing into Parliament the Immigration Bill because my concern was that we need some certainty around Immigration to assist with the growth of tourism.

We also supported the Agriculture allocation because not only do we think and believe that we should put more money into the Agriculture so that it can be again a revenue earning industry for us going forward but also to support Tourism. We know that we do not grow enough to support Tourism. We supported the Corrective Services allocation because we want to be out there, the Cook Islands profile to be a

safe destination and soon we will be talking about Ministry of Transport and that too is related to the main industry of this country.

So, there may be other allocations that we have supported but these are the main Ministries or Agencies that we feel should move forward to support Tourism and we should all do that in my view because we see that the forecast for Tourism is flattening in respect of the North American market. I think the hope was to see that market grow enough so that our \$12 million subsidy can be reduced in the medium term. Notwithstanding that the forecast is for a reduction in growth, the good news that there is still a positive net growth and it seems to me that currently we are faced with a shortage of rooms. We appear to be filling up and we do not see any major developments for new accommodation and that is why we were concerned with the speed in which Immigration was moving because if we were able to provide certainty around foreigners not being allowed here, then perhaps that would free up some major work for new developments.

I made mention to these other Ministries and Agencies because it makes sense to me that not only are we looking at our revenue but we should also be thinking about how it relates to our main industry and of course we all know that if a disaster hits us, we need to be ready with an alternative revenue-producing industry.

The other day, we talked about the Pearl Authority as being the marketing arm of the pearl industry and the Prime Minister made a frank statement which I agreed with and he said well, it didn't work.

We were looking at the FSDA and that being the marketing branch of the financial industry and I got the feeling that we are going to give it a chance to see whether it can grow back to what it was before.

We now have Tourism for our tourist industry and we want to make sure that it is going to work and so Infrastructure is not only for us locally but it is also to assist with Tourism.

Thank you Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, and I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate. You have the Floor.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you Chairlady, and good morning to you and the staff and this Honourable House.

To our good people out there listening – good morning to all of you.

I thought I'd try and speak the foreign language because we are talking about the Vote Item for Tourism. I would like to congratulate the Tourism Authority for getting us to this stage the position we are in, the healthy and wealthy situation of the Cook Islands. And of course the private sectors that invested in tourism sectors like the accommodation, restaurant, eateries, tours, rentals, crafts and everyone else. Not to forget our cultural side that actually is the big part of attracting our visitors.

Our International Airport was built in the early '70s, approximately about 50 years ago. We've got to give credit to our leaders, their vision for the Cook Islands to become a tourist destination. Our people that supported the leaders and the parents that pursued to educate and support our children to become what we are today. What we are today that's us in this Honourable House and our people out in the community on each Island, especially in Rarotonga and the Pa Enuu. Every post I'm hearing in Government, key positions are held by Cook Islanders and as the Leader is saying if not all, almost all, are related towards the tourism industry.

There was a research done recently earlier on this year based on ownership, Cook Islanders, owners of businesses in Rarotonga. Due to the issues that surrounded there were too many foreigners owning businesses. It was proven that about 60 per cent was locally owned.

We have a big issue right now. Rightly raised by the Member of Ngatangiia and Member of Titikaveka on our sanitation. We had 163,000 visitors in 2018 and the projection is it's going to increase, flatten off and increase but there are still a lot of people visiting us.

The Government, I am sure are looking into this situation that if we don't put a serious solution in place we know what the consequence is going to be and that's the concern of the people, not only in Takitumu but the whole of the Cook Islands. Once we get pollution and everything – it's already happening – don't get me wrong. It's already there. When it gets out of proportion it will take us a very long time to correct it and put our situation back in the right direction. Isn't it time to do a stocktake for Rarotonga and put the effort into these issues and consider not for the outside countries who are our partners out there but for us, for our people.

We are enjoying the wealth. Some of us may not be millionaires – I think all of us won't be millionaires but we are enjoying the good wealthy life of our visitors bringing into our country.

If we consider progressing and encouraging more developments, Rarotonga is saturated to a stage that we are hearing all these reports and Government is trying to put some solutions in place that we should be pushing towards the Pa Enuu. When we look at Aitutaki the number is around 35 thousand visitors going to Aitutaki. It's a huge jump compared from 15 to 20 years ago. We have had some tests of our lagoon and all the other issues surrounding pollution into our environment. Sanitation is an issue and our waste management is also a big issue.

A project was approved at one stage by the AID agency to put in a sanitation for Aitutaki. I wanted to pose this question earlier on to the Government what happened to that because it's quite a few years since. In due respect to the Minister responsible for ICI we are still having to find a solution to our situation that can end up like in Rarotonga.

Those are my comments. I do support the Budget but I would like to see a lot more money going into infrastructure as the Leader of the Opposition have mentioned, and also the substitute in agriculture that we are importing on a daily basis and many others. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you and I see the Honourable Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: In case I have been misunderstood, I wanted to explain there are a couple of Ministries, obvious Ministries that I forgot to mention. The Ministry that has to do with our Environment because I think that goes hand in hand with Infrastructure and with the rest to make better destination to assist with tourism. We are out there promoting ourselves as a clean environment.

I also failed to mention the Ministry of Culture. It may not be the sole attractor but it does play a part in tourism. These things are not necessarily the reason why people or the tourism are attracted to come to the Cook Islands.

I see the buzz words in our promotion of the Cook Islands as a destination, paradise, beautiful, our people, sense of freedom and relaxing. These are the reasons why people overseas are attracted to come to the Cook Islands. They want to come and see us and because they are coming in masses we then need to ensure that they keep coming.

I think it was in yesterday's paper in the Cook Islands News there was an editorial, I make reference to that editorial because sometimes we are a bit too hard on ourselves. I read the editorial twice because I wasn't quite sure whether I was reading it right. The Editor wrote about his first day in Parliament and saw us the Parliamentarians in debate. He was pleasantly surprised because, I don't know that this is the word he used but this is the word I thought I would use he thought that we were all 'civil'. Very nice to each other not quite sure which Parliament he went to. That is why I say that sometimes we are hard on ourselves. People looking inside may not necessarily think that our outward behaviour is as we describe it.

We should not forget the people that have been working in the tourism industry and the direction that's been provided, not only by Government but by the Board of Tourism.

Last week, we congratulated Mr Ewan Smith for winning an award from New Zealand. It did puzzle me as to why he was recommended by New Zealand and not by us. But it was fitting in any event that he deserve a reward as Ewan has played a major role in the direction of our tourism. I understand that he has been Chairman of the Board for some time and if he is listening to this debate, I'd like to congratulate him on behalf of the Opposition.

I want to go back to Agriculture. My message was that increasing or improving or reviving agriculture is a good thing. I know it's not the Government's priority, it definitely is the Demo Party's priority and let me give you an example. When we were in Mauke on the Select Committee and in Mitiaro the growers there were keen to grow. In fact a couple of the growers were growing tomatoes and exporting directly to restaurants here in Rarotonga. They were the main suppliers for places like Trader Jack.

We heard also that they have a pig problem and we heard the Prime Minister indicate his views as to why pigs were a problem and his view was that we were allowing the

pigs to be the boss and we are the pigs. So that is why I say that agriculture, if we assist our outer islands not only are we assisting our people it will put money into their pocket directly and it will assist the restaurants and stop us buying imported goods. And of course the ultimate beneficiary will be us in terms of tax.

This was the same situation in Mitiaro and in Mangaia. I got the feeling in Mangaia and I speak of Nga Pu Toru because we were recently up there on the Select Committee. It seems to me unless of course they are not telling me the whole story, but it seems to me that there is definitely interest in the outer islands to grow or farm. They see an opportunity for them to increase or improve their lives and Government should assist that. On that note I support the allocation for Tourism. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

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

MRS T. MATAPO: Thank you, Madam Chair and greetings to everybody this morning. Firstly Madam Chair I'd like to extend greetings to the island of Mangaia. Greetings to all the people this morning especially the people of Tamarua and also the workers working on the water project, May God bless you all and also the workers who are working on renovating a home which will be completed soon. The work that is being carried out will connect to the Vote Item that we are talking about.

I want now to give my thoughts on the Appropriation for Tourism. I am happy to see the Budget Book and may I quote as written in our book here that Mangaia is the second most visited Pa Enea destination. Even though you do not see many tourists on the island but the Book is confirming to us that Mangaia is moving forward in terms of tourism and it will continue to grow. It is a beautiful island and people want to visit it.

All the planned projects that will be constructed on the island it will draw a lot of visitors to Mangaia. To maintain this growth I want to raise some very important development issues.

In our Budget Book 1, page 228 schedule 12, Output analysis – Destination Development and the allocation is stated here. If Mangaia is not included in this allocation we would like to be included so that Atiu will not overtake us with regards to the number of visiting tourists.

Firstly, I want to speak on tourist accommodations on Mangaia. We had a village meeting to discuss a plan to beautify vacant homes of families relocated to New Zealand for the purpose of accommodating tourist. If you have been to Mangaia and visited my village of Tamarua you will see many vacant homes that are still new and beautiful to house visitors. My thoughts here are, to ask for financial assistance to assist our improvements to these homes for tourist accommodations.

My second submission is in regards to the staff of the Island Government. The role of Tourism and Community Development is assigned to one person, the island Government office. We all agree that tourism is an important entity for our country and I therefore, recommend an appointment of one individual or a post that solely

looks after the tourism activities on Mangaia. There has been people trained to be tour guides for the island and due to the limited number of tourist to the island they are not really active. If we increase the number of visitors to the island then they will be up and active again.

I challenge the Destination Development and Marketing Division in our Tourism office to include Mangaia in your allocation development for this year. We are not competing with Rarotonga and Aitutaki but only to have a little share of the benefit. We want our infrastructure developed because with this improved it will work well in attracting the tourist to visit our island. This is one issue raised by the local tour guides, for various sites on the island visited by the tourist to be cleared and access made easy. And in regards to our historical sites and the stories accompanying these we refer to it as – very rich.

When I visited New Zealand on Parliamentary Visit and when the *papaa* learnt that I am from the Cook Islands and Mangaia especially, they are keen to visit our country but I emphasis to them that my island is Mangaia. So, you have not been to the Cook Islands if you have not been to Mangaia. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I will give you the Floor Honourable Member Tama Tuavera when we come back.

Parliament will suspend until 11.00 a.m.

Sitting suspended at 10.30 a.m.

Sitting resumed at 11.00 a.m.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Please be seated Honourable Members.

Welcome back. Parliament is resumed in the Committee of Supply.

When we suspended the Honourable Tama Tuavera was on the Floor and you may continue.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Madam Chair.

I won't be long because I would like to grant the time for the Prime Minister.

I just want to remind everybody the golden egg and the golden mile is in my village of Muri, Ngatangia. You may as well call it the capital of the Cook Islands.

I would like to concentrate on Infrastructure because these are the people that do the work to rectify our country for tourism. My village is suffering in the lagoon Madam Chair. We've had consultants come through and tell us what they think the problem is. They've taken sand out of the lagoon which of course got washed back in a week later. Sometimes local knowledge is better than a consultant. Aunty Miti who lives there was trying to tell them "You take their sand away it will fill up again." But who listens to an old lady? So as we go through with the numbers we are very happy the

numbers are going up but our village is going down. Waste management is our biggest problem in Ngatangia.

Where are we going to go if that falls down in Ngatangia? There's no other place the tourist can go. If we promote Titikaveka they are also having the same problem as us. So let us put our heads together with Tourism, Prime Minister and come up with the best solution for Ngatangia.

And also we are looking at activities for our tourists to do while on holiday. Right now there's the two lagoon tours in Ngatangia, the two major culture centres and the buggy tour and also two mini golfs and we are forecasted for 169,997 tourists on our shores. While it's good for the economy, it's no good for the land. Maybe we should start pushing tourists to Atiu, to Mangaia, Mauke and all the Outer Islands. I like that one Prime Minister – Manihiki – but we have got to fix the airports, the runways in all the Northern Group so they can receive tourists. But let's be careful about this because of infrastructure. While it's still in its pristine we should be looking at putting the proper waste management into all these islands. We have heard the Member from Amuri talk about Aitutaki starting to get polluted. Let's not wait for this to happen.

