



FORTY-NINTH SESSION

Hansard Report

49th Session

Fourth Meeting

Volume 4

THURSDAY 6 JUNE 2019

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER took the Chair at 1.00 p.m.

OPENING PRAYER

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

Greetings to everyone this afternoon in the Name of our Lord.

I have a few announcements to announce this afternoon.

First of all, a big thank you to our Chaplin for the utmost blessed message extended to us this afternoon and may this be food for our soul throughout today and may God's blessings be upon us throughout our Sittings until we reach the final day.

Honourable Members of Parliament – Kia Orana to you all today and also to everyone in this Honourable House. To the Members from the Pa Enea – Kia Orana also to your families whom you've left behind to attend this Parliament.

A special Kia Orana also to Madam Speaker, Niki Rattle and Papa Colin in New Zealand. Our prayers goes out to you both for the safe recovery and journey back home from all of us here in this Honourable House.

A further special Kia Orana also to the crew of the *Marumaru Atua* who arrived our shores today. A very warm welcome home.

Lastly, Honourable Members, yesterday I announced that the Budget Book 1 and Budget Book 2 are available on the MFEM Website under Treasury. Today I am happy to announce that these are now available on the Parliament Website for those who prefer to have an electronic copy and have this downloaded from the Parliament Website. Also uploaded on the website is the Appropriation Bill 2019 and the Explanatory Note. Please see Parliament staff if you need assistance.

Honourable Members – Ministerial Statements. There are three of them and I will call upon the Prime Minister for the first one.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Deputy Speaker. Greetings to you, to everyone in the House and all our people listening in today. Thank you for allowing me and giving me this opportunity to present a special message to all of us today. My message will be short.

I was so pleased of the big event that happened at the Avatiu Wharf this morning. As leader of the country I think it's just right that I stand up before you all to extend a big thank you maata to all our people.

Firstly, to the Captain and crew of our Vaka the *Marumaru Atua*, for sailing her across the vast ocean of Kiva back to her home. We all believe that the Lord's blessings have been upon them on their journey back home.

I was in Auckland for the celebration of the completion of our vaka and I even kept an interest whilst they sailed back on the return leg. The first couple of few days they were on the ocean they went through some very rough weather and we heard that from the Captain of *Marumaru Atua* this morning. However, we must say thank you to the Almighty for giving them some very good weather on the way back home and I believe that all of us are so happy and proud to see the Vaka enter and berthed alongside the harbour.

We must also acknowledge the presence of all the Religious Advisory Council Reverends that were present this morning. The messages presented by the President of the Religious Advisory Council was so pleasing and heart-warming. And this is our way in saying thank you, in our customary way of appreciation.

I would also like to extend my special thank you to the Ui Ariki and title holders of our lands which were present there this morning as well and it was so warm to also see the paramount chiefs Tinomana Ariki and Karika Ariki.

I extend a very special thank you to the Head of State who was also present there this morning.

Also extending a special thank you to all our school children who were present and they really decorated the Avatiu Harbour this morning. I believe that will encourage them to be more involved in our cultural activities. I also would like to extend a special acknowledgment to our cultural team that were performing there this morning as well.

My special thank you goes to you our Members of Parliament that were there this morning. The Ministers and Members of Parliamentary from both sides who were there this morning. Thank you for showing our gratitude towards the event this morning. I must give a special thank you to the Leader of the Opposition and understand that she was there much earlier this morning with her husband and I think we should be proud of what took place this morning.

I believe as I mentioned this morning *Marumaru Atua* is not only a vaka. This is a sign. It's a very powerful symbol and this is our connection to our Ui Tupuna and our traditional customs. As we go forward this particular *Marumaru Atua* will show us

new visions to what we are looking for. We are showing the world how we care and respect our ocean and this is what we have agreed as Law in this House in 2017.

Our dream is to protect our ocean today and for the future and our vaka *Marumaru Atua* will be able to market our message to the world.

To end my short message, I want to again extend a special thank you to all of us who were there, all the Parliamentary Members, leaders in the country, the three pillars in the country and the people of the Cook Islands. Thank you so much.

In closure of my appreciation, I want to quote a verse from Psalm 91 because when I hear about *Marumaru Atua* I always remember this verse. It says: “*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*”

To all the people of the Cook Islands, thank you so much and may the Almighty look after us. Kia Orana.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister, I see the Leader of the House on the Floor.

MR T. ELIKANA: As you have announced earlier in your opening remarks regarding three Ministerial Statements, the correct position is there is two Ministerial Statements and there is a statement to be made by the Leader of the Opposition.

It is because of that statement to be made by the Leader of the Opposition, I rise to move a motion before this House and the reason is quite obvious because our Standing Orders only give the privilege of making Ministerial statements to Ministers of the Crown.

That being said, Mr Deputy Speaker, I move:

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to allow the Leader of the Opposition to make a statement for five minutes

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Leader of the House. I call for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tamaiva Tuavera

I put the Question. The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

I call upon the Leader of the Opposition, you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Kia Orana Deputy Speaker, Kia Orana to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and all your Cabinet Ministers. Kia Orana to all our Members in the Opposition and to everyone.

I will not dwell on the greetings as I will use up my five minutes.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Leader of the House for this Motion to allow me to make a statement before our debate this afternoon.

I join with the Prime Minister to give greetings to the crew of the *Marumaru Atua*. I went with my husband to the wharf this morning and there were no people at the wharf. So, I was one of the people who prepared the area for the arrival.

In fact I was there and I welcomed the Minister of Culture when he arrived. But all jokes aside, it was a wonderful morning and I was happy that we all attended the ceremony. I was happy that we agreed to the Motion not to sit this morning, so we can join the welcome ceremony for the *Marumaru Atua*.

Firstly, I want to thank this House for agreeing to adjourn our sitting early last night so that we can speak to the staff members of MFEM to seek some clarifications on the Bill.

This morning I left the ceremony early and went to our Office because the officials from MFEM were waiting for our meeting at 9.00 a.m. I want to thank the Minister of Finance and to let him know that we had a very productive meeting with the officials from MFEM. They were able to help us with matters that we did not understand and I believe more questions would have been asked in this Parliament but now they have been answered by these officials.

So, to my brothers from Nikaupara and the Member from Tupapa-Maraerenga, when we make these requests please help us because we are trying to get more knowledge. If you all understand that is good but don't stop us from finding more knowledge.

I would like to present to you one area that we don't fully understand. I would like for you to look at page 8 of Book 1. If we read this page we will see that the figures on this page are not correct. This is where we were stuck during the ten minutes that was given to us on Tuesday as there was no one that I can ask how come there is variance of thirty thousand and not 136 thousand.

Why is it 200 and not 20 and it is not just one mistake that we can say it is a typing error, it is not just one figure. If you go down the page there's about four and on the next page there's one, two, three, four, five and all of the bottom.

If we ask why this is important, it's because under our law the Minister and the Financial Secretary has to sign a responsibility statement which they did right at the front of the book. So, we had a discussion, it is not a huge problem we just wanted to understand why this is so because we are not likely to approve something that is not correct.

So, if we look at this, it is not a bad thing for the Government and the Opposition to sit down, go through these things, and identify the mistakes well in advance before we come to this House. I will ask as we go forward to look at this because it can only be good for our country.

Finally, regarding the statement of the Minister last night regarding the letter from John Scott, yes a copy of his letter was made available to me. It was supposed to have been in Tuesday's letter to the Editor but it wasn't published then.

(Radio Transmission Cut-Off)

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sorry, Honourable Members this sitting will be suspended as our meeting is not going over the air. When we come back on air, you will be called back. I do believe this is not going to take us into 11.00 p.m tonight.

Sitting suspended at 1.35 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.46 p.m.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Kia Orana and welcome back Honourable Members. Please excuse the interruption that just happened to our sitting this afternoon. We will continue with our sitting. Thank you to our technician for quickly restoring our broadcast on the radio.

I call on the Leader of the House and you have the Floor.

MR T. ELIKANA: Mr Deputy Speaker I stand to move a Motion:

That the Leader of the Opposition be given another 5 minutes in order to complete her speech and for the staff to make sure the 5 minutes is turned on

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

Seconded by the Honourable Member, William Heather

I put the question and the Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

I call on the Leader of the Opposition to continue.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I was talking about John Scott's letter to the editor. I had indicated that I had the benefit of receiving a copy of that letter thinking that it was going to the newspaper and published on Tuesday.

Like we welcome the advice we get from MFEM and any advice we get. I welcomed the advice that was contained, not an advice to me, it was his letter to the editor. And I checked the sections he was referring to and they seemed to make sense and a lot of sense to me.

My message to all of us, is not to accept any advice at all but to consider it carefully before doing anything. But for me checking it in the MFEM Act it made sense to me.

That is consistent with our approach on the Opposition side. We try to get as much knowledge as possible from people who are in the know. I would like to thank John Scott for his letter to the editor.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister mentioned that we have met and yes, we did have a meeting. I want to let all the Members know as to the purpose of the meeting. I went to meet him in his office and I was grateful that he has accepted my request for a meeting. I went to discuss with him about this current sitting of Parliament.

It is my belief that if the Government and Opposition sit and discuss the agenda of Parliament then all will go well and smoothly. In that meeting the Prime Minister suggested that the sitting time of Parliament be changed for this week and next week. In that meeting what he recommended made sense to me and I agreed.

I came back to my Members and explained to them the new format and the motion was put to the House and it was agreed to, easily. Our intentions are to seek clarification and understanding of the proceedings of parliament so that when we go through our sitting and discussions it will be productive. We do not talk about rubbish things.

Thank you to the Leader of the House for this opportunity.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you very much Leader of the Opposition. I now call the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Mark Brown.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I rise to make a Ministerial Statement.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

As the Minister responsible for the Appropriation Bill of 2019, I would like to advise the Members of an editing error in the supporting document, namely Budget Book 1. Which was provided with the Appropriation Bill.

This discrepancy came about from the final editing where unfortunately the wrong tables were inserted into the final draft of the Budget Book 1. And the error relates to the discrepancies in the variances reported in the Schedules and the purpose of the variances is for information only to show the difference between the 2018 Supplementary Budget and the 2019 Appropriation Bill.

Let me stress that it does not change the actual appropriations being sought in the Bill and most important, it does not change the amount of the Total Appropriation or the material substance of the Appropriation Bill. I can confirm that the Appropriation amount remains unchanged as contained in the Appropriation Bill for 2019 and as such my Statement of Responsibility in Budget Book 1 stands.

The supporting document in Budget Book 1 is comprehensive going well beyond the requirements of the MFEM Act. The Ministry of Finance will publish a corrigendum to Budget Book 1 with the revised information in the relevant schedules and these will be available to Members today. I wish to point out that what was tabled before the

House aside from Schedule 2 is accurate and to that end we will also be issuing an Erratum to be attached to the proposed Appropriation Bill to show the correct variance figures in Schedule 2.

So, the differences I am happy to clarify during our Committee of Supply discussions but for the benefit of Members I will go through some of these variance differences that we have now. As I said, these figures are for the variance figures, not the amounts that we are actually seeking to appropriate which are correct.

Therefore in Schedule 2 which is under POBOCs the Parliamentary Sitting Expenses variance figure should read \$136,000 instead of \$30,000. The total of Goods and Services variance is \$260,000 when it should be \$86,000. And the total variance for POBOCs in Schedule 2 which reads \$2,569,823 should actually be \$2,273,073.

The rest of the variances if Members will refer to the Appropriation Bill itself, the correct figures, it is in Budget Book 1 the supporting document where these figures need to be adjusted and I hope to have these figures to you very shortly in the attached form.

