



## FORTY-NINTH SESSION Hansard Report

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**TUESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2018**

**MADAM SPEAKER took the Chair at 1.00 p.m.**

**OPENING PRAYER**

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

I would like to thank our Pastor who has led us and who gave us a good message for today for us for our meeting in our House of Parliament.

Greetings to you all our Honourable Members who are present here in our Parliament today and greetings to our friends in the Gallery and to all our people listening in to our broadcast today we are giving our greetings to you.

**MADAM SPEAKER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There will not be much to say for this afternoon. There will be four names that I will be bringing up. Please, on our break at 2.30 p.m, if you Honourable Members can go and see Isaac Solomona for your photos. So if you, the Honourable William Heather, the Honourable Tama Tuavera, the Honourable Minister, Rose Brown and the Honourable Minister, George Angene report to Mr Solomona. If your names have not been mentioned, please try and finish this before our next meeting with the CPA.

Honourable Members, we will now go to Question Time which is for half an hour.

**QUESTION TIME**

I see the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera. You have the Floor.

**MR T. TUAVERA:** Thank you to you Madam Speaker. Greetings to all of us in this House today.

Madam Speaker, I have no question but to respond to what the Prime Minister said in his speech last night.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Was there a question asked to you by the Prime Minister?

**MR T. TUAVERA:** Yes. He asked about certain things and I just want to reply to that.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Those were not asked during Question Time. Question Time and reply is for Question Time. That was during the debate and you may be able to do that another time.

**MR T. TUAVERA:** Okay. I will turn it into a question then Madam Speaker.

The question was asked last night from the Prime Minister about our rugby field and this is the question.

Have you ever received any report from the ICI on this issue?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you Madam Speaker and thank you to the Honourable Member.

Even though it is just a made-up question for now, the answer is no. There was no report given to me by the ICI. This just came up while you were complaining about the roads in Ngatangiia. There is an answer and there will be something. Maybe it was not answered. This is the good thing. If you are thinking of it, make it happen. That's the only answer for you Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you.

I see the Honourable Te-Hani Brown.

**MISS T. BROWN:** I am not sure if this question is for the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Transport, but has the Government considered subsidising Air Raro flights because I am sure all the Outer Islands MPs will agree that the flights are really expensive?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you.

I see the Minister of Finance.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you Madam Speaker.

I have to say this is one of the most intelligent questions to come from the Opposition.

*(Much laughter)*

It takes the new and the youngest Member to come forward with this sort of thinking and it is my pleasure to be able to answer this question.

The short answer is yes. The Government has been concerned at the cost of travel between our islands, both for air transportation and also for sea transportation. And as the Members of the Opposition are already aware, Government has set aside half a million dollars a year to subsidise sea transportation. Our finance people have started the pilot project for the subsidy for sea transport, particularly for freight, and we are

hopeful that the information that we have gathered from the companies responsible will enable us to work out whether we need to put more money aside for subsidising sea transportation between our islands or if this is the most efficient way of delivering this service.

And of course we have also looked at the air transportation Madam Speaker. What ways can we make air transportation cheaper for our people? This is a difficult question Madam Speaker, because the subsidy is basically saying that you, the taxpayers of this country, will pay for the air fares of people who are travelling on Air Raro. Is that what our people want for their taxpayer's money to pay to make it cheaper for our people to fly between the islands?

This is a valid question and we have to look at whether this is a solution for us to subsidise air travel or do we look at other means like introducing competition as a means to reducing prices?

Let me just add, Madam Speaker, there is no obstacle or impediment to any other company wanting to come in and start a domestic airline but it comes down to the market and how much market share can be sustained by two companies and it appears that the market that we have for domestic air travel makes it difficult for a second company to come in.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable Member, William Heather.

**HON. W. HEATHER:** Madam Speaker, he has answered the question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister, you will be rounding up please.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Because it was a valid question, the answer has to be valid.

So definitely the question there is, we are looking at whether subsidy for air transportation is a valid way to help reduce costs for air transport.