My main concern here is infrastructure Madam Chair and I hope that this will be taken on board.

I have many more thoughts but I would like to give this time to the Prime Minister and with that, I still support the Bill.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. I can see the Prime Minister. You have the Floor.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Madam Chair.

Greetings to all of us and our people listening in, in the name of our Lord.

We are debating a very important issue in this House today. I would say this is the livelihood of our country today. It is only appropriate that our discussions are very open and honest in looking to improve this area.

I would like to start by acknowledging the workers in the Cook Islands Tourism. From their Head, Halatoa Fua as well as the Chairman of the Tourism Board. I agree and appreciate the acknowledgments for our friend, Ewan Smith. I would say that during the period when he chaired the Board we saw the rise of tourism in the Cook Islands. This is why I requested him when I took over the portfolio of Tourism for him to continue as Chairman of the Board. I am really glad he agreed. However, just a couple of years ago he approached me and said he was tired and he wanted to have a rest. I brought two young Cook Islanders to be on this Board. My intention is that we ourselves will further develop tourism. However, early this year when the term of this gentleman was expiring, he approached me again if he can remain so he will reach the ten year term of being a Chairman. I do believe when something is working don't touch it. I was glad with the request from this gentleman. Hence my approval for him to remain as Chairman of the Board.

All of them on the Board are young Cook Islanders. Captain Tama, there are two people from Ngatangia. The daughter of Trevor Clarke, Dianna; Serena Hunter, as well as Rohan Ellis and some young Cook Islanders. We see they are our own blood and they are capable of carrying this responsibility.

So when I see the good reports regarding Tourism my heart is pleased because I know our own people are developing tourism.

Destination Marketing. This is one of the major focuses of tourism today - Destination Development so I am glad with the comments before in looking at how we can expand, improve and increase the situation with tourism in our country.

As mentioned by our friend the Member from Ngatangia was saying it is not enough that only he and a few others do activities for tourism. We need to grow the options available to our guests. This is destination development. That is why I was happy to hear the Member from Ngatangia talking about new ventures in Muri, Ngatangia. This is our job to encourage our people to seize the opportunities that are available from this industry.

One aspect that I am really happy with these good reports from tourism in that there is no extra tourism hotel accommodation being built and yet the numbers are increasing. So the question is where are the tourists staying? We will be happy with the reason and they are all staying in the family homes, private homes. We should encourage this because our people are beautifying their own homes and building new ones and they are part of reaping the benefits of this industry. And that's not all. We see our young people and mamas selling produce on the side of the roads. That is part of the tourism benefits.

My friend from Amuri-Ureia you are talking about an investment into airline underwrites. As I read you we should really divert that somewhere else to support our people.

I want us in this House and the people listening to truly understand the difference between ourselves and Samoa and Tonga. When our election was completed in 2010, the Government was not then sworn in, then an ultimatum received from Air New Zealand, they will withdraw from the LA and Sydney service unless Government agrees to under write both services and we only had a weekend to come up with an answer. Thank you to our officials that worked hard over the weekend to advise Government whether the economic benefits was worth retaining these two services and under writing them.

Monday morning the report came very clearly we can't afford to loose these two services but it might cost us \$15 million dollars to retain those services. So we looked at each other what we are going to do. In light of the report from our officials we had no choice. We bit the bullet and agreed to under write. We should understand that was really a major and significant development in our tourism industry.

Tonga and Samoa were faced with the same choices at the same time but they shied away and you know what they have never recovered from that and their tourism

industries are still struggling even today. So please be careful what we wish for. We don't have any airline services, we need to depend on others but in doing that we need to ensure that we secure the best services.

We have come a long way. We used to have a monopoly on air services to our country but now we have three. So our tourism is in good hands. We are very dependent on air services because of our isolation and yet let us work together in addressing exactly the priorities that we are talking about infrastructure, law and order, agriculture, health so I am so please despite our difference perhaps in the approach that we should take, we are all supportive of the allocation for Tourism. Thank you Honourable Members and thank you Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members our time is completed on this Vote Item.

I will put the Question and the Question is:

That the sum of \$9,274,662 for Tourism Corporation stands part of the schedule?

Motion agreed to

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT:

The Question is that:

The sum of \$1,160,232 for the Ministry of Transport stands part of the Schedule?

The Floor is open and I see the Honourable Tina Browne you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you Madam Chair. I rise to give a short thought on this allocation. But before I take us to the narration on page 186, I must say that I am impressed with the Maori version that is allocated to each Ministry. This Ministry is called "Te Mana Tumotu o te Kuki Airani". If you told me that name without putting Ministry of Transport next to it, I wouldn't have a clue that it is Ministry of Transport.

The Ministry in the narration says that the purpose of the Ministry of Transport is to create and maintain a safe, predictable and cost effective environment for users of aviation, maritime and road transportation.

Earlier when we were debating Tourism I made reference to the Ministry of Transport as being another arm to assist us with the growth of our tourism and the key words as seen in the vision 'safe and secure management of our land, sea an air'.

I don't intend to take up all of ten minutes so if I can just refer to the second paragraph from the bottom of that page 186. I am encouraged by the fact that the Ministry is trying to organise by consulting with Taio Shipping to remove the *MV*

Moana Nui from the Nassau reef. They put it as an Achievement but I think its Work in Progress but I think it's a good thing anyway.

I wanted to comment on the Met Office for two reasons, one because of the relation with tourism but more importantly the warnings that they should issue out in a timely manner of cyclones. We know that we have had problems in the past as to the lateness of the notice especially for our Outer Islands and if this Budget is going to assist in improving our communication with the Outer Islands especially the Northern Group and it helps them provide a safe and secure management of the Cook Islands in terms of on land, in the seas and in the air the Opposition supports this allocation.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member. Are there further speakers? I see the Minister of Transport.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Greetings everyone in the name of our Lord. Greetings to you Madam Chair and all the workers greetings everyone. To the people of Tongareva greetings.

I will get straight to the speech. First of all I would like to give congratulations to Papa Ewan Smith. He has been made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to the Cook Islands Business and Tourism. He founded and has been Managing Director of Air Rarotonga since 1978. He has made significant contributions to the social and economic development of the country. I am voicing the support, Madam Chair and I doubt whether anyone in this House can deny the importance that air and sea transportation contributes to the economy. Air transportation is the backbone to our largest revenue earner – tourism.

Like the Leader of the Opposition was saying, this also helps with tourism. The other comments she was speaking about Infrastructure Cook Islands and also the National Environment Services and the Ministry of Transport should also go hand in hand with tourism. I thank God that these portfolios were handed to me because all these are related to benefit our people. And also, with the help of the current Government and the support of the Opposition, we will make this happen.

For Aviation, overseeing the safety and security on the movements of aircrafts and its passengers and ships with its cargos is normally tasked to Government agencies. Such as Civil Aviation Authority and the Maritime Safety Authority within the Ministry of Transport.

I would also like to report to Parliament that of the 31st of March 2018 all Aviation providers have been certified under the provisions of the Cook Islands Civil Aviation Act 2002. Aerial nautical study for the Pa Enuu will be made priority to Manihiki and Penrhyn followed by Pukapuka and Rakahanga and also not forgetting our Southern Group islands.

I think there were a few statements made earlier on that tourism is getting congested in Rarotonga and Aitutaki. And me as being the Minister for Infrastructure with the help of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister the Minister of Finance I think we will be fast tracking the sealing of the airports up North. After we do this

Air Rarotonga is planning to bring in a new SAAB aircraft and the North will be able to cater for this aircraft.

In regards to shipping, we have heard that Government has put aside \$2.5million to procure another barge so, it continues to support our people in the Pa Enuu. And I would just like to touch on the point that the Leader of the Opposition was talking about earlier.

The Ministry of Transport and Taio Shipping have signed an Agreement for the removal of *MV Moana Nui* from Nassau in the next six months and that is in the next six months. I am sure that the Member of Parliament for Pukapuka/Nassau will be happy with this. Also in this signing of Agreement not forgetting the *MV Koumaru* that is stranded on Mauke this has also been included in this Agreement.

Our National Transport Policy is long overdue so this will be addressed in this coming year and there will be a new division in the Ministry. Like I said earlier on it goes hand in hand with ICI, Environment and Tourism.

In saying that I would like to thank the Opposition for giving their support and the support of the Government. Kia Orana and Kia Manuia.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. Are there no further speakers? I will put the Question.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,160,232 for the Ministry of Transport stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

COOK ISLANDS INVESTMENT CORPORATION:

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge our officials from the CIIC this morning, welcome to Parliament.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$8,290,490 for Cook Islands Investment Corporation stands part of the Schedule?

I see the Honourable Selina Napa and you have the Floor.

MR S. NAPA: Thank you Madam Chair. If I may acknowledge the Head of CIIC. Please extend our acknowledgement to all your hard working staff when you return to your office.

I must tell everyone that this is the first time since my entry into this House that we have been able to fully discuss and debate the Appropriation before us and first time I

had the opportunity to talk on the Vote Items in the Committee of Supply. In the past years there has always been a guillotine motion to end the debate on the Budget.

There is comments coming from the Government side that there is too much opposition from our side of the House but I want to assure our people listening in, that we do not just oppose we actually correct the Appropriations. They the Government is not transparent to us in the Opposition as well as the people of our country.

I would like to come back to the Appropriation for CIIC. When I look at this year's appropriation for CIIC it has been reduced from about \$9million last year down to \$8million this year. I see also a reduction in trading revenue from previously \$2million and now to \$700,000. I am therefore seeking clarification as to the reason for this reduction. To my understanding if there is a reduction in the gross then surely there should be an increase revenue but I do not see that here.

When I look at the personnel allocation I see an increase in here because in previous years the allocation for personnel was about \$1million. When I look to that allocation for this year it has increased to about \$1.5million. As the Prime Minister has elaborated earlier that the salaries of some of the staff in this office is getting more than the Prime Minister.

I have to ask the question whether this level of remuneration is consistent with the salary banding as well as their performance. In this Appropriation their vision describes an effective and efficient management of the assets of the people of the Cook Islands. Meaning well managed and operated asset consistent with modern financial practice and to manage all public asset of Government and others.

I now would like to talk about schools. We know of the lease problem with Nukutere College. If CIIC responsibility was to manage and look after the affairs of our asset even though some of the schools are private schools. I just feel that maybe CIIC should have a more hands-on responsibility to take care of the leases of our schools so that they do not expire resulting in bigger problems to address. Today another example is Papaaroa School. We see the issues with the landowners.

A request here to CIIC is to explain their role in the negotiation process with the landowners and even though this school is classified as a Church school or private school, but these are Cook Islands students. So the request here to CIIC is to explain what role, if any, do you have to assist the school in this issue?

I foresee in the future another potential problem will be the Titikaveka College and that is the ownership of the College and the grounds as a whole. I remember at the beginning of the year seeking some help from CIIC in terms of the maintenance of the hard court and the info that I received from the CIIC was the hard court area is not part of the Ministry of Education of the Crown land.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I see the Honourable Tina Browne.

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

The Cook Islands Investment Corporation, I believe their role is to manage the assets of Government and for that reason we should look very carefully at the allocation of the Agency.

I want to start from the back. If you go to the Schedule, their staffing resources at page 32, I will concentrate in particular on the legal manager and under the legal manager is one junior legal. There's a lot of work in this division and we've seen there's been one of the achievements referred to at page 27, which is settlement of land issues, rental acquisition, etc. I am aware that some of that work has been farmed out, maybe because of the lack of capacity in the Investment Corporation. The reason why I say that in the current discussions on Te Mato Vai and Mei Te Vai Te Vai, part of the legal work has been farmed out to other lawyers and I wonder –Kia Orana to the CEO and to all in the Gallery and to Mr Tamarii.