Thank you very much Mr Deputy Speaker.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Deputy Prime Minister.

Honourable Members, it is now Question Time and according to Standing Order 66 (b) a total of one hour of Sitting time on Thursdays. Our Question Time today is for one hour. The Floor is now open for questions.

QUESTION TIME

I recognise the Honourable Member William Heather, Member of Parliament for Ruaau.

MR W. HEATHER: Thank you very much Deputy Speaker.

My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister.

A few days ago while we were having a break in our Session in Parliament, like the Minister for ICI, I ventured out to have a look at the lay of the land. I went to inspect the Recycling Centre.

I am used to seeing this place and yet when I went there I could see almost two hills that have been put together. The problem here as I have mentioned in one of our past Sittings is the accumulation of rubbish. All sorts of plastics, glassware, cans and all sorts.

So, I stand again to pose a question to the Deputy Prime Minister because he was mentioning an incinerator. When I look in Book 1 of the Budget Books I do not see an allocation for this incinerator so I pose the question again to the Deputy Prime Minister. What happened to this proposal? Has it been abolished?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member.

I can see the Honourable Minister Robert Tapaitau.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Greetings to all of us this afternoon in the Name of our Lord, Mr Deputy Speaker. Greetings to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament and the Leader of the Opposition and all Members on your side – greetings.

To the Clerk of the House and all your staff – greetings. Those of you in the public gallery – greetings this afternoon.

Of course the question from the Member for Ruaau, it is a good question. I don't know when he took time to go out and have a look. It's good if that's actually what he went to look at.

This is the answer to the question. The Deputy Prime Minister did mention before that we are considering that issue. There are three options we are looking at and we are looking at the most appropriate one for us.

Please don't think that we have forgotten about this. And to the people we have not because I have also seen this place. The two areas both at the ICI, the Waste Department as well as the Environment Services, they are looking at this issue. Both of these departments are looking to work together and if it's right then we can buy the incinerator because if it is not done correctly then it's a huge waste of money. We don't want to buy something that will only work for two years and it will be costly for us.

On what you are talking about – glass, there is a tender in the newspaper seeking interest for somebody to come and crush these glass bottles. So, don't worry, we have not forgotten about this problem.

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

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Deputy Speaker.

This question, I thought it was already corrected because this question has been posed inside this House maybe twice before this. There was a report from the Public Accounts Committee for unpaid Government workers from the year 2015.

Somebody came and visited me this morning because he has not been paid his wages of \$1,400. This person is an ex-Army veteran. That's why he came to see me and explained that he was included in this report.

My question is posed to the Minister of Culture. I know he wasn't a Minister then but he now wears the hat. If you can please remunerate this person and all the other workers who have not been paid plus 10 per cent interest for every year they haven't been paid.

Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Minister of Culture.

HON. G. ANGENE: Thank you Deputy Speaker and to you also the Member of Ngatangiaa for your question. This question is a little bit watery. You are asking me to pay this person for the amount you mentioned.

MR T. TUAVERA: Read the report.

HON. G. ANGENE: Why am I paying him? Because in those days I wasn't a Minister. You are saying he's an ex-Army. Never mind, I am a former Army.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister.

Again I see the Honourable Member from Ngatangiaa. You have the Floor.

MR T. TUAVERA: I don't have a Supplementary Question. He has not answered my question. My question to him is will these people be paid since 2015? If he thinks this question is watery or weak, well it is contained within the report.

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

HON. H. PUNA: Of course it is correct what the Minister is replying because he has no knowledge of this but the Honourable Member of Ngatangiaa is correct also. It is an issue but to be fair to both parties give us all the information and we will look at it and report back. Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister it's good to hear that you people are going to solve that problem. I see the Honourable Member from Amuri.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Kia Orana to all of us in this House and to our people listening in to our broadcast today. Kia Orana to all of us and greetings to the people in the Northern and Southern Group. Welcome back to the crew from the *Marumaru Atua* and I wish I was on the vaka and I will be happy.

I have some thoughts that I wish to present to the Government. In Tuesday's Cook Islands News there was an article concerning a barge belonging to the General Transport which is going to be sold. At the end of this article it mentioned that Government is going to purchase a barge or boat.

I heard the Prime Minister yesterday talking about shipping to the North and South and he said we require a new vessel. The question here is this - who is going to control the running of this vessel when it arrives here.

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

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for this good question. If we look at page 129 of Budget Book 1, you will see in the schedule there the outline for a shipping vessel and an estimated appropriation this year of 2.5 million dollars.

When it became apparent that the owner of the current barge was selling their barge it left the Government in a quandary as what we are going to do to transport capital to the Outer Islands. With approximately 18 million dollars' worth of Outer Islands capital projects for this year it is important that we secure the services of appropriate transport to ship materials to the Outer Islands.

For many, many decades now our country, our Government has chosen to rely on the private sector to provide our shipping service. And as I mentioned last night it is time for us to change the way that we do business. Sometimes we cannot rely on the private sector to carry the huge capital cost of an investment in a ship which is very difficult to run to make it commercially viable.

So, in the interest of providing efficient service particularly to our Outer Islands, the Government has made a commitment to support the purchase of an appropriate vehicle like a barge to take materials to the Outer Islands.

As to the question who will run this barge, well it is my expectation that we will put this barge out for charter to get an appropriate company to manage and run the barge on a professional basis. And of course there is a proper process that we must go through to ensure that proper procedures are maintained as to who will be hired or chartered to operate the barge service. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

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

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you Minister for your answer. I hope it will be transparent.

The second question goes to the Minister of Health. Yesterday I mentioned about a dentist for our island for our people and also for the tourists coming to our island. The people are still asking me, as to what the Health Ministry will do.

Secondly, there is a dentist by the name of Alfonse and he is in Aitutaki and he is due to return to Rarotonga yesterday. I ask whether you have agreed for him to remain on Aitutaki and raised his pay because that is what is required.

What is the Ministry of Health doing about this?

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

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you, Deputy Speaker and greetings to all of us in this House today. Greetings have been offered before and I thank the Member for Amuri/Ureia for the good question that he put to the Floor.

At one of our suspension time yesterday the Member and I had discussions on this topic that he has just raised, and I answered him, yes, this issue is being looked at. We have found that this young dentist wants to reside permanently on Aitutaki. Also there is a girl who is a dentist who retired and we are thinking of re-employing her.

She can be a good help with this problem in Aitutaki. I just want to ask our people to encourage our young people to take up these training so that they can take on these roles. This is one of the difficult things that is faced by the Ministry of Health to take on these important jobs here in our country.

We know the concerns of our people against the recruitments of health workers from overseas to work as dentist and medical doctors. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister and can the Honourable Member please take your seat, so we can clear matters at the chair.

Honourable Member you have the Floor and ask your question. This is a pleasure for me to give you the Floor for the third time. I am happy to hear the Minister of Health announce to the House that there is a dental doctor now stationed for Aitutaki.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Supplementary question to the Minister of Health regarding this dental doctor.

As I mentioned in my speech last night, Aitutaki is part of the Pa Enea and I do not approve the fee that is charged the people when they visit the dentist in Aitutaki. Sometimes the payment required of the people is more expensive than the fee charged on Rarotonga.

Our plea to the Ministry of Health is to look at this and see how they can reduce and minimise the cost to the people in this area.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member and I see the Minister of Health you have the Floor.

MRS R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you, Honourable Member for your supplementary question. I cannot reply your question today but if you can give me time to look into this matter on the dental fees required of the people of Aitutaki. I will come back in our future sittings and give you a proper answer.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister for your answer. Honourable Members you cannot ask more than two questions from now on.

If I had known that the Member Parliament for Amuri was going to ask that question, I will not have allowed it. This is a question that you the Member and the Minister can solve outside of the Chamber, maybe in the Minister's office.

Honourable Member for Ngatangia, you have the Floor.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Police.

I have visited our islands in the Northern Group and I had a good look at the agriculture activity of these islands. Nearly all the islands in the North are planting taro but they have a problem with their crops. The problem is the pigs. These pigs are very clever and knows when the crops are ready, then they go into the gardens and destroy the crops.

This is what the people shared with me while I was on their island. There are no bullets on the island. They are not able to get rid of the problem because they need the bullets to shoot the pigs.

Seriously, Minister of Police they have no ammunition at all in the Outer Islands to take care of the problem of the pigs on the Outer Islands. If you Mr Minister can assist our planters in the Outer Islands who are planting taro and have the pig problem.

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

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am one of the Members of the Outer Islands and I should be one to answer this question. The Honourable Member is correct in what he is telling us. We do have this problem in the Northern Group islands. This problem, we need to look at it carefully.

The way I see it with the Outer Islands, the pigs are the boss and the people are the animals. The problem is, people are letting their pigs to roam into the gardens and eat or destroy the crops. The solution is not the bullets to shoot the pigs, I do not agree.

That is the easy way out but it can only be a temporary solution. For the permanent solution we take this issue to the Island Council or island Government on each of our islands. This problem they are the ones to solve it.

Like I said, we are allowing the pigs to be the boss and the people the pigs. We fence ourselves with our crops inside and allow the pigs to roam and take over the island. This is our problem. Honourable Member the bullets is not the solution to this problem that you have highlighted today.

Have you spoken to the Mata Haurua Growers in Tukao because these men wants to plant and their harvest was posted on Facebook and these are taro, puraka, kumara and maniota. They did their planting through a grant from India that I was able to secure for them. They were able to purchase fencing to fence their planting plots and their implements for growing.

Let us not rely on the easy solutions, there are other ways that we will be able to overcome these problems. To me the real problem is us allowing the pigs to be the boss of our islands. We must encourage our island leaders to make laws to penalise those you are not fencing their animals but allowing them to roam and destroy the livelihood of others. That is why I wanted to answer this question because I am aware of the problem.

On the matter of bullets – yes. We will talk to the Commissioner to give assistance to our Outer Islands, as a stop-gap measure as this is not the true solution to this problem.

Thank you, Honourable Member for the question.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. I will suspend our sitting until 3.00 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 2.30 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 3.00 p.m.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: All be seated.

Greetings again everyone. Parliament is resumed and we are still on Question Time. We have got 24 minutes to go.

I now see the Honourable Member Selina Napa, Member for Titikaveka.

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. Greetings to everyone in this House.

Before I ask my question, I have a few things to say.

My question is to the Prime Minister as I have read the Budget books. I understand this question has been raised during our last Parliament sitting I think. We see in the Bill, there is an allocation for the Office of the seventh Minister and we heard the Prime Minister yesterday asking for our support to the allocation for the Office of the seventh Minister.

Therefore Prime Minister, before we give you our support, if you could tell us in this House who is this seventh Minister that you are referring to?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member.

I see the Prime Minister on the Floor.

HON. H. PUNA: Deputy Speaker, thank you. Thank you also to the Member of Teimurimotia. I would love to answer this question.

However, I am not in a position to confirm this and this question is also not appropriate as we are dealing with the Budget. If I can refer you to Standing Orders 94, we are still on the Second reading of the Appropriation Bill. However, when we come to the Vote Item for this part, I will be very happy to answer your question Honourable Member.

Maybe by then, someone from your side will be considered as the seventh Minister so that you can support the Vote Item immediately.

Thank you Deputy Speaker.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

I can again see the Member of Parliament for Teimurimotia.

MRS S. NAPA: My second question is to the Minister of Transport, and I think it is the Prime Minister.

Nowadays, we can see the big number of vehicles on our roads. Before, when I travel from Titikaveka to town, it only takes me about fifteen to twenty minutes to reach Avarua.