Thank you very much.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** May I remind you, stand when you make a Point of Order. I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa, you have the Floor.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. My question I think will be for the Minister of Finance. I am talking about a company owned by Tim Tepaki and whether Government supports this company asking for money from the Chinese. I am not sure whether it is \$30 million or \$300 million. I am asking this question to the Minister if he can confirm whether Government supports the proposal by this company to the Chinese Government.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Can I clarify that the question is appropriate, is the Government responsible for that business.

**HON. H. PUNA:** No, Government is not.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** So if the Government is not responsible for that arrangement between a business and another business, it is not appropriate for this House to ask the question.

Only matters that involve the responsibility of each of our Ministers or each Member in this House, not responsibilities outside of their portfolios. You understand? So they are not obliged to answer that.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Madam Speaker, can I just add to that, the reason why the question is being asked?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Are you asking a supplementary question?

**MRS S. NAPA:** No, no, no I am just backing why he is asking the question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You can only ask questions that the Ministers have as their Portfolios or mandate of the Ministers within Parliament work or in their Ministerial Portfolios, not anything outside of that.

They cannot be responsible for business that is happening outside of their portfolios. If you look at your Standing Orders that's what it says. I see the Honourable William Heather, you have the Floor.

**HON. W. HEATHER:** My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister explain to this House about the cargo that was sent by air plane to Penrhyn. Is this cargo part of the cargo for the Te Maeva Nui?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable Minister George Angene you have the Floor.

**HON. G. ANGENE:** I think all of us in this House know that I am the Minister for Culture so ask the question to me. Yes, that is what the Ministry of Culture has done. Thank you.

**HON. W. HEATHER:** Supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Can the Minister of Culture tell us how much money was spent on this flight?

**HON. G. ANGENE:** On the question how much was spent on this flight, Honourable Member, finance is not my responsibility but it is my job to make sure that the work is completed.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable William Heather.

**HON. W. HEATHER:** Madam Speaker, the Minister authorised this plane to take this cargo, our people are listening to the debate in this House and it is only right that he tells us how much of the public funds were spent on the delivery of this cargo.

**HON. G. ANGENE:** Point of Order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** What is your Point of Order?

**HON. G. ANGENE:** It is about the charter of the plane, I am not clear what plane he is talking about.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I haven't given a ruling on the first Point of Order, I have to give a ruling on the Point of Order first. Can you both please be seated for now? Honourable Member William Heather it seems that the Minister is unclear what air plane you are speaking about, can you please clarify that.

**HON. W. HEATHER:** This is the chattered flight that took the left over cargo for Te Maeva Nui to Penrhyn. This cargo was taken on the plane and not by boat.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable George Angene.

**HON. G. ANGENE:** Madam Speaker, to answer the question from the Honourable Member for Ruaau, it is not a plane that took the left over cargo to Penrhyn but the cargo went on the barge and the cost of this cargo was 2.4 million dollars. The plane that he is talking about, \$274,471 was spent to transport passengers and not for cargo. That is the answer Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary question to the question that was asked. In the newspaper, it says that a plane will take the cargo to Penrhyn for free. This is the Te Maeva Nui cargo that was left behind. It will be taken by the plane this month.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Member your supplementary question is based on newspaper article.

**MRS S. NAPA:** It was based on the message from the Minister himself that went in the paper.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** If you read your Standing Orders you should not be quoting newspapers and media that has already been gone except facts. If you have some facts that that is what happened then you can ask questions like that. I give the opportunity to the Honourable Minister.

**HON. G. ANGENE:** To answer the question from the Member for Teimurimotia, when you travel to another island you will take cargo for yourself. It is not right that you will not take cargo with you.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Madam speaker, can I now ask the question to him if he can confirm that the charter flight that was planned for Penrhyn will carry cargo that will form part of the Te Maeva Nui unlimited, free cargo.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you and I see the Member of Tongareva.

**HON. R. TAPAITAU:** Just to answer the question from the MPs on the Opposition side, I think the questions are shambles. Firstly they come up with a plane charter going to Penrhyn to take free cargo for the Maire Nui which is incorrect.

The Minister George Angene said cargo for Te Maire Nui all went up on the last barge that just left so I do not know where the Members got these so called facts that they think they have. I think we should not believe everything we read in the paper because that was out of context, thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Let me remind you when you look at your Standing Orders on questions, you must be able to back up the information when you ask questions and not just hearsay from the newspaper but some facts to back up what you say. I see the Honourable Tetangi Matapo.