I wonder whether there is scope in your staffing to increase the capacity in that area. Because if we forecast what Infrastructure is going to be doing and we accept that many of the leases that is owned by Government will expire, and many of the land rentals that are yet to be attended to – the arrears – there is a lot of work that is required in that division. I'm aware that Mr Lloyd Miles is the head of that division and he's losing hair rapidly.

I say this with seriousness because we know that the SDA School is in trouble. That's the Papaaroa College I think. I know this first-hand because they came to see me for assistance. But I thought that in line with the assistance that Government provided to the Catholic Church, this is something that Government should also assist. I told them that you're lucky because the Prime Minister is SDA.

So it might have taken the Catholic two years to negotiate. You people will take one week to negotiate. So when I see land acquisition there as \$2 million, I wonder whether that is the Papaaroa College or whether that is something else. I suspect that it might be something else because as my colleague Selina Napa has said, Papaaroa is looking for help.

And we know that not so long ago, the Investment Corporation had to pay enormous rental for Tereora College.

I'm a little puzzled with the figures on page 28 so far as land rental is concerned and it may be that I'm not reading the figures correctly, but under the Administered Payments, you have no provision there for land rentals for 2019-2020 but if you go across under Administered Funding you have \$1.5 million for land rentals. I am sure that your figures have been guided by what has happened from history but it is quite possible that the land arrears might exceed \$1.5 million.

The other reason why I suggested that perhaps you should look at employing others in the Legal Division is because the amount of work that is attended to by that division is such that they have no time to actually go and have a look at all the Government leases, work out how many are in arrears, work out when the land rentals are due so that much of what they do is reactionary. Having said that though, I am aware that they did some very proactive steps in Aitutaki and I'm aware that there was a big bill to pay just in terms of paying off the landowners for arrears of land rental. And so if I

can ask the Minister to have that in mind because employing another person might be cheaper than paying or farming work out to lawyers except of course that you've had the help and assistance of a very good lawyer at a very small price.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you and I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate. You have the Floor.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you Madam Chair.

Greetings again to all of us in the House and those of you in the Chamber including the CEO of CIIC.

I haven't got many thoughts on this one. I would just like to focus on this Agency, the branch in Aitutaki and the Outer Islands.

My acknowledgement to the Power Utility in Aitutaki which I believe is under the purview of this Agency. The Board led by Long and the Island Government and your management of this facility. While these two are still members of the Board I would like to highlight an issue we have with Aitutaki with our power on the roads.

The Member of Parliament for Matavera yesterday was boasting about the funds that he received from Government because the Minister was talking about a piece of paper but I believe it is money. Our issue is our roads have no light from the airport all the way to town. Like the Member for Ngatangiaa was referring to a golden mile in Ngatangiaa such is the same with our golden mile in Aitutaki. Funds are being paid into the power station for our workers to do their job.

How many years have we waited since the cyclone until now we are still waiting for streetlights not only to light the way for our visitors but also for our own people. Maybe that is why our people are not going for a walk during the night or early in the mornings hence the reason they are driving on vehicles. We want to encourage healthy living and reduction of NCD and maybe having the street lights will encourage my people in Aitutaki. But for visitors I see late at night or early in the morning they are trying to evade speeding motorists on the road. It is just not youth speeding but also the elderly with failing eyesight. Fortunately just by luck there has been no accident.

Here's a suggestion to this agency as you manage our funds to work hard on this Appropriation. I know there was already allocation in the last Appropriation. If all of this has gone to Arenikau they are fortunate. Unfortunately there is no revenue from this area. That's why the golden mile is between Amuri and Ureia.

So my request is if I receive a piece of paper like the Member of Matavera I will sing and praise this Government. I am not asking for free solar, no I want the lights to be switched on. This is only a small request. Thank you.

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

MRS S. NAPA: Because, Madam Chair my thoughts were not completed but my time was up. I rise to complete what I have to say. When I sat down I was talking about Titikaveka College.

Like I said when I met with CIIC on the matter of the hard court for some assistance from the Education to assist with maintenance and I was told this was not the responsibility of CIIC. And the comment that came back was that this is a community court and therefore the responsibility falls probably under myself as MP as well as the community. So if you could please get some clarification around who is in charge of the whole education ground of Titikaveka College whether it is Crown land.

However when I saw our good friend Mr Tamarii Pierre sitting in the Gallery I would like to take this opportunity to thank him in his time as Chairman of the Board for the assistance he provided when we were looking for a piece of land for the Takitumu Fire Station.

At the time we went looking CIIC under his management gave approval straight away for the front of the Titikaveka College to be housed for a fire station. However, it did not go through because of opposition from the College as well as the community but today we have seen the result of our fire station. I must say it's the best fire station on Rarotonga, better than the main one at the airport.

I will come back to the Capital Schedule for CIIC that is three Government building repair project the TSA, Police and the Justice because I only see an allocation for 2019/20 and nothing for 20/21 and so on. Just going back to the TSA I know last year the previous years the netball have been using the TSA and last year they were asked to find another venue for netball so that the renovation can take place and asking whether we will see a progress report on the renovation of these three major Government buildings come to Parliament sometime this year.

Coming back to the TMV Titikaveka backroad rehabilitation there is no allocation for 2019/20 because this back road rehabilitation has been a real controversial issue with landowners during Te Mato Vai Stage 1 and I would like to ask the Minister of CIIC who is the Minister of Finance and even CIIC if they could please have a look at allocating an amount to fix the back road at Titikaveka and I know what the Minister will say to me, you sort out the land issue and we will come to the rescue. But I think in this instance it's a collaborative effort between myself and the Government with the landowners.

The reason why I brought this up is because this morning I heard the advertisement going over the radio about the usage of the road at Sea Change in Turoa and that it will be turned into a single road and the road will not be accessible to heavy duty trucks and I might have been wrong in also listening and say that part of the advertisement was that sometime during the day the road will be closed and for people to find another way across. Although the shutdown might be temporary and this is the road area in Titikaveka that I have been asking for help for an emergency back road to be put in this area especially the area of Papaaroa School, the Queen's Representative and the area where this work is being done at Sea Change.

Hence my request to Government maybe not this allocation but hopefully during the Supplementary Budget to allocate funds to open a back road in Titikaveka and in terms of emergency something happens drastically around the area during a cyclone or whatever, there is no emergency exit in that area. Those are my thoughts for now and I will give time for others to speak.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you and I see the Honourable Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I just wanted an opportunity to talk about the Property Managers Division in your staffing resources.

And since you are here, this morning I asked a question that involved Government houses. The question relates to a request that I put to Investment Corporation to provide me details of the number of Government houses that are rented out to Members of Parliament and others.

The response I got I was a little bit surprised because all I was doing was trying to satisfy a conversation I had with a Member of Parliament in the Democratic Party who had applied and was waiting for a Government house. And I thought well if I got a response and say well there are no houses, well that is the answer. And a response that says there are no houses because a, b, c, d. That is another answer or we have no houses because our policy does not allow houses to go to any Democratic Party Member. That might be the likely answer.

The response was that for privacy reasons we cannot give you a list or the details. We are reviewing...

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member can I just interrupt. When you are debating on the matter in Parliament you speak to the Chairperson but I am hearing that your debate is directed to people in the Gallery.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I am looking at them but I am directing it at you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: The wording that you are using is your office and what have you, which are out of place. You address the House through the Speaker and mainly because we have already heard all that before so can I just bring you back into debating in the House to the Chair.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you Madam Chair for correcting me. So when I am talking to you I hope they are not thinking that I am gossiping about them.

Anyway the difficulty I have with that is that it is not so private for me to go and appoint an investigator to drive around and visit all the Government houses and then take details of who are in these houses. It just takes time unnecessary time in my view.

Secondly, how is it that you can claim privacy on use of public buildings? And that was quite confusing for me and the explanation that was given which I must say that was more confusing, that I may be using it for political reasons. The only reason was

to see whether a house can be made available for a Member of Parliament who lives in the Outer Islands.

But I think during the break we found a solution. I am aware that the Member of Mauke has just recently received a house. He might want to share it with the Member from Mangaia.

Now, I see on your staffing resources there are nine workers on the chart. I see in the spending and I am looking at the table 4.4, Government Building Repairs \$60,000. My question is does that mean that the Government houses don't need any repair. Not knowing how many houses altogether I am not able to give you a rough idea of how much one house might be allocated.

So, my request to you Mr Minister is if you can assist me by freeing up the provisions of information that have been asked so that I can understand how Government houses are allocated. We all know that if we understand how these things work then there is no problem but if we don't understand then you have problems and you have questions that may be asked that are inappropriate.

Now, I recently viewed the extension to my friend the Minister of Internal Affairs office recently. I must commend the workers and I assume that these are the workers from the Investment Corporation because I think that they may have been whipped to get the job done in such a short time but they did a good job. And I am sure they are going to be moving on to somewhere else because with the maintenance work that you have on Government house it's not going to fill a year.

I want to talk about the office or building of the Ministry of Justice that is under 4.4 of the Capital Schedule and the TSA and obviously the Police also. I mentioned about the Police office the other day when we were talking about the police allocation. I mentioned it because the offices in the building are so small and no air conditioning. In my view if you are working in such a condition your brain does not operate properly.

If you go directly from an office that does have an air condition and it is hot at the police office. You go directly to the Justice office and you go into the Court room where there is only one level of coldness in the Court room you are likely to freeze.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much Leader of the Opposition. That was perfect timing.

We will suspend Parliament now until 1.30 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 12.30 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.30 p.m.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (T. TURA): Please be seated everybody.

Greetings everybody this afternoon. I see that everybody is smiling because we had a great spread this afternoon.

We will continue with our Committee of Supply and we were on the Vote Item for Cook Islands Investment Corporation. Are there further speakers?

Before we suspended the last speaker was Tetangi Matapo from Tamarua constituency.

MRS T. MATAPO: Thank you Deputy Chair.

I only have a few comments to make so that there's enough time for other Members to speak.

Last year, a team of CIIC travelled to the Outer Islands and they stopped over in Mangaia. During that visit, we had a Council Meeting and they asked us Members of Parliament to support their Vote Item for this financial year.

Our discussions during that meeting also covered Government buildings on our island. Therefore, I stand here to represent us and to talk about this issue.

We had a couple of requests to the Minister and they were really basic things regarding Government buildings such as the hospital, the schools and so forth. The request is for better standard and quality of these buildings especially to accommodate the needs of our special needs children.

I cannot see in this Budget an allocation for the school building project. Maybe this has gone already to a school in the Cook Islands. I just want some clarification whether Mangaia will fit into this allocation for this financial year or next year.

Also with the hospital, they were surprised to know that there is no hot water in the hospital for a very long time. However, these are our thoughts and we are giving our full support to the Budget and we will wait for the answers in due course.

Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

Now I can see the Honourable Member from Matavera, Vaitoti Tupa. You have the Floor Sir.

MR V. TUPA: Greetings to everyone this afternoon.

Please excuse me because I was not here in the early part of the Sitting this morning as I had to attend to some very important meetings. If you knock on the door, the doors will be opened to you and that is why I was successful with my meetings. The benefit of this meeting is the financial support coming for my village Matavera.

I will put that aside and come back to the allocation. I can see that there is a huge increase in the Vote Item for the Cook Islands Investment Corporation. Personnel as well as Operations have increased and this is called Administered Payments. When we look at the Personnel Salaries it has increased to \$365,526. When we look at the

Administered Payments, this is to help other areas in Infrastructure and other agencies and I see an increase to the tune of \$500,560. This is more than what was allocated during the last financial year.

Our responsibility in the Opposition is to request Government for funding to help needed areas. I believe however that the increase in this Vote Item has already been committed to certain areas. I believe the reason behind the increase in this Vote Item is to complete the projects that have been started and also to start those that need to be started. Therefore I fully support this appropriation.