Today, because of the increase number of vehicles on the road, it takes me about an hour to travel to town or I depart home an hour earlier. We now see the improvements that have been made on our roads and also the new signage that is being built on the roads indicating the speed limit, such as thirty kilometres per hour or fifty kilometres per hour.

However, this is not my concern, my concern is the increase number of vehicles on our small island today.

Can the Minister inform this House if there is a plan in place to address the issue about the high number of vehicles imported in our country. I know the private sector is responsible for bringing these vehicles to our country, but how can we work together with the private sectors to minimise this.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Minister for ICI.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Thank you very much for the good question. The Honourable Member referred the question to the Prime Minister as the Minister of Transport, but I am the Minister of Transport.

You are quite right Honourable Member in that our vehicles have increased tremendously but time is changing. When we look at this carefully, it basically means our small country is doing very well because our people are able to purchase these vehicles.

I say this because back in the days you could only afford a bike. But today, we can afford to buy SUVs, and 4WD pickup trucks.

Like you mentioned the Ministry of Transport, management is one of the key issues and controls in place keeps this at a certain level which is good for us in the Cook Islands. So, I hope that answers your question.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I see the Leader of the Opposition.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Greetings to us all again.

Before I ask my question, on our Procedure Note for today, when the Deputy Speaker conveyed his greetings, I noticed he missed to mention something beautiful during his announcement.

I will ask him whether he wants me to read it.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. I will answer that. It was intentional on my side and I think it's not appropriate to mention that in my announcement this afternoon. I think my wife is not an apple. She's much more than an apple.

(Much laughter)

Thank you.

Can I ask you to put your question please.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: My question relates to purse seining. As we understand there was a petition about two or three years ago or maybe longer, and these people went to Court. I think it also went as far as the Court of Appeal. You can correct me on that. Now, I'm hearing that it has been taken to the Privy Council.

My question is, how much is it costing us to be involved in these proceedings?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member.

I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Mr Deputy Speaker, I think as the Attorney General it's my responsibility to deal with this matter but in order to give an informed response to this excellent question, can I ask that I be given time to obtain all the relevant information and bring it back to the House. Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister I see the Leader of the Opposition you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: This question goes to the Minister of Health. I did not participate in any of the functions but I read in the Cook Islands News I think last year the problem that arose during the Pacific Nurses Forum that resulted in some of the nurses being suspended.

I don't mind if the Minister will correct me because I read this information in the Cook Islands News. I understand that some of the nurses were re-employed. The question is, has this problem been sorted or is there any other problem that you know of?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Leader of the Opposition, I see the Minister of Health.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for your question. This problem has been solved and I am not aware if there is a new problem. My answer to you is that this has been solved. Thank you.

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

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Deputy Speaker, greetings to all of us I can now see we are all full and no one is making any noise.

I refer to the question posed by the Member of Parliament from Titikaveka on the increase of vehicles on the road and I remember a good thing that the Secretary of ICI said to us in Penrhyn. She took me and the Member for Titikaveka to the rubbish dump in Penrhyn and also to the ICI headquarter in Penrhyn and she showed us the white ware and the rusty vehicles.

She told us that they will contract Malcolm Sword and his barge to bring this rubbish from the Outer Islands back to Rarotonga to be transported back to where it came from. This is good thinking but this is my question.

These people that are bringing these vehicles on to our island and selling them to our people, they are selling the car to us but I don't know if they buy these back to return it to where it came back because they brought these vehicles here.

This is like the beer bottles that are brought here and when the beer is consumed who is responsible for the empty bottle.

I have heard the Minister of ICI say that bottles will be crushed. I think the onus or the responsibility of these vehicles, the people that sell them on the island should also be held accountable for getting rid of the bodies off the island.

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

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I am surprised at this question because it is asking when you purchase a car or a bottle of beer and at the end of its life are we going to take it back to the person who brought it in for him to look after it or send it back.

I will ask the question that if I buy underpants and when it is worn out what will I do with this underpants, send it back to the person I bought it from. That is the answer, we look at recycle, recycling is the answer, and repatriation.

I am happy to report that the Ministry of Finance is looking at a cost recovery scheme to allow funds to be put aside for imports that will allow the repatriation of these waste. Because we are well aware there are some waste that cannot be recycled or reused here and they must be returned or repatriated.

This has been started but there is a cost involved in returning batteries, scrap metal therefore there is a proposal that we are considering similar to the import levy or the

import duty on all goods, there will be proportion set aside for repatriation of these waste.

And quite right, there is a number of places now where there are significant car wrecks that are sitting on idle land and we have some dangerous goods such as used car batteries, motor bike batteries that cannot be disposed of on land and must be returned to the proper facility for its return.

There are also some materials that we can use to help at the cost of reducing what goes into our land fill through incineration. But we are not talking about just your basic incineration and burning we are talking about high technology, high temperature incineration that make sure there is no toxins being released into the atmosphere.

So, together with these options and also with the option of the barge or the shipping operation in the future bringing back waste from the Outer Islands we should be able to ensure that our beautiful islands do not end up being rubbish dumps and that we can look after the waste that comes into our country and return the waste to proper facilities for looking after.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will interrupt you, Minister the time is up. Thank you very much for the questions and your answers to the questions.

Orders of the Day, Standing Order 70 Interrupted Debate on the second reading of the Appropriation – can I repeat again please, Orders of the Day, Committee of Supply Appropriation Bill.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Honourable Members, yesterday we completed the principles and merits of the Bill which was concluded by the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Mark Brown.

Under Standing Orders 306 (1), I now resolve Parliament into the Committee of Supply to go through the Schedules of the Bill. The Clause will stand postponed until after going through the Schedules.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY – DAY 1

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We are now in the Committee. Honourable Members we will now go through the Vote Items of schedule one – agency budget appropriations:

But first, under Standing Orders 294, be reminded that the time limit of speeches for Members in Committee Stage is 10 minutes and 3 times.

Secondly, as approved during Tuesdays sitting, time limits have been placed on the debate for each Vote Item. These time limits are displayed in the procedure notes for easy reference.

AGRICULTURE:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,343,762 for Agriculture stands part of the Schedule?

The debate for this Vote Item will last one and a half hours. Do we have any speakers?

I see the Honourable Member from Matavera, the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I know our speaking time is limited to 10 minutes but I will sit down and stand up again to speak for another 10 minutes.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That is correct.

MR V. TUPA: We are now on the Agriculture appropriation. I want to thank the Minister of Agriculture and your Associate Minister. The reason being because the salary and wages of the staff in agriculture has been increased. If we go back to the appropriation of last year especially the personnel salaries the allocation was \$892,063. For this year the personnel salaries allocation is \$1,006,072.

Mr Deputy Speaker the personnel allocation has been increased by \$114,009. This is what I am thanking the Minister for. Last year I asked the Government to increase the salaries and wages of the staff of agriculture.

When we look into the operations allocation for last year - \$168,643 and for this current year it is - \$315,509. The increase, Mr Deputy Speaker is \$146,766. Again I thank the Minister of Agriculture and his Associate Minister for their hard work in ensuring the increase in the Vote Item for agriculture.

When we look in Budget Book 1 on page 98, and all the appropriation allocation for agriculture is listed on that page. The reason I bring this to the Floor, Mr Deputy Speaker because at the moment there are policies set by the Ministry of Agriculture.

The first is the Strategic Plan 2017/2020. The second is National Agriculture Policy 2017/20. In Budget Book page 98 are the allocations set to cater for these policies of the Ministry of Agriculture.

I would like to ask our Minister of Agriculture and Associate Minister to ask the Minister of Finance for more funds because there are still areas that are yet to be catered for which I proposed last year for agriculture. I remember asking for 3 million dollars for agriculture. When we consider the allocation for 2017/2020 we will find that for 2021 there will be an increase for that year. This tells me that for every subsequent year the budget will increase.

The reason I brought us on to this page, I hear the Ministry of Agriculture is aiming to put together a Master Plan for the entity. We are all aware that come next year the Strategic Plan comes to its end of 5 years. This will be reviewed to set up another 5 year plan. There are other policies set which will end soon.

These two plans set for agriculture these will support the Governments Master Plan. When these many policy and plans are reviewed it will open doors for a strong future another 5 years. My wish Mr Deputy Speaker is to bring all the departments of agriculture as one body. This will strengthen the work of the Island Councils.

When we consider the allocation of agriculture under the Island Council this is not enough for example for Aitutaki only \$2,000 per annum. These are some of my thoughts that I want to bring to us. I will sit down because my time is up.

I thank the Deputy Speaker because he again gave me the Floor to continue speaking.

This is what I want for our people in agriculture is to strengthen this area. As mentioned by the Member of Ngatangia the problem of the roaming pigs. The Prime Minister also spoke on this issue, that it is a problem on our islands in the North and the South. I am so please to see in our Budget an increase in the Appropriation for Agriculture and maybe by the year 2012 it will increase to \$3million.

I believe this is an important sector of our community and we need to provide for our people. To prepare us for times when we have natural disaster problems. Agriculture will provide for our people.

I am so happy because they have put our plans under the National Plan. This plan is the National Sustainable Development Plan. When we look at the relevant area which is part 10, I see they are trying their best to stick with this plan in order to improve agriculture.

This National Plan will correct our Master Plan. I believe in this Master Plan that we intend to acquire, that all of us Members of Parliament will be involved in sharing our thoughts in what needs to be put in the Master Plan.

I want to bring us all to the appropriation as we see in Book 1 as well as the appropriation in Book 2 and the estimates of money that will be increased every year.

When we look at Book 2 these are the projects the Ministry will carry out this period. This goes to say the increase in the estimates are appropriate in completing the project and in paying the workers. This will in turn strengthen us in doing the work because I know this is one reason in that we have to increase payments so work will be done.

I would like to applaud the Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture which is Marama Anguna. I can see the benefits the Government and us in the Opposition are doing for Agriculture today. When we look at the Head of Ministries these are new people on the posts who hold high qualifications.

The significant of this is that we have benefitted from holding MBA studies here on Rarotonga and the graduates are making use of this. Not only for Agriculture, but Environment and there are others who graduated and making use of it. I know the Minister of Finance is one person who graduated with an MBA and is making use of it. This also goes for the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Associate Minister for Justice and the Associate Minister for Agriculture.

I am grateful to these people because we planned to come together in order to make use of the knowledge they have. There are four of them in Government being the Minister of Finance Mark Brown, Minister of Internal Affairs Mac Mokoroa, Associate Minister of Justice Tingika Elikana, Associate Minister for Agriculture Patrick Arioka. That is why I bring this to the front to ensure that we connect to the appropriation for Agriculture.

I would like to highlight that this will result in strengthening Agriculture in our country because I can see the difficulties today. I also acknowledge all of us in this House including the Interpreter. We are all growers because I see the difficulties in people needing to have their land ploughed. That's why my proposal is to centralise all these sections.

The intention behind this is for Agriculture to bring all this machinery together to control it, to manage it, to assist growers without having to pay for these services and to appropriate certain funds under the Ministry of Agriculture to grow seedlings.

So, all we do is go and purchase seedlings from Agriculture. These funds will generate assistance for Agriculture. I believe this will assist us all in the Northern and Southern Group and in Rarotonga.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

I see the Member from Ruaau.

MR W. HEATHER: Thank you Deputy Chairman. I would like to highlight to all of us those who are engaged in agricultural farming as well as animal husbandry on the island of Rarotonga.

I make mention of Teava Iro who started the process of exporting nono, establishing a factory. As well as Mr John Scott and Mr Tupou Faireka for raising chickens and eggs to help our people and for those growing other crops like taro and kumara I make mention of William Pera and Nat Unuka as well as T&M Heather.