**MRS T. MATAPO:** Greetings to all of us this beautiful afternoon. My question is to the Minister for Telecommunications. We are now hearing about the Government's plans on the Manatua cable for Rarotonga and Aitutaki

My question therefore is, what is Government's plan to improve the standard of telecommunications on the Outer Islands apart from Aitutaki. Today the mobile phones on the island of Mangaia, you can only use it in certain parts of the island and not the whole island.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you and I see the Deputy Prime Minister.

**HON. M. BROWN:** This is a beautiful question raised by the Honourable Member of Tamarua. Before I answer her question, as Minister of Finance, relating to the previous question about a chartered flight to Penrhyn for freight, I can confirm there has been no payment made for any chartered flight for any freight.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Point of Order Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** What is your Point of Order Honourable Member?

**MRS S. NAPA:** The question posed to the Minister of Culture did not insist that whether the flight was paid, the question was, whether it formed part of the unlimited cargo from the Te Maeva Nui time and taken up to Penrhyn.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Point taken. Thank you.

Deputy Prime Minister please stick to the question.

**HON. M. BROWN:** It is good to be clarified. Thank you Madam Speaker.

In regards to the question on telecommunication, this is a very exciting development for our country with the cable. This is making available our access to internet and broadband worldwide through this new cable that would be put in. Currently, all of our islands including Managia are serviced by satellites and the intention is once the cable is connected to Aitutaki and Rarotonga, we will be able to enhance the satellite services to all of our Outer Islands. It is not just for personal use of the internet or

telecommunications but also for the delivery of Health services and Education services and a number of businesses yet to be developed here in our country with this new technology that will be investigated.

However, the question of the phone not working in Mangaia is probably a question better ask to the company that provides the service, and that is Bluesky. I am sure Bluesky will be able to provide an answer as to why the phones in Tamarua are not working. Thank you Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable Minister, you have two minutes.

**HON. G. ANGENE:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I have a question to the Leader of the Opposition or to the Honourable Member for Ruaau. You asked me a question earlier on so I would like to ask you a question.

Can you tell this Honourable House who your Leader is? We are unsure.

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

**HON. W. HEATHER:** Thank you Madam Speaker. To answer the question raised by the Honourable Minister George Angene, you addressed me as the Leader therefore you know who the Leader is.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Members. As we only have one minute, we will finish Question Time here and move on.

We will now go on to Orders of the Day.

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

Interrupted debate on the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill 2018.

When we adjourned last night after you did a wonderful long day of debate yesterday, the Honourable Prime Minister had the Floor. As the Prime Minister still has ten minutes left, I'd like to see if you would like to use your time.

The Prime Minister has declined his extra time I now open the Floor for debate on the Second reading of the Appropriation Bill. I recognise the Honourable Minister George Angene.

**HON. G. ANGENE:** Thank you so much Madam Speaker for giving me this opportunity to address this House and our people listening in. Before I express my views on the Appropriation Bill, I seek your indulgence Madam Speaker to convey my greetings to some people.

To all the people in the Northern Group Islands, the Southern Group Islands, Kia Orana to you all. To all those who in leadership role, Kia Orana to you all.

To the people in my constituency Tupapa/Maraerenga, to all the leaders in our village, greetings to you all as you listen to your warrior.

Kia Orana to you Madam Speaker and all your staff. To the Prime Minister of our country and the Deputy Prime Minister, to the Ministers of the Crown and to all Honourable Members on our side of the House, Kia Orana to you all. To the Leader of the Opposition and all the Honourable Members in the Opposition, Kia Orana also to you all.

Madam Speaker, in the past I used to identify the three Parties in our House as the Government side, the Opposition side and the Corrective side. Today, there is no Corrective side because I am now in the Coalition Government.

And to the young people of my village, Tupapa-Maraerenga from 16 to 17 years of age, on Sunday, please – I invite you all to a barbecue and a picnic at my place and I shall host you all.

Madam Speaker, I will now come back to the principles and the merits of the Appropriation Bill.