Now I want to talk about our Takitumu Primary School. I believe the Head for CIIC have by now received the letter of request to assist our school. The main thing here is to protect our school children and also those living close to this radio mast. In my letter to the Head of CIIC, I explained to him that, sometimes, we will need to use the Sunday School Hall. I also had discussions with the teachers how we can continue education for our children at Takitumu School.

During my telephone conversation with the Head of CIIC and before I wrote my letter to him, we came to a joint agreement. I believe what we have agreed, CIIC will be able to resolve this issue.

I have also noted the staff under this agency carrying out their work. My practise is that when it comes to this time, I would go and ask them their status and also heir new budget compared to the previous budget. During these meetings with the agency staff some bright ideas have come out. I didn't only consult with CIIC I also had discussions with other agencies because if we do this, it puts us in a better position what we should talk about for our people to hear.

I previously mentioned at the beginning of our sitting, when I saw this Budget and also heard the Minister's Financial Statement, I knew the Budget has increased. Now, I would like to thank Government for looking after Government assets. I believe this is proper to be under the administration of CIIC because when you make enquiries to people who are responsible to certain tasks in this department, they are able to tell you the reason things are done the way it is done. This is why I give my full support to the Vote Item for CIIC.

In closing, and before I exhaust my time, I can recall in past years, maybe in 2011 or 2012, there was a recommendation for the lands in Nikao to be given back to the landowners. I was happy with the intention at the time because it allows the opportunity for landowners to form a Trust Board. Remember, I only overhead about this recommendation and today, I am talking about this issue in this House. If that proposal actually transpired, we would have managed it the same way CIIC is doing today. However, Mr Deputy Chairman, it is fitting for CIIC to manage this area.

Please bear with me, I have another meeting to attend and I will be back in our House. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member I now see the Honourable Minister Mac Mokoroa.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Deputy Chair, greetings and greetings to all the staff and Members of this House. Kia Orana to the Head of CIIC and your staff.

I rise to support this Appropriation for CIIC. We know that this is one the biggest Ministry in our country. Its work stretches out to both the Southern and Northern Group islands.

I would also like to acknowledge the hard work the CIIC staff carried out in renovating my office next to the Ministry of Justice. The people that were involved in this work came from the village of Nikao although they are paid by Government.

The Leader of the Opposition asked earlier on why funds are used to renovate this office. The simple answer is to prepare for my Honourable friend Vaitoti Tupa when he visits my office.

Honourable Chairman, I had discussions with two former Ministers who previously occupied this office and they told me they attempted during their time to have this office renovated but it did not happen. However, through my request to the Minister and with discussions with CIIC, funds were allocated to renovate this office. On top of that, this Office will be utilised to hold meetings of my Portfolio Ministries as well as my community groups. Those of you on the Opposition side, if you want to utilise these rooms, we will not hesitate to make it available to you but with fees involved.

The responsibilities of CIIC are not only to maintain offices but also to manage Government houses and properties throughout the Outer Islands. Regardless of whichever agency is conducting the work on the roads or water at the end of the day these assets are under the responsibility of CIIC.

I am happy with what this agency is doing for us especially in Nikao as most of the main assets of this country are in Nikao.

The Honourable Member from Ngatangia, Tama Tuavera, is saying that the golden mile is in Ngatangia, but I would say the gate way to heaven or hell is in Nikao. If in the event that the airport is closed because of an emergency, this golden mile in Ngatangia will turn to golden dust. So through our support for this Appropriation it may give encouragement to this agency to maintain these main facilities the airport, the schools, Parliament and so on.

Regarding the comments by the Leader of the Opposition regarding lease of land with landowners, I support this notion so to keep our landowners happy as they see the improvement to their land.

Last month, I visited the stadium with the Head of CIIC, Papa Tam. We all know the stadium was built in 1984 for the 1985 Mini Games. After thirty years, we both agreed that this is an important asset of the country that should be improved for the next fifty years. I would like to thank the workers of CIIC, ICI and even the contractors of the Cook Islands Welding for working together to produce a report to show us the way forward for this development.

I also want to thank CIIC for improving our school, Tereora College and we know it does not stop here because Stage 2 is yet to come to improve our school Tereora

College. As we can see in this Appropriation, there is an allocation for maintaining our hospital as we all know how important this facility is for those people who fall ill.

These are my comments in support of this Vote Item, Kia Orana.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Minister.

HON. M. BROWN: Deputy Chair, in light of the time that's available there has been a lot raised in this particular Vote Item and I would like to be able to have time to respond to those queries.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister. You have the Floor.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Deputy Chair and thank you also to the Honourable Members for affording me the time to speak on this particular Vote Item.

The Investment Corporation can broadly be divided into two categories, one is the responsibility of State Owned Enterprises and Government corporations and the second one is the management of Government assets and buildings and Government land.

We can see in this year's appropriation the Capital Budget includes the initial amount of money to invest in the new Government building that is being proposed on the Waikapuangi site. This will be a Government building that will house, we estimate up to fifteen Government Ministries, under one roof and we expect significant cost savings in terms of centralising so many Government Ministries into one building. And the time is right Mr Deputy Chair that we need to look at upgrading the quality of accommodation that we house our Government departments in and they need to be brought up to modern 21st century standards.

Mr Deputy Chair there was a comment made by the Leader of the Opposition regarding Government leases that we may not have a proper handle and understanding of all of the Government leases. I can say that this department now has a very good understanding of all Government properties that it has a lease over, and I can say that when I became the Minister of Investment Corporation, there was a considerable amount of Government properties that had been left neglected and their lease had not been reviewed going back more than thirty years. I suspect looking at the length of time that these leases had not been reviewed that it was going to cost a considerable amount of money to be able to bring them up to date.

But it was this Government Mr Deputy Chair that had the courage and the had the conviction to go and look at these outstanding leases and make applications to have them reviewed and brought up to date and start the process of paying the landowners the outstanding amounts that they were due.

We started this with the Tereora College property which is on a perpetual lease of which reviews have lapsed for well close to 30 years and brought those up to date at considerable cost. The team has been to Aitutaki to review all outstanding leases in Aitutaki to bring those up to date.

Just last month, the Legal Officer for the Investment Corporation has returned from touring the Northern Group to look at leases in the Northern Group islands with the view to bringing them up to date for their outstanding arrears.

It is this Government Mr Deputy Chair that committed to put aside significant millions of dollars to bring these rental arrears up to date.

So, I have to say, that today we do have a very comprehensive list of Government properties that we manage under the Crown and we are endeavouring to ensure that all of them are up to date in terms of their lease payments.

But I can certainly agree with the Leader of the Opposition in her comment that certainly a lot of legal fire power is required in this particular department for the work that it engages in. And because there are specialist legal requirements that are needed in the Investment Corporation we have endeavoured to procure these services rather than engaging or hiring them as part of the staff the Cook Islands Investment Corporation.

I am sure that of our lawyers and legal firms have appreciated the fact that the Investment Corporation engages them to carry out and provide legal services as required by the Investment Corporation.

In regards to Government housing Mr Deputy Chair, certainly as I mentioned there is a waiting list of over 40 wanting a Government house for rent. And again the Government has been going through a program the last two years of upgrading all Government homes because they have been left in a pretty sad state of disrepair.

And the Investment Corporation is also going through developing an updated housing policy. This is important because of the increasing demands on housing from not just Government workers but also the general public in need of long term residential housing. And I know within the next 6 months we should have a housing policy completed to allow us to make decisions on whether we need to invest in building more houses or whether we find ways to engage the private sector to provide and increase the stock of houses.

But no doubt the housing demand has been driven in recent years by the increase of people converting their homes into holiday homes. I am hopeful that the housing policy will provide us with some solutions on how to address this shortfall of housing that we currently have.

In regard to the Member from Aitutaki about street lighting I am aware that 250 streetlights were purchased for Aitutaki. A hundred were installed last year and I understand there will be about 60 to be installed this year and another 60 next year. But the better news is that the Aitutaki Power Supply Stage 1 of our renewable energy program is completed. We would expect the new Board to be made up of Aitutakians to be the new Board for the Aitutaki Power Supply to be appointed very soon.

And even better news Mr Deputy Chair, I would expect that with the renewable energy online that Aitutaki residences can expect their power bills and their charges for their power to be reduced. But I will let the new Board make that announcement

and advice our Members of Parliament from Aitutaki whom I am sure will be very happy to hear that news for their people.

In regards to our questions raised from our Member from Teimurimotia. The question raised about the land issues around Papaaroa School. I can confirm Mr Deputy Chair that the Government has not been approached by the Seventh Day Adventist church or by representatives of Papaaroa School for assistance in the situation that they will be coming into with their lease expiring.

But I fully expect that the Government will provide as much assistance as we can when the request comes through to help and ensure that the school continues. Just as we helped the Cook Islands Christian Church Mr Deputy Chair with the construction of their hall at the Takamoia Theological College.

Just as we helped the Catholic Church with the rebuilding of Nukutere College after it was burnt down, and assisted them in securing the land that the school is on by acquiring with consent landowners through a Warrant. Working in conjunction with the board of Nukutere College who also contributed a significant amount to pay for the compensation for the land that was acquired by Warrant.

Just as we did with the Cook Islands Christian Church in the reaching to an agreement and settlement of their land issues in Tepuka. I am sure that when the request comes from the Seventh Day Adventist community the Government will be looking at ways as well to assist in partnership with the church.

In regards to the back road through Titikaveka, well the Government did open the road through Titikaveka around the back during part of Stage 1 of Te Mato Vai, and if it was not objected by a small group of landowners, that road would be very operational right now. So, that is the challenge to the Member for Titikaveka. If we want the back road to be opened, then we need to have the consents of our landowners to come on site particularly those few landowners that objected to it, we need their consents.

As for the Titikaveka College hard courts, I can confirm this is not part of the Crown lands. It is part of I guess the village or the club property, including the field, and if we were to provide assistance for the Titikaveka court we would probably have to upgrade all of the sports clubs on Rarotonga and then the Aitutaki clubs will come and ask for their one and then the Southern Group will ask as well. Everybody will ask for the upgrade so that's a community one that will require assistant.

But if we are energetic like the Ngatangia Sports Club, we would get the Japanese funding to upgrade the court like the Ngatangia Club did for their one. So there's ways and means to get this done.

I realise Mr Chairman that we have exhausted our time to debate on this Vote Item and I trust that we all support this Appropriation. Thank you very much.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister.

Honourable Members, I now put the Question.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$8,290,490 for Cook Islands Investment Corporation stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

COOK ISLANDS SEABED MINERALS AUTHORITY:

I will put the Question. The Question is:

That the sum of \$295,292 for Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority stands part of the Schedule?

The debate for this Vote Item is limited to 30 minutes. Thank you.

Are there any speakers? I now see the Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Tina Browne on the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Kia Orana Deputy Chairman.

We are always grateful to see you Chair our meetings in the afternoons.

As I look at the name Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority, its Maori name is Runanga Takere Moana. If I interpret that, it's old Moana. It's an old ocean. "Takere" means ancient or – Oh, "takere" is floor because takerekere is to blacken.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, I've been advised by my legal adviser that it is called "takere". It means the sea floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Deputy Chairman, although they might be giving the impression they are good at Maori, they're not. We're all the same.

I rise to give our comments on this allocation. This is the Authority that is to implement the Seabed Minerals Act as I understand it. We all know that we have the old Act and on our Order Paper is the Seabed Minerals Bill that we hope to get to.

The Opposition believes that the Authority – that our support should be given to this allocation to give us an opportunity to see whether or not at the end of the day this would be another industry that will assist us with revenue. So the Opposition supports this allocation.

Thank you.

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

I now see the Honourable Minister of Finance.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Deputy Chair. I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition side for their support for this Appropriation.