Acknowledgment also goes out to Arama Wigmore and the Wigmore Enterprise for their work in helping Rarotonga and the Outer Islands in their produce.

One of the most important things Deputy Chairman, I would like to quote something that one of our parents used to quote for us. His words are: "God put in us a strong spirit, not a spirit of weakness." I just bring this forth to support the notion of our hardworking farmers on our lands in our country.

I return to our Output allocations in our Budget. Under the Output: Research and Development I support the allocation for this and I congratulate the Minister of Agriculture as well as the Minister of Finance. Under Biosecurity, under Agriculture Policy and Projects, the Corporate Services – I would like to congratulate both of you for this.

However, the sad case with our people out there, Agriculture growers, they do not have the funds to meet their aspirations in planting. Sure, we will ask the question

why Government should support private business. This is the livelihood of this person.

However, if we do this it will be likened to the three people which their Master gave. One – five talents, two – two talents and the third gave one talents. We see that this will grow and produce and the more we give, the more they shall produce for our benefit.

So, I urge you the Government to seriously consider this proposal to assist our people and to maybe help stop depopulation of our country. True, I can see your assistance through the increment in Agriculture and thank you for it because at the last Sitting I and the Honourable Vaitoti complained about this. Maybe it is appropriate for this amount at this time but surely in the future let us continue looking at this to help our people.

I would also like to talk about Biosecurity. In terms of diseases, and considering the dogs roaming problem around our island especially when they approach the public eating places in town. I consider this highly inappropriate especially when I notice the tourists looking at this.

So, I urge those who check our animals to please inspect and survey all the animals on our islands. As you can see today there is an increase in feasts amongst our people from Government, Churches and Traditional sector. We have no other option because this is our way of life. If you try to reduce this there will be complaints. That is why I am highlighting if we can control this and all the diseases associated with it.

I will talk about the fruit fly that is affecting our mangoes, paw paws and so forth. I do believe it is time to find a way to totally eliminate this pest from affecting our produce.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I think when your ten minutes is up you sit down and then get up again so we do not delay.

MR V. TUPA: Greetings again Mr Deputy Chairman. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to complete what I have to say about agriculture.

I would like to touch upon an area even though the Member from Ruaau mentioned about this, I would like to issue my thoughts under Output 3 in the second Book.

Output 3 talks about livestock development. Under this output it mentions new machinery and the training of staff to utilise these machines. I think this is important because as we have seen machineries in the past years have all decayed.

Deputy Speaker through you to the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Finance please consider a tractor for Matavera, not only the tractor but also the implements to utilize the tractor.

I would like to highlight to us that under the work of BTIB, this is an agency allocated by Government to seek for soft loans. This area supports our growers. I would like this area strengthened and for BTIB and Agriculture to work together. Even though

BTIB have set interest rates at 5 to 6 percent maybe through their collaboration it will drop down to 3 percent.

These are important sections funds providing us with soft loans. This will strengthen the situation of growers on Rarotonga, Southern Group and Northern Group. I would like to say thank you to the Associate Minister as well as the Minister for Agriculture.

In Matavera today, we have an organisation called the Matavera Growers Association. We order for materials to assist our growers. I would like to thank the Minister and Associate Minister because today I believe an exemption have been given for the VAT to the growers on Rarotonga through the Ministry of Agriculture.

This is a difficult area for us in ordering because some of these materials are not ordered by the Ministry of Agriculture. This helps our growers not only in Matavera but also in Nikao and Puaikura.

This is a significant assistance because when we pay VAT it gets up to \$700 for this section only. So, I would like to thank the Ministry of Agriculture. I know this is through the review by the Minister of Finance how to assist our people. Through this assistance from the Minister it's good because I assure you today there are lands still covered in bush.

I believe that some landowners have migrated overseas and other landowners have said you can't use this land. This is one area that I believe we should strengthen under the Ministry of Agriculture.

To conclude my comments, I would like to encourage and to thank all the growers in the Cook Islands as well as the growers outside of Rarotonga. We know one of our sons growing pineapple. I know this is going well but we should look at how we can assist with selling and marketing and expanding this industry.

Also those of us here on Rarotonga assisting each other in agriculture especially in terms of machinery for those who cannot afford to pay their hire between 50 to 100 dollars an hour.

Those are my appreciation to the Deputy Prime Minister as well as the Minister of Finance for the Vote Item for Agriculture, and I will speak on all Vote Items. Thank you to all of us for this appropriation, God Bless.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Before we proceed, I just want to make a short announcement so that we do not confuse ourselves. I informed this House earlier on that our speaking time is three slots of ten minutes.

When you make your first speech and the ten minutes expire, you sit down and give a chance to another Member to speak. But afterwards you can get up again and speak for another ten minutes and then sit down and give the chance to another Member to speak and if you want to speak for the third time you are allowed to do that.

I think you can all understand what I am telling you but if you want me to translate it into English. It is only the Minister responsible for that Vote Item his or her time limit is open.

I see the Honourable Member for Ruaau, Honourable William Heather, you have the Floor.

MR W. HEATHER: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chair. As I mentioned earlier for our agriculture we need the full support of our Government.

We see the long term crop the Vanilla which the previous Minister of Agriculture has given his full support. The issue with this crop is that it is long term and not short term where returns will be fast and quick. This is the grower's problem they are finding it difficult to pay Government for their loans.

As mentioned by the Honourable Member Vaitoti the other problem to our growers are the market to sell their produce. This is exactly the problem that the vanilla growers are facing. If we want to give loans for a long term crop maybe only one each year because the money for such crop takes a long time to get and the payment of these loans also take a long time as well.

Grower should first of all be knowledgeable about the crop he is planning to plant before he starts his agriculture business example cabbage, capsicum and so forth. He will succeed because he is well prepared for any problem that may arise. I also encourage our Ministry of Agriculture to help our growers so that they will be better prepared for their planting activities.

We find our growers concentrating on planting one type of crop, like watermelon and at harvest time our local market is flooded. We do not sit down and plan carefully who to plant what crop so that we share the market between the growers. Instead we plant the same crop and flood the market. This is the spirit behind my views.

If I give a bottle of water to somebody I can be assured that one day he will return such a favour to me. When we give a grower money for agriculture, we tell that grower what to plant. If we do this I am sure the market in Avarua will be flooded with all different kinds of crop which is good.

This is the love we are saying is contained in this budget. What has been given today is only half. If we want our people to benefit from agriculture then this is the way to go.

We look at our Outer Islands, no job available for our young people. They get on the ship for the Te Maeva Nui celebration and then on the plane for New Zealand or Australia. This is happening because there is nothing to hold them back on the islands. This is what I see happening in our country today. If we are not willing to give the opportunity for these young people then they will leave for green pastures.

I would like to make a request to the Government that we work on this budget for the benefit of people. We must consult with our local growers as to what they expect from the Government so that all of our people benefit. Maybe a 5 percent interest on

loans so that it is manageable to our growers. Let us give them something to start their agriculture activity but give it with love.

There are many agriculture activity – pigs, chickens, goats, ducks and of course the many kinds of crops. There is a Chinese restaurant in Arorangi and they are looking for a local to provide them ducks. This is my vision for us locals to provide the local market and not to concentrate on the overseas market for all our agriculture requirements.

I have one more minute left. These are my proposals to the Government on agriculture to assist our people to improve their lives here in our Cook Islands.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member and I see the Associate Minister of Agriculture.

MR P. ARIOKA: Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Kia Orana to all Honourable Members this afternoon and to all our people listening to our broadcast.

Special greetings to the staff of agriculture as I am sure they are listening in and want to hear what is being presented in parliament for agriculture today.

Deputy Chairman, I stand to give some explanation from the Ministry on the Agriculture Appropriation that was well presented by the Minister Rose Brown as well as the Deputy Prime Minister. And therefore I will try my best to give some intelligence so that we know exactly the responsibility of this appropriation for our Ministry.

First and foremost Mr Deputy Chairman we envisage for this financial year to keep within the promises of our people under our Strategic Goals mentioned by the Member of Parliament for Matavera. While the Ministry of Agriculture chose 74 percent of that Strategic Plan. To date there is still 26 percent remaining targets relies on this financial year appropriation.

It is going to prepare our country firstly our biosecurity border protection program as priority for this financial year for a very good reason. Therefore Deputy Chairman it is important that the Honourable Minister Rose Brown and myself and all our colleagues in Government needs to give some enlighten on the concerns around biosecurity border protection

First and foremost, Deputy Chairman we take pride in the serious steps that our Pa Enua has taken to own its own processes in protecting their island. In addition to that, they had continuous embargo of certain restricted animals on islands of Mitiaro, Mangaia, Mauke, Rakahanga, Manihiki, Nassau and Palmerston.

Therefore Deputy Chairman, this agency as well as Government took pride of the seriousness of these respective islands and our need to work well within these respective island's rules and bylaws. It even gave us more pride that the Pa Enua themselves chose the protection of their environment which this Government took upon to support of this responsibility.

They have shown that they want to take ownership to determine what was more important to them for their environment, their bio-diversity for future generations to enjoy. What is even more important to us in this Honourable House, if the islands are to be the food bowl of the Cook Islands then it needs to think serious about the security of its island environment first as it produces better food quality for future expected markets.

It is clear and we need to understand that production and security are not that all in isolation but more towards working together to produce better food. High production and quality for our markets as well and that's the focus of this Appropriation Deputy Chairman. The Ministry is here to help support our Pa Enea Agriculture Program.

Secondly, Deputy Chairman, strengthening islands that is required under the biosecurity law to fully operate and comply with our national laws. The strategic focus here is to ensure these islands are fully functional, well resourced, operating under stringent level of operations that is conducive to cope with international clearances.

These ports of entry islands are Aitutaki, Atiu, Pukapuka, Penrhyn and of course Rarotonga for that matter. What needs to be informed in this Honourable House is the fact that the increase in international flights to the Cook Islands is growing at a faster pace that has already overwhelmed our biosecurity capacity to cope with the growing demand for those services that is required of them.

Secondly, and most important, the increasing number of undeclared vessels marked as high risk entering into the Cook Islands through the Pa Enea. This is the absolute reason the Ministry of Agriculture had to make sure the Pa Enea is structured, resourced and fully capable to deal with these kinds of risks. We are concerned and we have profound evidence that these undeclared vessels sits above extreme risk.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

I see the Honourable Member for Ruaau.

MR W. HEATHER: I don't think I will use up five minutes, maybe less but I will try and reach five minutes.

With regards to the Vote Item for Agriculture, especially for Outer Islands, we can see the appropriation for the Northern Group and the Southern Group islands. I can see the increased allocation for the Outer Islands to help improve their standard. I can also see an increase of allocation to the Southern Group islands, for example Nga-Pu-Toru.

In our Budget Book, Government has allocated each islands financial support to help keep our people on the islands. The sad part though is that there are still insufficient funds allocated here, but I would like to thank Government for this allocation here. We understand the wish for Government to ensure that our Outer Islands become our food bowl to supply our main island Rarotonga.

I think we know of one of our sons, Francis Smith who is one of the pineapple growers in Aitutaki. As he is part owner to the airline, he is able to export the pineapples to Rarotonga. If this was someone else they couldn't afford to bring this produce to Rarotonga. This is the downfall of bringing produce from the Outer Islands and for our Ministry to help pay for the freight to bring this produce to Rarotonga.