Madam Speaker, yesterday I listened to some negative views and yet last week the Opposition asked for us to help each other and work together. How can we provide the help if there is no peace? I have pledged to the Ministries under my portfolio to co-operate and work together for the betterment of all.

In accordance with the teachings of our Lord and Saviour "*I leave you peace and peace you shall grant amongst each other*" and yet yesterday there was a bit of a battle going on. That's why I am saying Madam Speaker this doesn't sound quite right because my life today is all about helping, a life of giving. This is what I've been taught. This is what I've been taught by my teacher, my mentor sitting behind me – our Prime Minister, the Honourable Henry Puna. If we are able to unite in peace we will be able to provide.

I would like to thank the Government of today because, Madam Speaker, I'm sure all of us in this House, have heard me speak in the past. When I was a Member of the Corrective side of the House, when it comes to the time of the Appropriation of this country, I always say that this Appropriation is like a pot of stew.

Madam Speaker, my heart is so joyous today when I see this huge roasted pork on my table. To my people listening in, there's substantial roasted pork that has been given to my Department - \$3 million worth without any interruptions. I acknowledge and thank the Ministry of Culture represented in this House to come and listen to their Minister. Thank you to these two staff from the Ministry of Cultural Development.

Madam Speaker, this is the reason I supported this Appropriation because of this beautiful piece of pork. However, Minister of Finance, when we shake hands with our five fingers it represents \$5 million for the next budget. I want the whole roasted pig, not just part of it.

To my Department, the Corrective Services, I don't quite agree with this name Madam Speaker because this is an English name. So in the coming days I shall sit and discuss with the heads and managers of this Service to find a Maori name for these two departments.

So, Madam Speaker, I have eleven more minutes but because this pork tastes so good I will not end here.

I just want to thank my good friend, Nooroa Baker, the Honourable Member of Akaoa. I want to share a short story so that you will all know about our long relationship and how we became to be Members in this House. During our time at school, we were in the same class from Grade 1 to Grade 6 and it ended there. He went into the forestry in New Zealand and I went to the forestry up in the hill. When he returned from the forest on that side he had papers and qualifications. One of those qualifications was on tree cutting. Likewise myself, when I returned from the forest in Tokerau, I also had qualifications. I know his qualification is on cutting trees and felling wood but my one is BAM – Bachelor of Action Man.

This is our close association. We never separated. He played rugby for Avatiu, I played rugby for Tupapa and the ball in those days was round. Today, we are playing ball again but this time, in this House.

My friend – greetings to you. You are not too late to join me so we are in the same team, the A Grade team.

I would like to ask the Opposition for us to work together so we can provide assistance for the future because, Madam Speaker, comments have often been made by Members on both sides of the Corrective and the Opposition in that we cannot achieve anything for our constituencies if we are not in Government. I assure you, Madam Speaker, these words don't sound well in the ears of some people. If I am able to achieve some of my goals when I was in the Corrective side, then why can't you do likewise? That's why I said that if you need help today ask for it and you shall be given.

Our need today is to pass the Appropriation Bill for our country. It is not the Budget for the Cook Islands Party. This appropriation is for the whole country and we should all support because, our workers are collecting money, the old pensioners are collecting funds and likewise the children and the old people, mothers with new born babies and the disabled. So much assistance is provided for our people and therefore it is only right that we should all support this appropriation. This is my request to the Opposition.

I only have five minutes remaining but I will end here Madam Speaker. May our Lord and Saviour help us all for the future. God bless.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you and I see the Honourable Tetangi Matapo. You have the Floor.

**MRS T. MATAPO:** Greetings to us all in this Honourable House. Madam Speaker and your staff including the Interpreters and all the Members of this House, greetings.

Madam Speaker, before I speak on the Appropriation Bill may I please take some time to address my people.

I would like to say thank you very much to the people of Mangaia for lending their support during the bereavement of our mother, our traditional leader, Numangatini Ariki. I thank you all in the name of our Lord and Saviour. I also thank the people of the Cook Islands, on Rarotonga and in the Pa Enua for giving us your support. On behalf of the family I wish to extend to you all our sincere thanks and acknowledgement to everyone who paid your respects to the family on her passing.

Greetings to my people on Mangaia, my people from the village of Tamarua. Our Pastor who is residing in New Zealand today because of your ill health – may God take care of you.