Quite rightly, this body, the Seabed Minerals Authority, is charged with implementing the Seabed Minerals Act. Some Members may recall that the current Act was passed in 2009 but the Office of the Seabed Minerals Commissioner was established in 2013 and this Government supported the establishment of the Office because we could see that in the coming years, there was going to be a growing interest in this particular sector and we wanted to be sure that we had the regulatory authority in place to be able to manage the interest that would start to arise from the minerals in our waters. We have been aware of these minerals in our waters since the 1970s and a few scientific expeditions by Russian expeditions, by Japanese expeditions under the South Pacific Commission, conducted some surveys and exploration back in the '70s and '80s and subsequently determined that we are only one of two places in the world that has concentrations of these seabed minerals at the high concentrations that exist, only one of two places in the world.

The first place is in the Clarion Klipperton Zone which is in the international seabed area. This is an area that's known as the high seas and it's under the jurisdiction of the United Nations. There are a number of countries who are signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea who have claimed parts of this international seabed area. Members will be pleased to know that we, the Cook Islands, are also a sponsoring state in this international seabed area through our partnership with our Belgium-based company.

The second place that the minerals exist in such high concentrations is in our own ocean, a blessing that has been provided to us by the good Lord.

Over the last six years Mr Deputy Chair, we've undertaken a lot of work in gaining knowledge on this particular area and we have encouraged a number of our young graduates with different qualifications to get involved in this particular minerals sector.

Their attachment to the Seabed Minerals Authority has given them a good grounding and understanding of the Seabed Minerals as an emerging industry for our country. I can name a few; Marino Wichman who spent a number of years with the Seabed Minerals but is now currently with the Ministry of Marine; Alex Herman who is probably our foremost legal expert on the law of the sea who is now working with Crown Law; and currently we have our engineering graduate, Rima Brown who is now on an expedition vessel with NIWA doing exploration work in the Chatham Rise off New Zealand and she follows in the footsteps of Iosenio Fatialofa who also was on an exploration expedition on a vessel that was exploring in the ISA area. So slowly but surely, we are building up experience and knowledge amongst our emerging graduates in this new sector.

Once the Budget is passed, I understand Mr Deputy Chair that we will have the presentation and the debate on the new Seabed Minerals Bill that has been tabled before the House, and it is at that time I would like to speak in more depth and more detail about the work that will be undertaken. But suffice to say, without the

establishment of the Seabed Minerals Authority back in 2013 we would not be in a position today to seize the opportunity that presents itself to our country today.

Therefore, Mr Deputy Chairman, thank you once again to the Members for their support for this Appropriation.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I now put the Question.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$295,292 for Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

The Question is:

That the total Ministries, Crown and Statutory Agencies of \$118,326,192 stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

Thank you, Honourable Members. We now go to Ministerial Support Offices.

PRIME MINISTER – \$422,569

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER – \$350,000

MINISTER VAINÉ MOKOROA – \$290,000

MINISTER VAINETUTAI TOKI BROWN – \$290,000

MINISTER ROBERT TAPAITAU – \$290,000

MINISTER GEORGE ANGENE – \$290,000

The Question is:

That these allocations stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

SEVENTH MINISTER OFFICE:

I can see the Leader of the Opposition Tina Browne you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I was reading from the copy of the Procedure Notes that was issued this morning but I understand that it might have been amended. You have gone through the Ministerial Support Offices up to Minister George Angene and

you asked the question whether those should be part or remain part of the Schedule and as I understand you are now asking about the 7th Minister.

My question is, what happened to the Leader of the Opposition?

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We will come to that after we do this. Thank you Honourable Member.

As per the discussions between the two Leaders this morning, this is what we will do right now and we will touch on the Vote for the 7th Minister's Office. I will give you thirty minutes for the Opposition and maybe thirty minutes for Government. I see the Honourable Member from Teimurimotia.

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you Deputy Chair. I rise to express our concern and opposition to this allocation for the 7th Minister's Office. I want to say that we are absolutely appalled that Government wants to appoint a 7th Cabinet Minister hence the reason for the 7th Minister Office allocation. If the person we think who is going to be sworn in as the 7th Cabinet Minister....

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, can we discuss the allocation rather than the person. Thank you.

MRS S. NAPA: If the intention as we suspect of a person and yet the Government may say no it is not.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, please can you come back to the allocation rather than repeating what you have said earlier.

MRS S. NAPA: Our position on this Appropriation for the 7th Minister's Office of \$290,000, such a big waste that will be expended on this office. Like my request before if this was allocated to BTIB to be distributed as soft loans for the people and I will say we have no other displeasure to this.

We suspect it is not only going to be \$290,000 when we have the input of his salary, his perks, his allowance it will be over \$300,000. I want to assure the Government when our people who are listening in know of this Appropriation for the 7th Minister they will not be happy. I can see this Appropriation will be given to their members to keep them happy. Of course these funds appropriated for this office these are tax funds of our people and our tax payers do not deserve to be saddled with the enormous cost of a 7th Minister Office.

As mentioned in the report of the Public Review Committee, a Government can exercise its right to form a 7th Minister Position and as the Prime Minister said this is one serious consideration that needs to be taken for the changing of time. However, when you look at the responsibilities of these offices including the Leader of the Opposition, they have Ministries underneath them that can be responsible for the duty and work of Government. So I rise to object to this allocation for this 7th Minister.

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

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you, Deputy Chair. The Opposition's position is, this is a question of priorities. This has been the Opposition's position since day one with regard to the debate on the Appropriation Bill.

During the last week or so, there have been suggestions during the debate of other priorities and this is exactly one of them. It is the Opposition's view that we are in this Parliament approving additional funds for our own travel, in fact not even of the Members of Parliament of the Opposition, the Members of Parliament in Government and we are going to be increasing our pay and we are going to be extending this Parliament and allocating \$300,000 for it.

All for our benefit and we are suggesting a 7th minister and spending \$290,000 on that office. And just yesterday when I asked that the appropriation bill for the Head of State that we should recognise his status and provide him with a renovated accommodation that was declined and no attempt was made to try and get the funds to do that.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I have to interrupt you Honourable Member. Please come to the Vote Item that we are talking about because you are talking about the Queens Representative which has been approved yesterday. Can you please come back to our Vote Item?

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Deputy Chair, I did say at the start that I think this question is about our priorities. It may be inappropriate for me to refer to the name but we know that yesterday the proposal from the Opposition was to increase that allocation to enable accommodation available for the position.

Really my point is Government increases the travel amount for Members of Parliament in Government and I think it was between \$180thousand or \$200thousand and we are going to be spending quite a substantial amount money to accommodate the wage increases and we are about to approve including the Opposition the increase for Parliament because we accept that we need better accommodation when we are sitting in Parliament.

It would be very difficult for us to accept given all that we have debated this is priority. It would be in my view very difficult for our people to accept that either. If you look at all these four areas, what does that suggest to you, we are looking after ourselves before anyone else?

The second reason is that, the rationale behind the appointment of a 7th Minister was to bring some skills into Cabinet and where did I get this from. I got this from the Political Reform Report that was prepared 20 years ago. I do not think we should say well, it so old it no longer applies because if you move your chair and sat in a mutual chair, the rationale makes sense.

If indeed the Government is looking at following that rationale even if they are, it still in my submission still does not give any priority to this Appropriation. I would ask Government to please look at other priorities. There are Parliamentary Salaries which

I spoke to you yesterday. If there is money, then it should be spent there and there are other wage increases that we have been talking about.

I thought we were all on the same page because we all said, well yes reward performance. Yesterday we heard suggestions about increasing the pay for Island Councils and Mayors in the Outer Islands. And when we come to debate the allocation for the Outer Islands we will be talking about that because we support that as well.

So, there are many areas in my view that are more deserving. And why I say that, it is because you have been telling us all week that you are the best. And so, if that is the case, why is it that you need another Minister.

So, let us be serious about this and the Opposition wants to be serious about this. It is not a laughing matter or time to joke. So, our request is that lets allocate this money somewhere else to Corrective Services, maybe. There are areas that it is more deserving than this. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. I will give the time to the Honourable Albert Nicholas and then I will come back to you, Honourable Tama Tuavera. This is to make it fair to both sides of the House.

Thank you Honourable Members for your understanding. You have the Floor.

MR A. NICHOLAS: Kia Orana to Mr. Deputy Chair, all Honourable Members in this House elected to serve our people. To the Clerk of Parliament and all your staff – greetings.

Deputy Chair, I rise just for a few minutes if I may. I think if this issue Government did not consider serious I do not think it would have found its way on the Bill before the House. Government considers this very issue very serious, Deputy Speaker and that is why it is on the Bill before the House.

After years of sound financial management Deputy Chair, this Government who is not known for shelving projects and issues on the shelf. As it has created for itself some good financial buffers and has created for itself a lot of extra revenue which has allowed it to increase money into certain Ministries and right across the board as we have seen over the last couple of days.

The office of the 7th Minister is no exception, Mr Deputy Chair. The time is right and it has been recommended to the people of this country and to various Governments by the political reform committee. But sadly, Deputy Chair, no Government in the pass has really had the courage to do something about it.

Be it may, I would not know their reasons were but the time is right Deputy Chair. And the time because we have a lot of extra revenue out there created by this very excellent Government who is good at financial management.

So, I rise before this House with a big open heart Deputy Chair to support the Appropriation for the office of the 7th Minister. And may I finish by saying the time

for the office of the Queens Representative will come. And when that time arrives upon us Deputy Chair rest assured there will be a million dollars available to build his office.

The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance has guaranteed that to me because the QR is my uncle, Thank you.

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

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I stand in this House...

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: May I correct you all, we are in the Committee you can call the Chair as the Chairperson or Chairlady.

MR T. TUAVERA: I dare not call you Chair lady, Mr Deputy Chair.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I beg your pardon, Honourable Member. Parliament will be taking a break and when we come back you shall have the Floor.

Parliament is now suspended until 3.30 p.m.

Sitting is suspended at 3.00 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 3.30 p.m.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Members.

I bring the Parliament to Order.

Before we proceed with discussions on the appointment of the 7th Minister, you can all see here in the House seated a young lady who has taken on the responsibility of translating for the House. It's called gender balance people. Thank you very much.

Now I call upon the Honourable Member for Ngatangiia. You have the Floor.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Mr Deputy Chairman.

Mr Chairman, I stand in this House today as an elected Member by the people and those people that elected me have told me to voice their opinion in this House. Before I do that Mr Deputy Chairman, I'm just curious. The Government is denying who this person is and yet we are allocating a position and money to this position there's a ghost there at the moment. My good friend over here, the Member from Avatiu, he made mention that the group for Political Reform have okayed this position.

MR A. NICHOLAS: Point of Order Mr Chairman.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: A Point of Order has been raised and what is your Point of Order?

MR A. NICHOLAS: I did not make any comment about this Political Reform committee had made this decision. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member or RAPPA and I ask the Member to come to the point please.

MR T. TUAVERA: He mentioned Political Reform in his speech Mr Chairman. For the wrong reasons.

MR A. NICHOLAS: Point of Order Mr Chairman.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: What is your Point of Order?

MR A. NICHOLAS: Clarification Mr Chairman. In the Political Reform's recommendation is what I said Mr Chairman.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

The point is taken. Honourable Member for Ngatangia, you may continue.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Mr Deputy Chairman. Will I get my minute back?

The group for Political Reform is saying the integrity of this current Government has been challenged saying it is failing to deliver democracy to the Cook Islands people. Today more than ever political and electoral reform should be the priority of the incumbent Government. The leaders need to ask themselves the question what the word "democracy" means.

HON. H. PUNA: Point of Order Mr Chair.

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

What is your Point of Order Honourable Prime Minister?

HON. H. PUNA: Chair, the Honourable Member is reading his speech.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you. You may continue.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Mr Chairman. Thank you Prime Minister.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Don't read it again please.

MR T. TUAVERA: The Political Reform group have asked me to say those words in this House because it is hugely unfair to the taxpayers of this country to be lumbered with extra costs as we can see today. That will exceed \$290,000. When it is just a political whim, a strategy to try and stay in power and that is what the people want to be heard in this House today.