Maybe not to fully pay for freight but to subsidise to enable them to bring the produce to Rarotonga as mentioned by the Member of Amuri with regards to the dentist or maybe each island's Ministry of Agriculture can become responsible for this. They buy the produce from the growers and they export it to Rarotonga and sell them.

Maybe through this method this will enable our people to export quality produce without damaging them. But this responsibility should become the Ministry of Agriculture on each island to properly put in place a plan to export the produce to Rarotonga. If we are able to look after our people, I strongly believe our people will not leave their islands for greener pastures.

Last year, a gentleman came to me and asked to borrow my shotgun. I gave it to him because he wants it to shoot pigs in Mitiaro. This person actually works for the Island Council and this is one of their responsibilities. So, I gave him three packets of bullets and the gun but when the Police went to Mitiaro he returned the gun. I had faith in the person that borrowed my gun and didn't think there was an issue with him. But this person caused trouble with another person so the gun was removed from him.

The main idea here is to control the wild pigs. If we are able to control our pigs, there will not be an issue.

Those are my thoughts and we now see that there is an increase in the number of pigs on our islands. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Associate Minister of Agriculture again.

MR P. ARIOKA: Thank you Deputy Chairman. I don't know whether we should rewind our tape to where I left off.

I was just talking about the extreme risks in the Pa Enea that we have profound evidence today at a total of 180 vessels crossing through our waters from the east heading to the west per year. This seriously puts our biosecurity on high alert and more to the point these undeclared vessels are from countries that poses serious economic as well as social and cultural risks to our country's food security.

Strengthening our biosecurity in the Northern Group islands allows better trade opportunities with countries like Samoa and Hawaii and therefore the third point here it also means our biosecurity on Pukapuka and Penrhyn are locally resourced by our own people that is capable, trained and ready to a capacity to operate and provide the necessary services to help minimize the risks to our shores.

We are happy Deputy Chair that discussions with the Northern Group Island Government and biosecurity needs together with partners within Customs and

Immigration is ongoing. We want to work hard to make sure that the services being put in place is to allow international shipping opportunities to the Northern Group.

While it is in the planning stages trade between countries of Samoa, Hawaii and others is expected even to a point that this allows future emergency evacuations prior to a disaster response when it arise and also health emergency evacuation and referrals when it does arise as well.

Therefore the Minister and I are discussing this further with our biosecurity teams but also with the Government of Samoa to establish a bilateral arrangement on this front. We want to make sure that this arrangement forges strong partnership in the protection of both border control initiatives.

Last year I raised in this Honourable House the concerns regarding a serious threat today to our coconut industry most specifically from countries in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and the Micronesian countries.

Our Government cannot be complacent and therefore the Northern Group Islands needs to collectively be ready for this threat and therefore the locality and position of the Northern Group close to Kiribati Islands puts us in a very curative situation. So, this appropriation must always allow the resourcing of our biosecurity to help the incursion of the rhinoceros beetle, a serious pest capable of crippling our coconut industry within a very short space of time and currently it will be impossible to recover for many, many years.

I think we all understand in this Honourable House that this ability to affect it will affect our way of life in a big way here in the Cook Islands and for many generations.

Mr Deputy Chair, the second reason for the increase of the Agriculture budget allows the development of the Agriculture Master Plan. As mentioned by the Honourable Member for Matavera this Strategic Plan 2020 is concluding by the end of next year and therefore it means it is timely that our Strategy 2020 must undergo immediate review and evaluation on the performance of its work.

This review will assess its current position and what was being delivered, where we can improve and where can we do better in our service delivery. It also means, Deputy Chairman that the agriculture sector master plan must get involved in the same thinking of the 2030 Cook Islands Economic Strategy and that will be led by MFEM as it brings together the economic sector under a much more comprehensive and collaborative future investment plan.

Mr Deputy Chair, our current strategy 2020 as announced earlier a 74 percent of our strategic goal has been well achieved. It means the Pa Enea agriculture business is in sync with the Ministry strategic focus for the sector and for the country and it has been well received by the Pa Enea today.

The 26 percent mentioned earlier is to allow the beginning of farmers to market strategic thinking that will involve the combining of the Pa Enea and Rarotonga producers in producing high quality food for our domestic market. It aims to achieve

quality, diversity, quantity and helps offset international importation of agriculture goods.

We understand this is not an overnight strategy planning nor a one year outlook but a multiple year forecast even to a point that we have to involve the private sector, the food industry, the tourism industry and our growers in this planning process.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, I have to disrupt you. Parliament is suspended and will resume at 7.00 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 4.58 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 7.00 p.m.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You may all be seated. Greetings to all of us this evening. The sitting is beginning again and I would like to request the last Member on the Floor to proceed.

MR P. ARIOKA: Thank you, Deputy Chair. My last statement before we went for a break, I was talking about the strategic thinking that will involve the combining of the Pa Enua and Rarotonga producers into this planning process of developing our agriculture Master Plan. But more importantly aiming to achieve quality and diversity in food production as well as offsetting importation of agriculture goods.

This planning is not going to be an overnight achievement nor is it not going to be a year outlook but a multiple year forecast. Therefore it is with a much better view that involves our partners the private section, the Pa Enua to be part of this planning process. Therefore it needs to be a plan developed by our people, owned by our people and delivered and benefit for our people.

It is for this reason that the agriculture plan will become an important one to show where Government intends to put its investment while achieving a higher return to those investments.

Therefore, Deputy Chairman I applaud the great support by the Opposition and the Honourable Member colleagues for the support in our Ministry budget.

Lastly, Deputy Chairman yesterday in Parliament I spoke passionately about the need for this Government to uplift low paid Government public servants across Government agencies. This increase of our Ministry budget is aimed towards those increases including the public servants who have stepped up on new roles and new responsibilities today and therefore, Deputy Chairman I acknowledge the comments raised by the Opposition and we will take that to heart. Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member, I can see the Honourable Minister for Agriculture Honourable Rose Brown.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Greetings to all of us this evening, greetings also to our people listening in and viewing us on the internet this evening. To all our Cook

Islands people in the Outer Islands and in New Zealand and Australia, greetings to you all this evening. Thank you to our Lord for giving us the strength to work hard in this House in the last few days, both sides in sharing their comments with the aim of assisting our people.

Deputy Chairman I would like to give acknowledgement to our people on Rarotonga and the Outer Islands who are working hard in the sector of agriculture as well as raising livestock. Those of you in the south that we have managed to visit in the past few months and what you have shared from all the sectors of the island - the Island Government, traditional leaders for assisting us in our review and as well as our people in the north. We look forward in the next few months to visiting you and two of our officials will be visiting you very soon to hold consultations with you in the north.

I show my appreciation to the Members who have shared their comments and thoughts on agriculture and on top of that the assistance from my Associate Minister Patrick Arioka. We both agreed that he will share all the technical information as we all know he has a lot of experience and has worked in the Department of Agriculture.

Therefore, I think I shall not be long because most of the information has been produced by our Associate Minister as well as special thanks to the Member of Parliament for Matavera for he has elaborated on all the background information on this appropriation before us.

I seek leave, Deputy Chair if I take time to greet my people of Atiu. Firstly to the bereavements we have faced on the island last few days for Mama Moe Nio because most of the people on Atiu do not really know this lady because she has lived for such a long time on Rarotonga. But this is her last wish to be returned to the island of Atiu and to be laid to rest. So may the warm blessing our Lord take care of the family as we travel through this time of bereavement.

Special condolences to our Member from Mitiaro for the passing away of one of his father figures during the last few days.

Special greetings to my parents my Mum and Dad listening in from the island of Atiu and in the past I have forgotten to acknowledge them but tonight I give them that recognition as well as to the rest of the people on the island of Atiu and to my beloved husband and our children, greetings to them all. In my electoral of Teenui/Mapumai from the old to the young, greetings to you all tonight.

Now I return to the appropriation I would like to thank the Secretary Marama Anguna and all the staff in the Ministry. In the short time our Secretary had been with us she had made some changes in order to boost the morale of the workers and also to adapt to the changes we are going through nowadays.

Not only here in Rarotonga but extends to the Pa Enua especially the Southern Islands because an Agreement was signed between us here in Rarotonga with the Island Governments and Council to work together on agriculture.

I come back to the comments made by the Members in the Opposition regarding soft loans from the BTIB as enquired by our people to assist with planting. Government has had discussions for funding to be set aside for this. And to those that had been approved funding to start vanilla growing, an arrangement was reached between Government, BTIB and BCI for the grower not to make repayments for 2 years as we know it takes a long time for the vanilla to be ready before harvesting.

We hear you about the vanilla being a long term crop and it will not be ready to harvest until after two years. I want our people to know that our Government and the Ministry of Agriculture are finding ways to assist you in your agriculture activity.

We can see an extra \$200,000 was appropriated for 2019/20 and \$100,000 allocation for each of those year. This is for the people who want to make a loan of \$5,000 to \$20,000. There is no security required for this loan. However you are required to submit a business plan to BTIB to look at and approve your loan.

I want to thank the Government and Cabinet because the plan here is for everyone to work together as a team so we can move forward. I believe that our people can hear of all the assistance that Government is giving especially for agriculture. I would like to remind our people that our local produce is the best food. The Ministry of Agriculture is working closely with the Ministry of Health to find ways to move forward.

The Associate Minister earlier talked about the Master Plan. This will be the plan for our Government and people to follow for 2019/20. An invitation was given in the local newspaper for anyone to make submission to the Ministry for the Master Plan. I am happy to report to this House that we have received many submission from the public for the Master Plan to improve our agriculture for the future.

In the WHO world conference there is an encouragement for the people to go back to our traditional medicine and the local natural green food. That is why I mentioned earlier that the Ministry of Agriculture is working together with the Ministry of Health.

We have a young man that is responsible for making the Te Tika health products that is being sold in the CITC main store. He will be attending the Health conference which will be held next month in July. He will do a presentation on reviving our traditional medicines and to encourage our people to eat our local food.

The science world has discovered that the soursop fruit is a medicine. This is one of the main objective of the Ministry of Agriculture to encourage our people to plant this fruit and other healthful plants, both on Rarotonga and the Outer Islands. We encourage our people to come and get the shoots and seedlings so that you can plant these around your homes. This is one way for us to give to our people to start planting in the homes before we take it to the market.

There are also plans for small gardening in our homes. This plan is targeting our women folks. This will be included in our Master Plan for Agriculture. We will find ways to assist our women in their small gardens. Our nursery is open to assist anyone in Rarotonga and those in the Outer Islands especially the seedlings. This has been

put on the website inviting our people to place their orders to the nursery in Arorangi and they will prepare these for you to pick up and grow yourself.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members we have run out of time allocated for this Vote Item. I will now put the question.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,343,762 for Agriculture stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

AUDIT OFFICE:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,129,154 for Audit/PERCA stands part of the Schedule?

The debate for this Vote Item will last for one and the half hours.

Do we have any speakers?

I see the Honourable Mark Brown, Minister of Finance you have the Floor.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Chairman. I just like to report on the progress of the Audit department over the last few years seeing as that has been some comments and concerns about the outstanding consolidated audit reports of the crown.

Just to clarify for the Members of the House before the Audit department provide consolidated audited reports they must first audit the individual Ministry and agencies account. About four years ago we were three years behind in our consolidated audits that was presented to parliament. At that time the accepted audit principles were the widely known as the GAPP – Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. This shifted to a new principle which was the IFRS - International Financial Reporting Standards.

Today I am happy to report to this House that every Ministry account except for one department is up to date. In December last year we completed the 2014 consolidated audited crown accounts. By the 30th of September this year the Audit department will be able to table before Parliament the consolidated audited report for 2015, 2016 and 2017. Which will bring us up to date.