To the three pillars on the island – the Government, religion and traditional leaders – greetings to you all. To all the elders, mothers and fathers and all our youth and children – greetings to you all. We are well here in Rarotonga and please listen in to our radio.

A Bible verse says, “*It is not us that love Him but Him that loves us.*” I listened to all the views from all Honourable Members and especially from Government, there are some good plans that we can benefit from. However, there are some initiatives that will expend the funds of this country.

An Honourable Member mentioned yesterday that, “This is the people’s Budget.” One is saying there is a surplus and it conjures images of an overflowing cup and I believe this cup is overflowing everywhere and not just on one side. So I would like to thank those clever and wise people who have put our appropriation together, until today as you display your wisdom on this Appropriation.

Firstly, I want to touch upon the appropriation for Agriculture. I thank you for the new initiatives in this allocation. Therefore, as you have said, when we knock please open the door. I would like to mention about the shade houses for the vanilla plant. I brought these views in previous years to the previous Minister, for shade houses for vanilla on the island of Mangaia because today vanilla grows in abundant on Mangaia but it hasn’t been cared for like you do in Rarotonga in a shade house.

Secondly, I would like to touch upon the lands for agricultural purposes for our people. Today we are seeking assistance to fence the taro planting areas in my constituency. I do believe we have the number one taro from Mangaia but today roaming pigs and goats are damaging the crops of our planters. So maybe not today, maybe the next day I will visit you Honourable Minister.

As well as farming for animals on our island, especially in our village, pigs just roam around. So if you want a whole pig Minister George, it’s all in Tamarua. This is one situation in which the people need help today and these are our thoughts. When our water system is completed, we need an abattoir to slaughter our animals. The thoughts I am putting forward are all in our Mangaia Puna Plan.

I am also happy to see the allocation for our elderly in our Appropriation. Mangaia has an aging population. That's a fact. In my own village there are more elderly from 50 years to 100 than the youth from 19 years to 30. Therefore the first problem is the caretakers for the elderly. Like we have heard in past days there are no caregivers. Maybe through this allocation it will encourage caregivers to look after our people including those who have returned from New Zealand.

Secondly, today we have a programme of taking care of the elderly. One day a month we bring them all together and meet each other and entertain themselves. Therefore Minister responsible I would like to request for support because we are fund raising to improve the building where they meet. I also believe this is one avenue to reduce the issue of mental health.

I will now talk about our special needs children. One of the problems on our island today is that there is lack of qualified people to look after these special needs children. Maybe this is one area that should be looked at.

With regards to Education, thank you Honourable Prime Minister of the Cook Islands because the Prime Minister has confirmed there is funds for our bus and it is just a matter of achieving this.

Today there is a new Minister for Internal Affairs because this is one area that needs assistance in the schools in Mangaia on the area of safety. We need assistance for the elderly especially in accessing buildings as opposed to them having to climb up on the steps. I have discussed this with the previous Minister and he supported this proposal but I am not sure if this has been started and I request assistance to train caretakers for these disabled people on the island.

I will now move to the area of the Ministry of Health. I am happy today that we have received a water filter for the hospital on Mangaia. Another request Minister, all these years we know that Mangaia is a cold island and there is no hot water for the hospital in Mangaia. This is a very basic need for the hospital. I am requesting for hot water for the hospital in Mangaia.

I see your proposal for flying doctors and let me add to that doctor, a dentist also because our people have experienced in the past where if they need dentistry, they have to pay their own fare to come to Rarotonga. Therefore let me add to this flying doctors as well as flying dentists.

I am happy and encouraged to look at the assistance subsidy by Government for sea transportation. Therefore Minister, like you have promoted or boasted during the campaign time of making it happen, please make it happen now instead of ten years time.

I would now like to talk about the cost of living. When we look at the appropriation as well as the wages for workers, I know for us the people in Mangaia we do not see this increase in wages. When you go into the shops you come out again because you spent a lot of money to buy only a few things. Like a previous Member said, it is about using the money in the right way and in the right place. So those of you

utilising our funds today, do your best which is why you have been given the opportunity.