Thank you Mr Chairman.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: I was actually getting up to pull a Point of Order on the Honourable Member.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Oh. Thank you.

HON. H. PUNA: Because he was making a remark that needed to be proven.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Do you want to continue Honourable Prime Minister?

HON. H. PUNA: Yes, I really want to pull that Point of order on him because he was saying that the appointment of a 7th Minister is to allow the current Government to stay in office. I want him to prove how that can be done and what he means by that statement?

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: If there are no other speakers then we'll –

Oh, I can see the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister Mark Brown.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Deputy Chairman. It is well known that the No.7 is a lucky number.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Point of Order.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: What is your Point of Order Leader of the Opposition?

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I would like the Minister to prove that.

(Much laughter)

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Leader of the Opposition.

You may continue Honourable Deputy Prime Minister.

HON. M. BROWN: The proof Mr Deputy Chair is in the Scripture when God said on the seventh day you shall rest.

(Much noise)

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order. Order.

HON. M. BROWN: Mr Deputy Chairman, this position of the 7th Minister was created over 20 years ago and I think approved by the Democratic Party Government and from what I read about it, it was created with the expectation that Cabinet could add someone to their ranks to provide more strength and rigor to the Cabinet. In fact, the principle behind the 7th Minister was somebody who had strong finance or

business qualification or background. The implication was Mr Deputy Chairman that Cabinet Ministers were not strong in these areas. In fact the implication was that they were dumb and they needed somebody clever to be appointed as a 7th Minister. And it sounded very patronising Mr. Deputy Chairman when I read through that.

Twenty years ago Mr Deputy Chairman, our Budget was barely \$60 million. Today Mr Deputy Chair, we are debating a Budget of \$260 million. Back in those days we dealt with about four different agencies that provided development assistance to our country, four different countries. Today there are close to 20 different agencies that provide development assistance with our country.

Today our Ministers in Cabinet hold multiple portfolios and are required to attend meetings at these different portfolios at different times of the year. The workload on a Minister today has increased hugely compared to what it was 20 years ago. Members would have seen at lunch today that the Government Members were not in lunch. That was because we had to go back and do the business of the Executive and hold a Cabinet Meeting during our lunch break.

The three Associate Ministers that we have Mr Deputy Chairman work full-time in assisting the Executive with their role as well as carrying out their Member of Parliament duties. Therefore the opportunity Mr Deputy Chair to appoint a 7th Minister is fully justified. It is fully justified and it is fully legal. Because 20 years ago the people that were in power put this into law, put it into our Constitution, to allow the appointment of the 7th Minister with the expectation that it would be utilised in future years and that's exactly what this Government is doing Mr Deputy Chair, is we are following the law and putting in place provision for the appointment of a 7th Minister. Nothing more, nothing less.

And the statement by the Member from Ngatangiia to say that we are appointing the 7th Minister to ensure that we retain power is just total fabrication and totally incorrect. Because although the law says we can appoint a 7th Minister with the full powers and authority of a Minister who may in fact also sit in this House, they will not have any voting power in the House.

So the Honourable Member will need to retract his statement and correct himself for scaremongering the public with statements like that. I have no doubt Mr Deputy Chairman that the appointment of the 7th Minister will spread the workload amongst the Cabinet Ministers and allow more efficient service to the public.

I am just wondering Mr Deputy Chair that depending on who was the person that we appointed as 7th Minister whether the Opposition would still object to it. So the Opposition is saying that they object to any appointment of any 7th Minister regardless of what benefit they can bring to the Executive Branch of the Government.

Well this is a Government Mr Deputy Chairman that is not afraid of making bold steps and bold statements. We have done things that no other Governments have done before and we will continue to take bold steps in the future in the interest of looking after and serving the people of this country. Thank you, Mr Deputy Chair.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister, I can see the Honourable Prime Minister you have the Floor.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you to the Chair and greetings this afternoon to those of you in the House and those of you who are listening. We have had some very enjoyable sessions discussing the Budget up to this moment. Unfortunately this is how Parliament works it is the duty of Members of Parliament to bring the thoughts of their people into the House. I would just like to ask the House today not to be hasty as we discuss this particular matter.

The Deputy Prime Minister has made his presentation before the House and I support it fully. This discussion paper is actually in our Constitution. I ask that we do not object to this because this is the first time this has happened.

I hear the objections that it is a waste of money and this includes the incorrect comments that have been brought to the Floor by the Member of Parliament for Ngatangia. Had we read the law you would understand those comments were incorrect and unacceptable.

The Deputy Prime Minister has said this is the appropriate time for this to happen. He is right because the work load of each Minister is heavier than what it was before.

At the conclusion of Parliament a Cabinet Minister will be travelling to Ponapei to attend a fisheries conference and I was hoping the Minister of Fisheries would have been appointed by now but we were not able to establish as we have to abide by the laws. I am the Minister of Marine Resources. That particular meeting for the fisheries is the same time as a meeting that I have to attend in New Caledonia. Yes the work load is extremely hard.

We do not require a scientist to become the 7th Minister. That is the problem with us, we judge before we give someone the opportunity to prove themselves and that is because I have heard comments on Cook Island radio. My plea to us and those listening let us not reject our very own. We don't necessarily need scientists or doctors or lawyers in Government. Any genuine sincere Cook Islander will be good enough. For Government, it is about team work and that is the secret that has kept our Government in place for the last nine years, team work. Each of us brings particular skills to the team and that's what we respect.

I had my suspicions some time back when I listened to the Member of Parliament from Teimurimotia and the comments that were being made and the possible suspicion that she knew who that 7th Minister would be. Perhaps if the name suited them they would support. I would like to assure the Opposition that right now we are discussing the Appropriation and not who that person would be.

This is a very deep topic but let us not be fearful of going into uncharted waters. The objective behind this appointment is to ease the work load on Government Ministers

Thank you to our Associate Ministers who have been carrying the work load too for us but we don't rush into things. This is a calculated move the timing is right, our

economy is strong, our country is growing but we need more on the front team to drive our boat.

It was raised earlier on the residence of the Queen's Representative. I know this has been discussed yesterday and we also know the reasons as to why the Queen's Representative's residence has not been upgraded. Sadly it seems to me that we still trying to cloud the thoughts of our people. There is only one reason and that is the lease on this particular piece of land is still being addressed. Had this been addressed earlier I assure you we would have done something for the Queen's Representative residence.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister just come back to the subject.

HON. H. PUNA: I am just coming back and I stand to support fully this Appropriation. I'd like to acknowledge the different thoughts that have been brought to the Table but unfortunately it is in this House where matters are discussed at a national level. May God bless us all. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. Honourable Members, you have the Floor Leader of the Opposition.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I stand to emphasise that my point was about priorities. I am sure that the Members in the Government side understood when the Member for Teimurimotia spoke I was not going to speak on this allocation because like her I thought we were going to speak about the appointee. Don't blame us because this has been written in the newspapers and it was announced on the radio. If that is wrong then we apologise. Because it has been announced and written in the Cook Islands news then it is not right for me to speak on this allocation because this is my brother.

But we are told that we are not talking about the appointee but we are speaking about the merits of this Ministry

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, sorry we are not talking about the merits we are talking about the allocation.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Sorry, sorry not the merits we are talking about the allocation that is why stood up.

The objection is not because this is the first time. The objection is about priorities. The Prime Minister is talking about the duties of the Ministers I ask that we look at the work of our public servants that have served for many long years. That we reward them before we consider ourselves, like you Prime Minister, I am all for respecting people's views. It is a good lesson to respect each other's view.

Thank you very much.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Honourable Members we have to continue with our Ministerial Support Offices. Seeing that there are no other speakers.

SEVENTH MINISTERS OFFICE: - \$290,000

I see the Leader of the Opposition the Floor is yours.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Deputy Chair, I was waiting for you to finish your sentence because I have a Motion to make and I did not want to miss that opportunity.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you and you may continue, Honourable Member.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I propose a Motion, Mr Deputy Chairman. The Motion is under Standing Orders 308, the Motion is:

That it be amended by reducing it by \$290,000 the amount allocated for this Office

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I look for a Secunder.

Seconded by the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera

I will put the Question. The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

The Motion has been seconded.

Honourable Members do you want to debate on the Motion? No! Allow me to carry on with the Motion. Can you Honourable Member sit down please?

The Motion was presented and it was seconded. Hold on, I have my advisor on my right.

The Motion is:

That the Vote Item be reduced by \$290,000

Those in favour say, aye.

(No audible reaction from the Floor)

This is the Motion:

That the allocation for this Office be reduced by \$290,000

Those in favour say, aye.

(Audible aye, recorded)

Those against say, nay.

(Audible aye, louder than previous response)

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The no's have it.

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

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you Deputy Chair. We voted on the amendment just then. We have not voted on the Motion.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: A suggestion to the Honourable House would you like to vote by division? Can you move the Motion?

MRS S. NAPA: I move a Motion:

For the division of the House

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I look for a Seconder?

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tamaiva Tuavera

This is the order of our voting. When the question is put to the House, those in favour please stand and when your name is called, please sit down.

In favour of the Motion:

Honourable Tina Browne
Mr Tamaiva Tuavera
Mr Terepai Maoate
Mr Vaitoti Tupa
Mr Manuela Kitai
Mrs Selina Napa
Mrs Tetangi Matapo
Mr Wesley Kareroa

Those against please stand. When your name is called, please sit down.

Against the Motion:

Honourable Henry Puna
Honourable Mark Brown
Honourable Robert Tapaitau
Honourable George Angene
Honourable Vainetutai Rose Brown
Honourable Vaine Mokoroa
Mr Tingika Elikana
Mr Patrick Arioka
Mr Tereapii Kavana
Mr Albert Nicholas

Mr Tuakeu Tangatapoto

This is the result of our voting for the aye's and the nay's.

Those in favour of the Motion = 8.

Those against the Motion = 11.

Absent: Mrs Agnes Armstrong (sick)

Mr William Heather Jnr (sick)

Mr Nooroa Baker (indefinite Leave of Absence granted by the House due to his sick wife.

The Motion is defeated

I will continue to go through the Ministerial Office Appropriations:

SEVENTH MINISTERS OFFICE – \$290,000

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION – \$290,000

IN TOTAL – \$2,512,569

I see the Honourable Member for Teimurimotia, you have the Floor.

MRS S. NAPA: Mr Deputy Chair, I stand to remind the Chair that we did not put a Motion for the Seventh Ministers allocation.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I am sorry, Honourable Member I did. I will repeat myself again.

SEVENTH MINISTERS OFFICE – \$290,000

The Question is:

That the sum of \$290,000 for the Seventh Ministers Office stands part of Schedule?

Thank you, Honourable Members. I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: Mr Deputy Chair, I call for a division

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Here is the Motion:

That this be voted on by division

I call for a Secunder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member Tamaiva Tuavera

The Motion is:

That the allocation of \$290,000 remain as part of the Appropriation for the 7th Minister's Office?

Those who are in favour please rise: If your name is called out please take your seat.

For the Motion:

Honourable Henry Puna
Honourable Mark Brown
Honourable Robert Tapaitau
Honourable George Angene
Honourable Vaine-Tutai Rose Brown
Honourable Vaine Mokoroa
Mr Tingika Elikana
Mr Patrick Arioka
Tereapii Kavana
Albert Nicholas
Tuakeu Tangatapoto

Those against please rise: When your name is called please take your seat.

Against the Motion:

Honourable Tina Browne
Mr Tamaiva Tuavera
Mr Terepai Maoate
Mr Vaitoti Tupa
Mr Manuela Kitai
Mrs Selina Napa
Mrs Tetangi Matapo
Mr Wesley Kareroa

Here are our votes.

Those in favour – 11

Those opposed – 8

Absent: Mrs Agnes Armstrong (sick)

Mr William Heather Jnr (sick)

Mr Nooroa Baker (indefinite Leave of Absence granted by the House due to his sick wife).