There has been a huge shift in Ministries and agencies providing accurate and timely financial report to allow audit to take place. Now that we are starting to receive timely accounts the focus now to Ministries has been to shift the audits of their accounts from qualified audits to unqualified audits. Unqualified audits are what we are looking for and these are audits that give you a clean bill of health in terms of your financial reporting.

So, this has been a huge improvement in the financial reporting to allow audited accounts to be undertaken in a much more, timely manner but to make this process even more, timely and even more accurate, we have invested millions of dollars into a new financial management information system.

With the support of the Government of New Zealand we have been able to invest over \$3 million into this new financial management information system which is now starting to be rolled out and implemented amongst our different Government agencies. What this means is we can now obtain information to produce accurate financial accounts at the push of a button.

Right now the team that we have assembled that have been in place for two years now rolling this out through our Government agencies are training and upskilling those people who will be using this new finance management system in the different agencies.

The one thing that we have to do and invest some money in to really ensure that this system is effective is in terms of the cable network that is required to be able to centralise all Government agencies through the fibre network that we have.

But really it comes down to the efficiency of our systems which causes either the timeliness of our audit reports or the delays in our audit reports and I liken this Mr Deputy Chairman to our water system.

The investment that we've put into our water system will mean that once it's completed the days of having dirty water or no water will be a thing of the past and this is the same with our finance and data and information collection. Once we have the system in place the days of delays in audited reports will be a thing of the past because we are not just talking about Government Ministries, we are also talking about Island Government agents. We're talking about SOEs. We are talking about anything that receives Crown funding.

They must produce a financial report and this must be fed into the accounts that the Audit Department will consolidate to provide the consolidated financial accounts for the whole of the Crown.

If you were to ask the Ministry of Finance today how much does the Government spend on fuel or how much does the Government spend on stationary, we wouldn't be able to tell you. We wouldn't be able to tell you without going through every Government Agency accounts manually and taking out the information on their expenditure on those specific line items

This was the nature of the Public Sector Reform that we undertook back in 1996 when every Government Agency was responsible for its own accounts and ran them like a business. Now the pendulum has swung the other way and we are looking now at centralising the financial functions of all Government Ministries.

So, this is the nature today of our Audit Department and the appropriation that we have put in here. There has been an increase in the Audit Office as there has been

with all other agencies as a result of the Government's increase of public service salary bands across the board.

I am hopeful Mr Deputy Chairman that when I stand here again this time next year, we will have up-to-date audited accounts to be able to present to the House and to the Members. I look forward to that happy day next year.

Thank you Mr Deputy Chairman.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister. I see the Honourable Member for Matavera, Vaitoti Tupa.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you to you Deputy Chair tonight.

Deputy Chair, I am pleased with this allocation for Audit because they have considered the payment for salaries for workers. When you compare this to the allocation of last financial year to this year, there is an increase of \$50,000.

I am pleased to hear the comments by the Minister of Finance regarding the audit reports today because as he said we are expecting that by the 30 September this year, all audit reports will be up-to-date. Because I see this in the days I was working for the National Environment Service.

When I look at the reports compiled by Audit, there is a statement by the auditors whether it says, qualified or unqualified. I believe in those years for us in Environment during the years between 2005 and 2007 our audit reports were qualified. My understanding at the time was that, if your report is qualified, it means a good report but these people advised us and said no. A qualified report is not good and I am talking about the years between 2005 and to 2008.

Through the clarifications by the staff of Audit, when I realised then that unless your report is unqualified, it is a good report. I do believe that people who led agencies like Environment in previous years, their belief were the same in that if your report is qualified, it is regarded a good report. However, it was explained to prove that your efforts were productive you must receive an unqualified report.

I am very pleased when I look at the allocation as well as the Estimates for the years 2020-2021 and going forward. I believe these increments will be able to encourage our workers within these departments to do their work properly.

Firstly, let us look at ourselves within this Parliament House. I was advised last year that this Parliament has been in the situation of qualified reports for almost 30 years. I would like to report that the report that Audit produced for Parliament in the year 2017-2018 is for the first time unqualified and I believe for the year 2018-2019 the audit report should start here at Parliament before it moves out to other agencies.

I believe this is what the people want to know about what we are doing here in Parliament and I do believe this is what the people are looking for the audit report on our Appropriation and expenses that it should be unqualified.

So, to our people, an unqualified audit report shows good management of funds and processes and I do believe that Parliament will be the first agency to be audited for the year 2018-2019.

We will now come back and look at the work that Audit has completed during this time, if we look at the work they conducted from 31st March 2019, under these letters these are work that they have completed. Audit one is the audit of phase two of the Green Climate fund, this is a special audit conducted on 31 January 2019. As well as an audit on Payment On Behalf Of Crown (POBOC) and this is a performance audit conducted on 2 March 2018.

We look at the audit done for the Punanga Nui Market on 30 August 2017 when this conducted and completed on 23 February 2018.

We look at the National Environment Services during that time, they conducted an audit on the procedures within the National Environment Services and completed on 7 February 2018.

An audit on the Environment Impact Assessment and this audit was conducted on performance on 4 September 2017.

An audit was done within Infrastructure Cook Islands on procurement compliance and this was conducted on 22 March 2017.

An audit was also conducted on the Corrective Services in May 2018. I would like to highlight these as examples of the work conducted by the staff of Audit to show what they are doing as they approach the situation of timely audits and to balance the reports of the Ministries.

As the Minister of Finance said we are all looking forward to the time that by next year all Audit Reports will be current up to the year 2020. But I am happy at the estimates for next year for this agency. This will serve to encourage and strengthen the work in Audit.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I will interrupt you Member, your time is up. I see the Leader of the Opposition, Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Greetings to all of us this evening. I stand to share my thoughts on the debate on the Audit Office. I am pleased at the explanation by the Minister for Audit at the beginning of the debate especially in regard to the options for the future. I would like to speak on the reason why there is a need to audit our accounts every year.

We recall in April in the last sitting when I mentioned Government audit reports that have not been completed. Then I mentioned eight years however, the Minister then corrected me in April and there were only four outstanding.

The reason why I am asking because under our Constitution the Audit Office is in breach for not providing updated audit accounts and it is not appropriate in my mind for this to continue or for us to turn a blind eye and not to fix this problem.

However, when I look at the explanation from Audit my heart has soften somewhat. I realise that Audit is working hard to bring their audited accounts up to date even though they can audit an account as long as it is given to them from MFEM. We are all aware as explained by the Minister that the Audit Office is unable to complete an audit report until the final accounts are presented from the agencies.

I understand during my years on the Pearl Authority Board even then the account of the Pearl Authority Board I believe were three years in arrears and not audited. However, the reason given in those days why this happened was the capacity and the personnel and skill level in Audit was not strong enough to conduct comprehensive audits. However when I look at the situation within Audit now there is about 24 employees there.

I am a bit bemused when they put in their report under the heading “Significant Achievements and Milestones” and they listed this catching up of reports under significant achievement and milestones. The way I look at it, these are audits overdue by years, and they have supposed to have done it back then. So, this cannot be classified as significant achievement and milestones because they have been late.

I am pleased as the Minister elaborated that there is a new process whereby at the press of a button you get all the information. We all know I am no accountant but when you gauge from the comments it looks like it is a better system than the previous manual system we used to have.

But I am suspicious that this is not the only reason why this system has been quickly put in place, I am sure that the Minister has been affected by complaints raised by the Opposition as to where are these accounts. If that is the case then so be it let’s all move forward.

There is one part that I am looking throughout the document and I notice there is no report from PERCA because under our Constitution an independent body has been established called PERCA. Their responsibility is to look at complaints raised in areas of Government agencies. I remember during the time when I was a Member on this Board and our chairman then was the late John Kennings.

The process in those days when a complaint was raised about a Government agency and the way they conduct their business. First the complaint was lodged with PERCA and they will deliberate on it and then a report will be tabled in Parliament. The work conducted by PERCA in terms of investigation, includes the questioning of people and these will be collected and collated into a final report to Parliament.

Maybe the Minister can further explain on this and whether this body is still in existence or no longer functioning.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. And I see the Honourable Minister Mark Brown.

HON. M. BROWN: Yes, the PERCA Board is very much an active and important part of the audit process. The current chair of the PERCA Board is Geoff Stoddard

and this Board is tasked with the review of special audits or the ordering of special audits and the receipts of any complaints by anybody regarding Government agencies.

They have been responsible for providing reports to this parliament on a regularly basis. And I am sure if the Honourable requested we would be able to provide a list of all the audited reports provided by PERCA over the last couple of years on very specific investigations that they have conducted on complaints that have been laid to them.

And I have to say that other than the appointment of the members on the PERCA Board the Minister has very little involvement with this particular body. And the reason for that is, so that the PERCA Board can operate independently in pursuing investigations and conducting its work.

And to be clear the PERCA Board does not report to the Minister, it reports to Parliament and as pointed out there independence is essential and they provide check and balances in our Government operations.

I am very happy to answer any more questions that the Members may have regarding the PERCA. Thank you.

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

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I am happy to hear Honourable Minister that the PERCA Board is still here. My understanding the reason for the existence of the PERCA Board is a good reason. I do agree with the explanation that this is an independent body and the Minister does not interfere with the work of the board. If the PERCA Board is still doing their independent investigation and continuing their work, I think it is a good thing. If Geoff Stoddard is the Chairman, that is also a good thing.

I have one more question, maybe you are able to answer. During our time the problem was when we table the report to Parliament it is put on the shelf and remains on the shelf and we do not hear about it again.

My question then is can the Minister confirm when the report is tabled to Parliament are the recommendations carried out. I believe if the recommendation are done then the work of the Board is worthwhile.

I want to look at the forecast estimate for 2020/2021, 2022/2023. You were saying that hopefully next year we will have a new financial system. I system you described that only requires a push of a button.

My second question is why you require the big allocation for personnel when you in fact have streamlined the whole process.

My third question is on page 13 of the Budget Book under significant achievements and milestones. I want to understand what will happen next Honourable Minister. Does that mean at our next Parliament the estimates for the years 2014, 2015, 2016,

2017 and 2018 audited accounts? Is that when Parliament will then have the benefit of reading these financial reports.

Before I sit down, I have one last question. Usually when a lawyer asks a question they already know the answer. I want to assure you Honourable Minister that I do not know the answer to this question that is why I am going to ask you.

Who does the audit of the Audit Office? Who audits the Auditor? Thank you very much Honourable Minister for your answers.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member for your good questions.

It looks like there are no more speakers. Can I call the Minister responsible to wrap up?

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you, Mr Chairman. These questions are very easy to answer.

Firstly, the recommendations of the audit reports are recommendations and they provide the basis for relevant agencies to take action on them. So, if it's a financial matter the recommendations will provide a guidance for the Ministry of Finance to take action as required under the Ministry of Finance Act.

If in the course of investigating a complaint that the recommendation finds criminal doings then that provides the basis for either Crown Law or the Police to undertake actions under the Crimes Act. And if the findings are of such a nature that they do not warrant any sort of sanction or any sort of punishment then that recommendation is available to all Members of the House when the report is tabled.

Which brings me to question three – the tabling of the reports. I believe the consolidated audited crown accounts for 2014 have been tabled in this House. I believe if you want something to send you to sleep you just need to read that tonight.

But as the audit office and the audit director advised me the audited reports for the crowns account for 2015, 2016 and 2017 will be completed by the 30th September of this year.