I would also like to touch upon the area of fishing on the island because we see today the assistance from Government to the fishermen by providing fuel. In the allocation under Marine another assistance that is required which is an area that we do not receive assistance is the safety gear for boats.

Also at the moment one of the floating buoy of the island of Mangaia has snapped, maybe the fish are too big in Mangaia. Therefore we need another buoy to help the fishermen on Mangaia.

Since we have a woman Minister, I would like to make a request for the women. I am also thankful and appreciative seeing in the allocation on page 211, the assistance for our people because this is what this appropriation is all about to help our people. On top of that I would like to say thank you to Infrastructure Cook Islands for the first stage of the water on Tamarua. Everything has landed on Mangaia and we are just waiting for the project to start.

I would like to make a request regarding our water pipes in our villages because it is really old. These were installed maybe in the days of Adam, these are PVC pipes. Some sections of these pipes are on the top of the ground and some areas are under the ground. The problem here is that the pipes are full of dirt and mud and breaks easily.

The request here Honourable Minister is that since the water that we are going to pump through these pipes are clean water it is only right that it should run through clean pipes. That is the request Minister on this project and I am sure the people of Mangaia will be happy when they hear that you have approved this request.

I think I have come to the end of what I wanted to say on the Bill and I am willing to grant my four minutes to another Member that may have a lot to say on the Bill.

Greetings to all the new Members of Parliament that have entered this Honourable House and to all the rest of the Honourable Members. Thank you very much.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Member and I recognise the Honourable Member Tai Tura, you have the Floor.

**MR T. TURA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to you and all your staff. To all Honourable Members on both sides of the House, greetings this afternoon. To all our people listening in, on Rarotonga, the Southern and Northern Group, greetings to you all.

Greetings to the people on my island of Akatokamanava. Before I speak on the Appropriation Bill today, Madam Speaker, with your indulgence can I please express my condolences and acknowledgement to my island people.

I would like to convey my condolences to you, Mama Maunga, for the passing away of your husband Papa Edwin Ngariki. This old man was flown to Rarotonga on

Wednesday last week and he passed away on Thursday. That is the reason I asked for a speaking time yesterday to express my condolences but never mind, today is good enough. Therefore, to you Aunty Maunga and your children and all the family, I along with all the Honourable Members of this House extend to you our deepest condolences.

This bereavement is for all of us the people of Akatokamanava as well as all the people of Nga-Pu-Toru and the people on the island of Mangaia. Maybe we are asking, why Mangaia. This Papa's wife is half Mangaia and her family is sitting on the far end of this House, the Honourable Member from Oneroa.

This Papa is the head of the water reticulation on Mauke. He is the one in charge of all the work that is to do with Solar Energy and clean water on Mauke. I extend my appreciation to all the people of Mauke who came to the family service at the Catholic Cathedral in Avarua, and also the Nga-Pu-Toru people and Auau Enua who came to pay respect to this old man. To the people on Rarotonga as well who came to the family service for this Papa, I thank you all. May God take care of you Aunty Maunga, your children and all the family in the future.

The second goes out to the island of Mangaia. Our sincere sympathy is also extended to the family of the Mama Ariki who passed away on the island of Mangaia. I will never forget this Mama for her assistance when I was working in the electricity supplies in Mangaia. In those days I had no problems I just go to her and she directs me what to do for Ivirua and Tamarua. Maybe the Honourable Member for Tamarua was not born back in those days. I convey deepest sympathy to the people of Mangaia as well as to the family of Mama Numangatini.

I will now greet the people on the island of Mauke and all the different sectors on the island, we all understand the three pillars – the Government, the church and the traditional leaders. I will just end my greetings here and would like to extend one big greetings to all the people on the island of Mauke.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Members this might be an appropriate time for us to suspend the Sitting rather than continue with a new speaker.

Parliament will now suspend for lunch and we will resume at 3.00 p.m.

**Sitting suspended at 2.30 p.m.**

**Sitting resumed at 3.00 p.m.**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Please be seated.

Parliament is resumed.

Honourable Members, before we suspended the Sitting, we were on the interrupted debate on the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill.

The Honourable Tai Tura had the Floor. You may continue.