The Motion is carried

Thank you very much to all Members of Parliament.

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION'S OFFICE:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$290,000 for the Leader of the Opposition's Office stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

TOTAL MINISTERIAL SUPPORT OFFICES:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$2,512,569 for Total Ministerial Support Offices stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

Honourable Members, we come to the most important divisions, the Outer Islands.

When we go into these items, 30 minutes for Aitutaki. All three Members of Parliament for Aitutaki have ten minutes each. Those islands with only one Member of Parliament you have ten minutes in total. This is our arrangement for our debates.

The Question is:

AITUTAKI:

That the sum of \$2,060,486 for Aitutaki stands part of the Schedule?

Do we have any speakers?

Sorry Honourable Member, you are not from Aitutaki. As I have previously announced, it is only the MPs for such islands who should talk. I am sorry to the other Members of Rarotonga, you cannot speak on these Vote Items.

I see the Honourable Member from Arutanga/Reureu/Nikaupara.

MR T. KAVANA: Thank you very much to the Deputy Chairman for the opportunity to speak. Greetings to all of Aitutaki listening in to me speaking, those who hold titles and positions right down to our young people.

Special greetings to my electorate of Arenikau. Those of us who hold titles and positions right down our young people and children. God bless you all. To the three main pillars of our community – greetings to you all in the name of our Lord.

I rise to give my full support to this allocation for my paradise of Aitutaki. I won't speak much on this allocation because it looks good but I do make a request to our Island Government, our Mayor and our Executive Officer that the management of these funds for our island should be appropriately managed.

I see a significant increase allocated by Government especially the increase for the salaries and wages of our workers. So, please do the right thing in terms of allotting remuneration for our workers on our island.

As I mentioned before, please give consideration to those workers who have served our island for so many years, give them a rise. Just don't look after your own friends when considering adjusting salaries because some people have served our island for a long time wholeheartedly. They are near retirement and it is appropriate that we grant them some recognition before they retire.

As well as the work that we are carrying out on our island, I also give thanks for the machinery that is working on our island in developing and beautifying those areas.

As I have discussed with the Executive Officer, and I hope you are listening, my request is to use our machinery to clean our maraes or sacred sites on Aitutaki as these areas are very important historical sites. Because some of the tour guides on the island have approached me to seek assistance from our Island Government to develop and beautify these historical sites on our island.

I am pleased to speak about my electorate. I know we have a night market in our village. At this moment it's tonight and please accept my apologies as I can't be with you tonight. In the areas we are talking about, this is one of the activities that attracts visitors to our island. So may God be with you my people doing this work.

My thanks to our Island Councilor's doing your work to help develop our island and our communities. May our Lord take care of us and keep us and also to our Government for providing this assistance to develop for the betterment of the island of Aitutaki. There are other things to talk about. Maybe my two colleagues will elaborate more and God bless Aitutaki.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. I see the Honourable Member for Vaivaitau.

MR M. KITAI: Thank you Mr Deputy Chair.

Greetings to all of us this evening. When I look at the allocation for Aitutaki well, what can I say but it's attractive. I support the comments mentioned by the Member from Arenikau.

Deputy Chair, if I may please acknowledge my electorate. Greetings to all of you in my electorate of Vaipeka, Vaipae and Tautu to those who hold high positions right down to our children.

When I look at the allocation for Aitutaki it looks good. I have something to say in regards to the allocation for the Mayors and Island Councilor's, not just for Aitutaki but all the islands. I am asking for an increase across all the islands of \$40,000 for some and \$30,000 especially for the Mayors and Island Councilor's.

When I look at the Chief of Police although he is not from my electorate but he should be acknowledged. If there is no increase in funds maybe a vehicle to travel around and inspect the work on the island. I am sure the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister will agree to this submission.

I would like to touch on the solar power on Aitutaki because as mentioned by the Minister of Finance when the development is finished, power rates will be reduced. I am waiting for the Prime Minister to say that you have one month of free electricity supply. Since he has also given the same to the island of Mangaia, we are only asking for one month not one whole free year of free electricity. My role is to make the request. The other two Members from Aitutaki is to talk about areas that needs improvement.

For us in Aitutaki we know the Prime Minister firstly is from Aitutaki and then Manihiki second. There is an old parable from the island of Aitutaki which says *“remember the old lady who fed you with coconut”*. Thank you.

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

MR T. MOATE: Thank you Deputy Chair and greeting to all of us. My greetings to all of our people on Aitutaki and all our different sectors anticipating this assistance from Government.

My thanks to the Minister of Finance for clarifying the situation with the street lighting but when I consider his reply this is way above what Matavera received. And when you consider the prospect of the solar power resulting in the reduction of electricity rates to our people. On this matter I did commit that I will praise you for this part so here it is. So we are going to look forward as to when these reduced rates will start but the people will wait for this.

However my suspicion is that most of the street lights are all installed in Arenikau, when my close friend here talked about this while we were outside he told me the streetlights in his area are completed. So I think the sixty that has been mentioned will all go to Amuri/Ureia.

I would like to mention on the tourism industry on Aitutaki. As mentioned in the Budget Book about thirty thousand people travelled to Aitutaki. This has come about through assistance from various avenues like Air Rarotonga and Ewan Smith and his workers, Island Hopper Mr. Robert Skews and the help from Cook Islands Tourism and private sector of Aitutaki like the Aitutaki Lagoon Resort. Over and above those of us from Aitutaki who entered this industry from the beginning to develop tourism on the island.

I will mention some people that went through this including Tai Herman, Teina Bishop, Mike Henry and Terepai Maoate. To this day these friends remain in the industry and their businesses still exist to provide employment for the people of Aitutaki. Despite our differences in our political life our aspirations are for the island of Aitutaki.

I would like to highlight this point to those of us across all the outer islands we must all work together for the development of our own islands. These friends stand ready to offer you assistance and guidance on how to develop your own industry. This has come through the challenges that has happened in the outer islands. However like us in Aitutaki we need to address the issue of pollution. Therefore my request to

Government is please to consider this under the responsibilities of ICI and all other agencies that are able to assist including the Prime Minister's Office and linking to tourism and agriculture.

Under Pearls, we established a budget in the previous year. I believe this is a very good programme. However, it is one year now and it has not happened. I do not know what the problem is but the three of us are ready to start this at the end of this Parliament.

In the past few weeks produce were brought to Aitutaki from New Zealand including tomatoes and the tomatoes were sold at \$17 a kilo, it was sold out. In Rarotonga the same tomatoes from New Zealand sold at \$19 and I am not sure why Aitutaki was cheaper. However we do acknowledge that in recent times there has been a lot of rain and it is difficult for growers. We really need this programme by Government to move ahead in order to retain the revenue that is being sent out of the country.

We have about five to six flights flying to and from Rarotonga seven days a week. We can supply Rarotonga with the produce that we grow. Today we don't have export and we don't have enough produce to fill the shops.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member your time is up.

HON. M. BROWN: Mr. Deputy Chair, in the interest of the Honourable Members from Aitutaki. I would recommend that the Honourable Member utilise the allocation for Aitutaki because the other two Members didn't use their full ten minutes allocation themselves.

I would be happy to hear the rest of his talk because it is going so well we are hearing such good things from Aitutaki. There is seven minutes left on his allocation.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I will think about that. You may continue Honourable Member.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you Minister and thank you Chair.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please come back to the allocation of \$2,060,486 thank you.

MR T. MAOATE: Chairman, yes I support this allocation for Aitutaki because even if I object, it will not be changed. As recommended by the Member for Matavera with regards to the SRS, I fully support this to be included for Aitutaki as well.

I fully support this allocation for Aitutaki and going along with the two Members as well from Aitutaki. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member.

I now put the Question. The Question is:

That the sum of \$2,060,486 for Aitutaki stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

Before we move on I have agreed for Aitutaki only the extra minutes for speaking.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,695,715 for Atiu stands part of the Schedule?

Honourable Members the debate for this Vote Item is for 10 minutes.

I can see the Honourable Minister and you have the Floor.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Greetings again to all Honourable Members and to our people listening to our radio broadcast. I have a chant to start my talk and it goes like this:

(Minister delivers her chant)

To support this message there is a Bible Verse that goes like this: *Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Psalms 103:1, 2*

The people of Atiu are overwhelmed for the many blessings of the past months. Therefore, I rise on behalf of all the people of Atiu around the world to give their full support for this allocation for Atiu.

We acknowledge and thank the Minister of Finance as well as the Government of today from all the three sectors of Atiu – traditional, religion and Island Government for this great allocation for Atiu.

We can see a figure of almost \$7million has been allocated for Atiu. Of this \$1.7million for the Island Administration office. There are other areas of our community that is also gaining from our allocation even the Welfare Benefit for our elderly and children.

Our road upgrade has changed the look of our island for the better and we look forward to the second stage. Thank you to the Government for stopping the people from eating dust on the road. There is a CICC Church Conference to be hosted by Atiu later on in the year, this is one of the reason for the road upgrade.

I convey my appreciation to the office of the Island Government for all the good work that you are doing for our island. Thank you to everyone for your great support to all the work to make our island a beautiful place to live.

The road upgrade is not the only change on our island we have the coloured lights and streetlights installed on our roads. The people of Atiu send their appreciation to those responsible for this change on our roads.

Mr Deputy Chair, I speak for my electorate Teenui and Mapumai. I am comforted on this allocation for my constituency. Thank you to all the Government office for your part in this Appropriation and the work you do to provide for our people in the Outer Islands. I would like to pay tribute to these government officials: Tangi Tereapii, Ngateina Rani, and Tokoa Rani they have assisted in installing the lights in Atiu. There are still areas to be completed.

Thank you for the allocation for the Manea Games that will be held on Atiu next year. This is a major sport event for the Southern Group islands.

Thank you for the allocation by CIIC for the long overdue renovation works on our school. I asked for a salary increments for the Island Council and Government Representative Officers on Atiu. There is also a request for a new Government vehicle for Atiu.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Deputy Chair, Please allow me.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Carry on.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Please allow me, Mr Deputy Chairman to carry on since there are two Parliament seats for Atiu. If I may use that allocation to speak on behalf of Atiu.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Actually this is only for those Members who are present in the House. As I have given Aitutaki five minutes I will give you another five minutes but stick to the point. Thank you Honourable Minister.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Therefore my people of Enea Manu, please be patient because there is so much to talk about this allocation given for you.

Although the airport has not been mentioned in the allocation but I am pretty sure the Government will not forget about this.

I will sum up and repeat again my full support on this allocation. This is the Budget of Love and for the people of Eneuamanu. To all the people of Atiu out there listening and watching us on TV, you can see now, how beautiful our island is. Please do come home.

I know of a beautiful traditional proverb that goes like this:

*“You belong here and you will always belong here.
And you will never forget where you came from”*

Thank you very much and I do appreciate, Mr Deputy Chairman for giving me another five minutes. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister. I think you have forgotten the other chant from your island regarding one eye closed, one eye open.

Thank you.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,695,715 for Atiu stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

MANGAIA:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$2,158,290 for Mangaia stands part of the Schedule?

The debate on this Vote Item is limited to ten minutes for each Member.

The Honourable Member for Oneroa, Wesley Kareroa.

MR W. KAREROA: Greetings to you the Chair of our meeting and also to all Members of Parliament.

I stand to support this Appropriation of Love for Mangaia and before I sit down I want to talk of the reason why I support this good amount that has been appropriated, \$2,158,290 for the island of Mangaia.

In comparison to the allocations that have been given to Aitutaki and Atiu, Mangaia has more, and a larger allotment. That is why I stand and strongly give my support on the allocation for the island of Mangaia.

Returning back to the Appropriation, it pleases me that the allocated amount for the Island Council has increased somewhat. However, if the allocation for the Mayor and his support was to increase further by \$40,000 – better still.