So, I expect those reports to be delivered to Parliament ready for tabling at the subsequent Sitting of Parliament once they are received. So, hopefully the Members will be able to look through them before the end of this financial year in June next year which brings me to the second question on personnel. If we are having this wonderful system, why do we still need to employ so many people?

We still need these numbers because I can tell you with the numbers we have we are three years behind. The system will speed up the process but we still definitely need staff at the Audit Office and they are currently short of staff now and any young graduate with a finance degree/accounting degree would walk straight into a job at the Audit Office.

As it is with the high demand of qualified finance people in the private sector we are having to import qualified auditors to work in our Audit Office from overseas and if we were to match the salaries being offered by the private sector companies, we would again have to boost the personnel for the Audit Office. And this is the challenge when you do a Budget. If you are going to boost the money for one agency you are going to reduce it for another agency.

Unfortunately we do not have a magic bucket of money that you can just take money out and put in there and take it out and put in there. It just keeps filling itself up. We don't have that. So, the last time we tried to do this was back in 1995 and that's when the country went into a financial crisis. It spent more than it earned.

However, moving to the last question then as to who audits the auditor? I know that the Audit Department employs and engages outside auditors like KPMG to do certain work and I am sure that when I pose this question to the Director, he will be able to provide me with an answer so that I can answer that question to you tomorrow.

I do believe we understand all the questions posed concerning the Audit Office.

Thank you very much.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I now put the Question. The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,129,154 for Audit stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

CROWN LAW:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,257,075 for Crown Law stands part of the Schedule?

The debate for this Vote Item will last one and a half hours. Can I ask the Member for Matavera? Oh, sorry, I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

Sorry, Honourable Prime Minister because I always believe it's the Member from Matavera that always speaks first.

The Floor is yours Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you very much Mr Chairman and greetings to us all this evening including our listeners out there. Maybe you are used to the Member of Parliament from Matavera first getting up all the time. I wasn't aware that he was a lawyer.

I do believe this Vote Item won't take a long time but I stand here because I want to make some comments about this.

Firstly, I would like to speak about a lady I would say is the foundation of this office for a long time - 30 plus years. She is Dorothy Ivaiti a mama from Matavera. She has worked for a long time in this office and in excess of 30 years.

Last Friday she retired from work. I do believe the Office of Crown Law had planned a farewell function for her and I am waiting for a phone call to let me know when it is.

However, I want in the presence of our people listening in to pay tribute to this lady. I would say that this mama is a mother figure for the staff in this office. It is sad but there is a time for everything to come to an end.

So, Mama Dorothy as our listeners are listening in tonight, I on behalf of all of us and those in this House would like to acknowledge and honour you for your time and service to our country. May your retirement be happy but don't relax too much.

Mr Chairman, I would like to come back to our estimates for this office. I can see there is a big increase of allocation for the Crown Law and the increase is on remuneration of personnel. I would like to explain why it is like that. There is a new Solicitor-General in this office and he commenced work at the end of last year. He took over from Mr David James.

Mr Stuart Baker is a lawyer from the north of New Zealand and is originally from England. He married a New Zealand lady and they have children. When the position for a Senior Crown Counsel was advertised last year, he was the successful applicant so ended up in the Cook Islands. I do believe he is carrying out his job with integrity and honesty as the Solicitor-General.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I am interrupting you Prime Minister. Our time is up for suspension.

Parliament is suspended until 9.00 p.m. tonight.

Sitting suspended at 8.29 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 9.00 p.m.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All be seated please. I give the Floor to the Prime Minister to continue speaking.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you, Chair. I was talking about our new Solicitor General before we took a break and his name is Stuart Baker. The way I see it this friend is very good for this position.

We know that the Office of the Crown Law is the adviser to the Government on all matters on law. What I have seen in the last few months that we have been through as soon as a request is given the advice is received quickly. This is only right because we need good advice to guide us.

I was speaking to the increase in the budget for Crown Law. I give my thanks to Cabinet for approving this increase before it was presented to the House. Previously there wasn't many lawyers in this office but now under the guidance of this new Solicitor General he has completed his plans on how many lawyers he requires in the Office to enable them to provide the advice to Government when requested.

And the system right now in the Crown Law Office is that he is the Head followed by the Deputy Solicitor General and below them are two Senior Crown Counsel and below that there are three junior Crown Counsels. I am appreciative of the fact that one of our own girls is one of the Senior Crown Counsels.

I am grateful and we hope that one of our own shall attain the top post and this is one way for us to encourage and push her forward. This does not mean she's the only one, we've had others of our own young people before but before they reach the top they move to other employment. I do believe that during the term of our young people in this office they shall reach the top positions.

I would like to touch upon thoughts that we should consider. I heard mentioned before us in this House the mention of this prisoner that conducted a shooting where two people died. I do not want to dwell deeper into this issue however, I would like to look at those who guard these prisoners.

We are aware of the review conducted by two persons, one of our own the former Commissioner of Police, Bobby Matapo and another person from overseas conducted an investigation into this incident. Weaknesses became apparent in the care of these prisoners.

My biggest concern right now is there is a law suit being filed against Government. I am not saying that I am troubled with the fact that a case has been filed but my concern is with those who did not do their job properly in taking care of these prisoners.

My concern is although these Government workers they did not do their work properly however if a problem arises then they are not the one that faces these issues. The Government and the people of this nation will pay for their mistakes.

There is now a case being taken up in the International Court of Arbitration in the UK on a similar incident involving our Ministry of Health. We recall that there was a Medical School proposed before to be set up at the Rakahanga Hostel, St. Mary's Medical School.

This initiative got into trouble and now our Government is being sued. We have expended so much money, millions and we await for the final result of this investigation in Britain and waiting for the weight of the penalty.

There is only one reason why this happened for the haphazard work conducted by these senior officials without seeking proper legal advice. They walked away scot free. To me that's not right and not fair. Why do the people have to pay for their mistakes and why don't they pay for it.

Maybe the Leader of the Opposition have thoughts on this, this is a critical issue. To me we have reached the limit whereby these people who conduct these mistakes shall pay for their mistakes. Why do they have to walk away scot free and leave it to their employer the Government of the Cook Islands to pay for their mistakes?

We should know Members of this House and our people, these are not isolated incidents. It is happening over and over again in our Public Service. Some don't care from their mistakes because they know the Government will pay for it. So, I would like to pose this question for us to deliberate because I know our people are listening because these are not simple mistakes. They are now coming back and taking funds and pay from the Government from the people's fund.

The Office of Crown Law has so many responsibilities under the law. They correct and review our Bills that we are deliberating in this House. They advise and assist the Police in legal matters and they also stand and represent the Government in Court. That all takes time and resources.

I am heartened as the Attorney General that sufficient funds are being provided for them to carry out their responsibilities and I know they are doing their best. So, I am seeking our support on this allocation. Those are two thoughts I have put before us and please give your thoughts. Thank you Chair.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister, I recognise the Honourable Member from Matavera.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you very much, Deputy Chair. Firstly I would like to support the comments made by the Prime Minister on this mother of ours this lady who have worked for so long in the Crown Law Office, Mrs Dorothy Ivaiti. I have met her after her retirement and throughout this time she is conducting some small business at home.

Therefore I would like to give my thanks and appreciation and acknowledgement to this lady on behalf of all of us. When I was the head of the Environment Service she was working in Crown Law. In those days when I was promoting a Bill that is the 2003 Environment Act this was one good lady that assisted in the development of this Bill.

Later on, when our friend the Member of Parliament from Pukapuka, Tingika Elikana became the Solicitor General she was still working in this agency.

This is what I know of her service to the country in the Crown Law office. I extend to her my greetings and thanks on behalf of myself, my wife and family as well as the Matavera CICC church of which she is a member of.

I now come back to the allocation for Crown Law and to inform the Prime Minister that I do support all these allocations. It has increased the salaries and have empowered the staffs of this agency.

The thought that I would like to bring to all of Mr Deputy Chairman is what I have mentioned in our last sitting. When I consider what the Government in those days

established and proposed and that is to bring all that have legal qualifications under one body the Crown Law. Maybe this one area that is being considered by the Minister for Crown Law.

I believe this is one area to make sure that we have adequate people with legal qualifications living in the Cook Islands. I recognise advertisement in the newspaper put forward by the Environmental Services and they are seeking expertise in policy and legal advice. I do realised that there is a need for them to source for these expertise in this area because there is a need to review the 2003 Environmental Act.

When we consider the Seabed Mineral Act in this Act there is a provision included under EIA. This has been included in the Seabed Mineral Act. I want to inform the House that there was a time when the Seabed Mineral Bill was being developed. The Commonwealth Secretariat did the review of the Bill. This new legislation was in line with this Seabed Minerals Act.

This is one thing that I want us to understand our Environmental agency is looking at establishing a new Environmental Act. That is why I stand to highlight the need for us to work together to complete this two legislation the Seabed Minerals Act as well as the 2003 Environmental Act. This is not the only case there is also the Infrastructure Bill. There is a need for this two legislation to align one with the other.

I bring this to us so that we will appreciate the work that is being conducted and assisted by the Crown Law office to achieve these important work of Government. That is what I would like to bring to all of us to show my support for this appropriation Mr Prime Minister and the problems with the litigation overseas.

This is a significant amount of funds and we are looking at millions of dollars. I would like to highlight to all of us the impact these things are causing on the funds of our people. Our support is required to ensure that this does not happen again. That is all I have to say, Deputy Chairman.

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

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Kia Orana to all of us Honourable Members. It will not be long before we adjourn for the evening. Let us remain patient until then.

I stand to put forward my thoughts on this allocation for the Crown Law Office. When we look at this allocation it is divided into three parts. The advice that this office gives to Government, the litigation in the court and then the drafting of legislations. When we look at their allocation, 40 percent is for the legal advice to Government, 30 percent for litigation and 30 percent for drafting.

We must understand that under the litigation and drafting sometimes the Crown Law gives this work to lawyers outside the office. If a litigation case is difficult Crown Law will engage a lawyer outside the office. I don't consider this a bad thing because if you consider the task difficult it is better to get someone outside who are able to do the work.

The Prime Minister has just explained the work done by Crown Law and the staff responsible to do the various responsibilities. I am one who fully support the employment of our own young people who are to complete their university studies, we must knock on their doors and offer employment here at home.

I know that last year the Crown Law office was on a scouting mission to employ staff not only from universities but some of our people that has worked in the legal field overseas. When I heard this news I was happy because we should bring our own people in the legal field back home.

We all know that another part of my life is that I am a lawyer and I always try to employ our own people. Today all the practicing lawyers in my law office are all women. If you apply and you are a woman you are recruited straight away. If you apply and you are a man, I will first interview you.

I strongly support the new Solicitor General that the Prime Minister was mentioning in his speech. Since the previous Solicitor General has gone back to his home country and is not listening to this parliament. I want to say something about him.

I am glad that his contract is not renewed. I have met the new Solicitor General and I agree that he is a good appointment.

And I believe he will do his job fairly although when I went to meet him, I could see he favours the Government.

I know a few days before our Parliament convened, the Procedure Note was emailed to us for the first day of the Sitting which was Tuesday. He was so quick to respond to the email informing what should be done and what not to do. This is the type of support that we need to all the Members of Parliament.

The only sad thing I would say about our new Solicitor General is that, when I went to see him, he was in his office. It was a huge office located in an old building. There was no air condition and it was very hot which does not provide a good working environment for the Solicitor General.

The Solicitor General is a lean man. The fact that there is no air condition makes him look sick. Therefore, I would like to ask the Attorney General that if he thinks this Solicitor General is a good man, by all means, look after him so that he will think of resigning in the days ahead.

The new Solicitor General sometimes works out of his office but most of his work is done in their office.

If we can recall the former Solicitor-General, he was the one that went to the Court of Appeal and criticized the Constitution of the Cook Islands. He sounded foolish as well as the Attorney General.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Member, your time is up.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: The Prime Minister previously mentioned about the claims against Government. With regards to the claim about the prisoner, I would like to leave that issue until we come to the Vote Item for the Corrective Services then I will express my views.

With regards to the issue about Health, I did hear about the Medical School but I don't know the details of the claims against Government. But even then, I think what will be difficult for us is, unless of course we change the law. We know that if you're the employer and your employee does something wrong, you the employer will be sued. Although the employer did not authorise for that certain activity, but because this person is your employee, you face the consequence.

I think this is appropriate especially with employers who have no idea what is happening, but as I understand our law at the moment, for example if a lawyer in my company Browne Harvey gave the wrong advice, I'm the one that will be sued. Even though I was not involved in the mistake that was done, unfortunately, that's the process.

I do believe however that this is an issue that needs careful scrutiny because we don't have a bottomless bucket. If we get sued, our rainy day supply will be exhausted. So it is only right that we discuss about this issue. On one side, if you are a good employee and you made an unintentional mistake, in that situation the employer should take some liability in looking after this matter.

Before I conclude, I would like to say that this is an important Ministry. It is a Ministry that gives the Crown advice and the Government needs to have an office that is excellent at providing that service.

But before I sit down, I have one question Mr Prime Minister. If the Opposition Office wants some advice, because the Opposition Office is funded by the Crown and under the Public Service Act, the Office of the Opposition is an Agent because it doesn't fit anywhere else. Why is the Crown Law Office not available to the Opposition Office for advice in the same way as other Government Departments? That is my first question.

My second question is, if the Crown Law Office is giving advice to Parliament, and I am talking about the Speaker and the Clerk, they being neutral people, why isn't that opinion or advice made available to another branch of Government, the Opposition?

I heard someone say – I think I know who it is – we are not neutral. No, we're not neutral but I am talking about neutral people being or supposed to be neutral people being the Speaker and the Clerk.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much Honourable Member, Tina Browne.

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

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you. Our meeting is very good this evening even though the Leader of the Opposition is almost falling asleep. I would like to suggest that we go up until midnight tonight.

No, seriously, I would like to say thank you very much to the Opposition for your support for this Appropriation. There is no doubt that the Office of the Crown Law is a very important office. I would also like to remind us that it is a very impartial and independent office. It has to be. Under the oath of the lawyers, they are directly responsible to the Court, not to the Government of the day.

To answer the good questions raised by the Leader of the Opposition, firstly, the question is correct because we all benefit from one bag of money. However, I would like to ask the Solicitor General tomorrow why the system is like that. But I think the main reason is because most times the advice you need will conflict to the advice given to Government because Crown Law works for the Crown and that's the perception there, they are responsible to the Crown first and foremost.

So, maybe then sometimes the issues or questions that you refer to Crown Law for advice, it will have a negative impact on the Crown. But I will be very interested to hear from the Solicitor-General tomorrow.

The second question, this is a good question because I have always thought that this Office of the Parliament, they should have their own independent legal adviser because they are supposed to be independent, independent from Government and from the Opposition, which means then they should not seek advice from an agency that has the Crown as its main client.

So, I will support the proposal that we look for an independent legal advisor for the Parliament in order to avoid any perception of any conflict of interest. Maybe when I leave politics you will appoint me to be the lawyer of Parliament. But this is a very important issue and thank you for raising it tonight but again I will approach the Solicitor General tomorrow morning and ask him for his views and I will come back to the House. Again thank you for your support for this appropriation.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister for the Crown.

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

That the sum of \$1,257,075 for Crown Law stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,976,507 for Cultural Development stands part of the Schedule?

The debate for this Vote Item will last one and a half hours. Now I can see the Honourable Minister George Angene.

HON. G. ANGENE: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I am happy to rise to give my views on the Appropriation Bill for Cultural Development. Greetings to all our people out there listening on the radio and also on our TV live streaming, Kia Orana and greetings.

I would like to extend my acknowledgement to our two staff from the Ministry of Cultural Development doing all the media coverage for the Parliament. I believe that the payment that is given to them during the night sitting is not a time off but as overtime and fully paid. So therefore I will confirm with you that I will make the move for your full payment and not time off.

Mr Chair, I again say greetings to you and all our people listening in on the radio, our people in the Outer Islands and of course here in Rarotonga.

I can recall a few islands that came down during the last Te Maire Nui, when it was time to return, they complained and bad mouthed Government saying there is not enough money for their return trip.

The knowledge and assistance from the Minister Tapaitau they returned home to their islands with the cost of fares divided between the Ministry of Culture and Minister Tapaitau's Ministry.

Since that time Mr Chair, I together with the Secretary of Culture Anthony Turua have approached and requested Government to improve and increase the estimates to iron out any problems that should happen during the Maire Nui. I am happy today in working together with MFEM, Cabinet have supported and given this budget for the Ministry.

Before coming to Parliament this evening I have just been at the National Auditorium to say farewell to our dance team that is representing us in Hawaii. I want also to extend thanks to the Cabinet for allowing the allocation of money to assist the team to Hawaii.

In this Ministry I can see the work in the Ministry is progressing well without any interference from anyone because every day I am there to see what is happening and if there is a slight setback I get worried.

I want to come away from the Ministry of Culture and I will touch upon what the Prime Minister mentioned earlier about the shooting incident. I want to assure us in this House that the portfolio was rightly given to me to look after and some people are nervous because I know the inside and outside of this place.

I can recall the first time I came into this House in the year 2010 and in the House there were two lawyers and maybe three teachers and they are all professionals and they believed that they have reached the top.

Mr Chair, I want to assure this House, I have been to a place where they can't get to and the place where they are going to, I can get there. And if they get there they won't get back in here, there is only one exception and that is George Maggie.

However I will put that aside for now until we debate on the Corrective Services and I will come back and touch base on that area again.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Minister and I see the Member of Parliament for Matavera, Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you Mr Deputy Chairman.

Well for me I do not want to go into that place, I might not be able to get out.

Deputy Chair on this allocation for Culture I really give my acknowledgement to the increase especially in personnel because I believe part of the reason for the increase in the appropriation is to adjust the personality and the positions within this Ministry.

In the paper today there are three vacancies that has been put out for those who are interested in these three areas. I see that they are three important sections stipulated in the newspaper and their responsibilities are quite difficult and important responsibilities.

I would like Deputy chair to return to the appropriation and in particular on the works that have been done and the works to be done.

I would like to highlight our language and under this section three hundred terms have been gazette under Reo Maori and this will assist us in the development of our Rarotonga language as well as to assist us under the area of historical sites because I know this is one area that has not been accomplished in previous years.

As we have seen some people have travelled to the Southern Group to look at historical sites. Under UNESCO, there's a programme on world heritage and these can be allocated under this section, and they have identified an area called MAUNGAROA to be listed under World Heritage.

That is why the Ministry of Culture Development is looking at these areas to be listed so they will be preserved.

When I look at computers and internet we have no assurance that none of these will break down. Under this section I know the Ministry of Culture Development is working closely with a Company in New Zealand to preserve these multi-media recordings.

I know that two staff members from the Ministry of Culture Development have been sent to this agency in New Zealand to be trained in preserving recordings. Here is one example today one of our old Papa Tangi Kapi because in the past he was a recorder of events. He used to film events in the past from investitures to sports and all sorts of events and I remember about five years ago he made a request to environment.

I worked closely with the Head of the Culture then Mr Sonny Williams because we know some of the recordings, the videos were damaged and together with my colleague Sonny Williams in those days we were aware in his collection included Northern Group islands, the Southern Group islands and amongst these were

recordings of investiture protocols, rituals and we knew then that four of these were damaged. These recordings were collected before the 1992 Festival of Pacific Arts.

If we consider that if these recordings, videos if they disappear they will be gone forever. I am very happy with the Ministry of Culture Development is doing in preserving these recordings for the future. We know that the video collection by this gentleman was about 200 and about a quarter of them were damaged.

I know one of the recordings he filmed include the investiture of the late Rongomatane Ada Ariki. I apologise to the island of Atiu I know this recording is lost. This is our responsibility to support this department in preserving this heritage for us. That's why I want to bring to the House the importance of the video recordings conducted some forty years ago. But what is heartening today that some of these have been preserved.

I would like to come back to an agency World Organisation called World Intellectual Property Organisation WIPO and in those days we were looking at preservation and copy writing our music, our songs and traditions. I want to assure you Deputy Chair that today what we record and produce some others are claiming copyright on this.

Here is an example in Tahiti French Polynesia today when you look at the performance of the dance produced by an elder Papa George Karaponga called the Mokora Duck, the duck dance because I want to assure you that the Tahitians are claiming this is there's. We can't help it because we did not have copy right.

When we look at a famous song composed by a composer Turepu Turepu and this beautiful song, *Enua Manea* I want to tell this House that in Hawaii some part of this song has been changed and these organisations have claimed ownership. The issue here is we cannot say no this is not there's.

This is what we need to do support the work under WIPO. How do we claim this as our own today.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

MR V. TUPA: The reason I raise this because I know that within the Ministry of Cultural Development especially the National Archives there are footage recordings from past years that has been preserved. What we need to do is strengthen the copyright Act within the Ministry of Culture Development. And this will serve to protect the song that you composed, the drum beats that you composed, traditional songs that you composed.

I can see today that our workers within the Ministry of Cultural Development is working hard on these. That is why they are making this request for the resources to help them preserve all these heritage for our future generations. I believe the collection of video footage from Papa Tangi Kapi will take about one to two years to be fully preserved.

This is going to be a difficult task because it was recorded on the old video and not today's DVD. That is why my request for us to support this request for these

appropriations. I want to assure us this is my passion, my culture in particular the culture of the Northern Group as well as the Southern Group because today, I see changes in these ways of life.

We are not only the ones conducting this tradition of drumming and dancing because I want to highlight to us that in one country one of their traditions is drumming and only drumming and that is Japan. Today I see some of these techniques have been included into our own drumming. At one point when I was in Japan I went to visit this exhibition on the culture of Japan. What I saw was there were 50 drummers and one person might have ten drums to himself.

This is their culture, their performance and I asked why they are doing this exactly what we are doing here. Because they have drum beats for war in the old days. They have drum beats for welcoming visitors, exactly what we are doing today because some of our drum beats and culture are disappearing.

When we look at the ritual of an investiture back in the old days each local community had their own drum beats for their own protocols or rituals of investiture. But the issue today is we are incorporating the drum beats from one island to use to conduct in the investiture on another island.

The concern here is none of these were recorded in the old days. I believe this is one of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture to revive these traditions and cultures. That is why I place high importance in the responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture, not only in preserving video footage but also reviving cultures and traditions.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member. Sorry I have to interrupt you.

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

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Deputy Chair.

I move:

**That the progress of the Bill through the Committee of Supply
be reported 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

Parliament is now resumed.

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

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

I am happy to report:

**That the Appropriation Bill is passing smoothly through the
Committee of Supply**

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Minister.

Thank you very much Honourable Members for your good work today. Further considerations in the Committee of Supply is an Order of the Day for the next Sitting day.

Honourable Members, we have come to the end of our meeting for tonight. Parliament will now adjourn until 9.00 a.m. tomorrow, Friday the 7 June 2019.

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance to say our closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

Parliament is now adjourned until 9.00 a.m. tomorrow, Friday 7 June 2019.

Parliament adjourned at 10.25 p.m.