The reason I say this is because these are very important positions that they hold on the island of Mangaia, very similar to that of Members of Parliament. They are the ones who know what requirements are needed for Mangaia including recommendations that are brought to the House to be passed here on Rarotonga.

If we refer to Output 4: Public Utilities I believe that there are two areas of responsibilities here and that is electricity and water.

When I look at the Operating Expenses it says \$355,000 and the Personnel is \$130,000. In comparison their Trading Revenue is much higher. I propose that there be a separation in that area of funding for them. When my colleagues in Parliament including myself return to Mangaia we are going to revisit these allocations and try and address it better.

I draw our attention to Agriculture. They have a very small allocation of funding especially the trading revenue. I apologise it is not Agriculture, it is Tourism. This is

a very important area for Mangaia because it is one particular area that Government actually taxes heavily. We would like to see a better allocation of funding here in order to be able to promote Mangaia well in the tourism industry. Operations stand at \$18,000. It may be sufficient because there are only two personnel there.

It is rather unfortunate though because in comparison to other areas this particular area in tourism is actually low in comparison and perhaps we should look at increasing funding. However, if we were to combine everything, this will come to \$301,000. This allocation of moneys is actually returned to Rarotonga to help Government.

Perhaps the reason why Mangaia has been given such a large allocation of funds is because there's always a constant return in funds from Mangaia to Rarotonga to support Government.

I now would like to draw our attention to Infrastructure. This is a work force that I would really like to see their funding increased so that it's comparable with the cost of living. These are the workers who finish at 4 and then return home. There's no consideration with the labour. I have had discussions with the Public Service.

Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

I see the Honourable Member from Tamarua. You have the Floor.

MRS T. MATAPO: Greetings this afternoon to us Members in this House.

I would like to extend wider greetings to all because my colleague here omitted to do that. Once again on behalf of my colleague here including our colleague who is not in the House, is in New Zealand for medical reasons, we'd like to extend our greetings to all our people on the island of Mangaia.

I also extend greetings to the people in Rarotonga, outside of Rarotonga including those of you watching the livestreaming this afternoon. I have a verse to encourage us. *"Let there be love as we all work together with one another."*

I would like to extend greetings to my people in Tamarua. Those of you who are working preparing for the arrival of Christianity to our island on Friday, I extend greetings to you all. Also to those of you here on Rarotonga who will be celebrating I also send greetings to you. To the Reverend William Tereora who is in New Zealand at the moment, hopefully the good Lord will return you home so that we can join together.

I now come to the Appropriation for the Island of Mangaia. My colleague has supported this. Had the Prime Minister already indicated earlier on his intentions it would have been very easy for Mangaia to say this way or that way.

As stated earlier the Appropriation is fantastic and to those of you in Mangaia the Island Council who put this together I am very sure that you re all happy. As for me I

am not happy and the reason being in the Appropriations for the workers although there was an increase to coincide with the allocation in this Book of Love.

I can see for personnel there is \$943,706 allocated and when you compared that to the number of workers as I mentioned last night in the House I would have liked for this to have been revisited so that we can reward those who have been working in the work force in Mangaia for a very long time. Hopefully should there be some residual funding in June you will have a look at these workers and appropriate them really well. Please don't just look after yourselves but look also at our hard working people on the island.

I would really like to applaud the hard work that is done by the people on the island of Mangaia for Government and also the Private Sector in your endeavours to try and lift up the standard of living on our island of Mangaia.

I come back to Tourism and Development sector. There are two workers in this section and the appropriation for them is \$37,725. As I was impressed last night in the House I would like to see this sector boosted better in order to help these two that are driving tourism on the island of Mangaia.

Chair, I also bring to the Floor another thought on the work on the Island Government, Mayor and the Councils and also the appropriation for the Island Government I can see the sum of \$578,760. I know there is a new bus for Mangaia, if the Prime Minister can clarify if the operating cost is in this Appropriation.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$2,158,290 for Mangaia stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

MANIHIKI:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,332,714 for Manihiki stands part of the Schedule?

The debate for this vote item is limited to ten minutes.

Honourable Prime Minister of the Cook Islands.

HON. H. PUNA: I am not happy with your allocation of time because we have two islands, we have two separate villages so ten minutes for each village.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I was saying the Members present in Parliament.

HON. H. PUNA: One Member but two villages. Greetings to all of us in this House and we are enjoying this. Firstly greetings to you my people listening in by radio.

The leaders on the island, traditional leaders, Church and Government greetings to you all. The leaders of our people here on Rarotonga, greetings and those of us in New Zealand, Australia and all over the world greetings this evening.

Acknowledgement of our bereavement for one of our women on the island of Manihiki and may God keep you all.

We have good news for the island of Manihiki in this Appropriation. As we have said before this is the Budget of Love because our allocation has been increased by over \$400 thousand dollars. It's not that we are the parents of the Cook Islands, no the children of our nation have decided this is appropriate for the parents. So to you the young children of the nation for allocating this for Manihiki, God Bless you all. And our traditional thanks to you all.

Many good things are happening on our island. Right now work on the Tukao passage through the reef is taking place and we have the experts from Rarotonga and Mangaia clearing the passage so our boats and canoes don't run aground. However I hear that the explosives are not working properly but maybe it's an old collection from ICI. Never mind we may be able to send some on Papa Tapi's next visit.

Our terminal at the airport has been completed in the past year. My heartfelt thanks to the Tumu family for granting this land for our terminal. Without this we would still be standing under coconut trees as our terminal in Tukao.

We talked about our solar which is doing well. So, to our Mayor apologies because your brother has boasted about the street lights of Matavera. Now we are missing out. Never mind since we consider ourselves the parents of the nation, you're the elder. Let's look after our children first. But there are so many things taking place on our island that our people are happy about.

I believe this Appropriation will result in improving and increasing our livelihoods on the island of Manihiki. So, Mama Akaiti and I are looking forward to the time of celebration when we once again meet on Manihiki.

There are other proposals, looking at preserving our water on our island and that has been pointed out by the Member of Parliament from Ngatangia. But he didn't see the water containers or reservoirs underneath the two new houses. That is our intention that all our houses receive concrete water tanks. The good thing about the plastic water tanks are when you come back from the sea during the cold periods the water inside here is very warm for a shower.

To complete my thoughts this evening is the notion of improving our airport. When you talk on this issue then you have to say it in the same breath as for Penrhyn. Then later on with the help of the Member for Pukapuka we shall then bring Pukapuka in. So one of our sons from Manihiki, Penrhyn and Rakahanga is a Minister. Let us encourage him this time to complete these projects on our islands.

You heard of the presentation from Air Rarotonga that their second SAAB will be available next month. They want to fly this plane from Manihiki to Mangarongaro and when the time is right, then to Pukapuka. But the key is the airport has to be tar

sealed and this will happen. I truly believe this will help to change our living for the better to realise our dreams that our air fares will be cheaper.

We want to hold our family reunions on the island. This larger plane will serve to realise our dreams. The beauty about this is Air Rarotonga has advised that the air fare will drop down to \$600. These are certainly beautiful opportunities for our people. Our people will then return often from outside our paradise and we travel often out and for cheaper air fare.

So when the time comes let us reap this benefit.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

I will put the Question:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,332,714 for Manihiki stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

MAUKE:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,359,944 for Mauke stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

To the people of Mauke, I am bringing to you next month the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister and they will then explain everything that is contained herein. Maybe also the Minister for Infrastructure.

NUKUROA:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$843,759 for Mitiaro stands part of the Schedule?

This debate for this Vote Item is limited to ten minutes my brother.

You have the Floor.

MR T. TANGATAPOTO: Thank you very much Deputy Chair.

Greetings to you and all the workers of this House and all the Members – greetings.

To the people of Mitiaro, traditional leaders, the churches, the Government, the Island Government and all the people of Mitiaro – greetings. Our elderly folk in their homes tonight – greetings to you all.

To our paramount chief, Tinomana Ariki and your delegation – greetings. In case you might think that I was avoiding your delegation, my apologies but this is the time for Parliament, the reason being this is where my home was, I have lived in Puaikura for 11 years.

Tinomana and the women folk of Puaikura were like my mothers. Never mind, one of my own people is there, if they're then then I am there also. I do believe that you and your women folk are enjoying your time on Mitiaro. Maybe on Friday at the airport we shall meet before you return. My request to my people please take care of our paramount chief until they return.

Some of my people are here because of referrals and all my Mitiaro people residing on Rarotonga – greetings. My thanks to the Government of Japan for granting over \$100,000 to build water tanks for Mitiaro. My thanks also go to Mann Unuia because he was the Project Manager on Mitiaro.

You may be wondering why I did not speak when we went through each Ministry because the main idea is you asked me to illustrate in this House where the level of work of ICI and the Ministry of Health is. The most important thing though that there was no point discussing them as these have already been addressed with the relevant Ministers.

I return to the allocation of \$843,759 for Mitiaro. This allocation is only for the Island Government. There are other sectors that receive funding – the Police, the hospital, education and when they are all incorporated into one, we are looking at \$3 million coming to Mitiaro.

I want to confirm that I am very happy with this allocation of \$843,759 for Mitiaro. I support the notion by the Prime Minister that regardless of how much is appropriated, even \$1 million, it will still not be enough but the main important thing is development assistance keeps coming every year.

But what I am happy about is since I was a CEO for the island of Mitiaro our Appropriation has always increased every year for Mitiaro. Over and above that, what I am most happy about is the amount of funds being paid to our elderly and welfare. And I am happy because when I first entered this House my request was if the workers on Mitiaro can be paid at \$10 an hour and I am happy. I see this taking place during the period that I am still in Parliament.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

When we come again to Parliament you will be taking the Floor.

Honourable Members, pursuant to Standing Order 251 I now call on the Minister responsible for the Bill to move a Motion to report progress of the Committee of Supply.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Chair.

I move:

**That we report progress of the Bill through the
Committee of Supply back to Parliament**

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I shall now put the Question.

The Question is:

That progress in the Committee of Supply be reported to Parliament?

Motion agreed to

I now declare Parliament resumed.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I now call on the Minister in Charge of the Appropriation Bill 2019 to report progress to Parliament.

HON. M. BROWN: Mr Deputy Chairman, I report:

**That the Bill is progressing through the Committee of Supply smoothly
and with no amendments**

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister and thank you Honourable Members.

Further consideration in the Committee of Supply is an Order of the Day for the next Sitting Day.

I see the Leader of the House.

MR T. ELIKANA: Greetings to the Deputy Speaker.

I stand to move a Motion in the House and before I do so, I just want to acknowledge and say thank you to all the Members of the House.

In accordance to what the Minister of Finance has reported, the thoughts behind the allocation for the Budget is moving smoothly. It didn't come through any completion but it is all through the working together and bringing the ideas to get through in the Parliament.

As you can recall, in the past few days we have started working from 9 o'clock until 10.30 at night and we have had a look at it and we needed to have a rest so that we can have enough rest.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Members, before we proceed, it is proper that we approve or accept the report from the Minister.

The Question is:

That the Report be adopted?

Report adopted

I now call again on the Leader of the House.

MR T. ELIKANA: As I mentioned earlier Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak in English so it is clear.

Deputy Speaker, I move:

That the House be adjourned until 1.00 p.m. tomorrow, Thursday, 13 June

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Leader of the House.

I am looking for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Prime Minister, Henry Puna

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: You may continue Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: I can see we are all tired including the staff of Hansard and the staff of Parliament. As well we see some of the Members are not well. We have also made excellent progress with the Budget to the point where we should be finishing it tomorrow and it is only proper that we give rest to our bodies.

Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Honourable Members, we have come to the end of our meeting for today. Parliament will now adjourn until 1.00 p.m. on Thursday 13 June 2019.

I ask the Member of Parliament for Nukuroa to say our closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

Parliament is now adjourned until 1.00 p.m. on Thursday, 13 June 2019.

Goodnight everyone.

Parliament adjourned at 6.00 p.m.