**MR T. TURA:** Thank you very much Madam Speaker.

Previously, I was expressing my greetings to the people of Mauke. In addition, I would like to express my greetings to the tribe of love on Mauke and this includes my Chairman and all the supporters and Committee members. Kia Orana also to the Independent – the One Cook Islands and also the Democratic Party. Please accept my acknowledgement to you all back on our island of Mauke.

In the 100 metres race that we competed, Tai Tura became the split-second winner. This shows the great work of the Committee and how hard this race was run. One of the Mamas in Mauke said “There is power in food.” Therefore, the race was a close one but that is how some races are run.

And now I would like to share my thoughts on the Appropriation Bill.

I am happy to observe the increase of allocation to the island of Mauke. It is close to \$100,000. It is a small amount but this is enough. There is a saying: “A small amount presented to the king is the amount for everybody.”

I would like to share my thoughts on how I would like to make improvements, to happen in Mauke and we can now see that the end of the year is not long to go. Before long the financial year will be all over and therefore prior to the Appropriation Bill for the following year, I ask that all the Ministers sit together and discuss and come up with how the money should be appropriated.

We have previously heard all the requests from the different islands. For me there are three most important things that we need in our country. These can be the first, second and the third and they are in my thinking – water, water, water. And the other request to the Government is for roads improvement, and it will not be completed within the four years term.

On my return to Rarotonga it was quite obvious that there is a great need for water on Rarotonga and then there is the obstacles for Te Mato Vai advancing. So we can see the important issues that we talked about in this House – the water and the roads. Come to Mauke where the water flows. There is no more water problem on our island.

So I invite the Honourable Minister Rose Brown and the Honourable Member from Mitiaro, to ask Mauke for water if they need it. Next week ask for the road workers in Aitutaki and take them to your islands to work on the water. I think it is a waste of time, the road workers staying in Aitutaki to improve the roads there. The Island Council in Aitutaki has a different way of running businesses compared to that of the ICI. That is why there is a delay when it should have been completed last year.

The workers go from Rarotonga to Aitutaki to make the tar sealing and they get mixed up with the locals. I have a son that returned from Aitutaki and I have told him not to go back to Aitutaki and he asked me why and I told him the longer you stay in Aitutaki you will end up living there and not return to your family in Rarotonga.

Therefore, I encourage the Members of Parliament for Aitutaki to abandon this job. The next time you do some work in Aitutaki, maybe improving the water system, you will end up digging up the roads. I say be smart and come to Mauke and learn from us. When the water work is done on Mauke we included the laying of our power line. When the tar sealing is to be started there is no disturbance to the road sealing. I can see the Honourable Minister Rose Brown is not in the Chamber, so Minister of ICI, bring all your workers and come to Mauke. Start on the sealing projects for the island and this will be a big help for our agriculture, tourism and so forth.

I would like to speak on the Outer Islands. It actually broke my heart hearing all the different things discussed about the Outer Islands. Madam Speaker, I would like to confirm with you that 99.9 percent of the population of the Cook Islands are Outer Islanders. 100 percent of the Members of Parliament present in this House today are from the Outer Islands starting with you, to the right to include Mangaia, Atiu. Further down, Atiu, Rarotonga, Mitiaro, and Mauke.

When Tangiia arrived to the Cook Islands he brought two wives from Mauke and when he arrived to Rarotonga, there was nobody here and he settled in Ngatangiia. Across from the Leader of the Opposition is Rakahanga/Mauke and next to him is Aitutaki and Kiribati and next to him Mangaia and Rarotonga.

Madam Speaker, it is not right to say that it is a waste of time to do things for the Outer Islands. I would like to confirm with you that all of the Heads of Ministries are Outer Islanders. Executive Officers of SOEs are Outer Islanders. All around Rarotonga there are Outer Islanders. So do not say that again. This one is a Mangaia/Nga-Pu-Toru. As you can see, our Leader of the Nation – he is from Manihiki.

So all the things written in the newspaper talking about the Outer Islanders, these are warriors and leaders. That is why we are a nation of great people.

Now I'd like to talk about Agriculture and the new ways for agriculture. In the Outer Islands there is not enough labourers. The growers in the Outer Islands are elderly people. Physically they are not strong but mentally they are very active. Our youth today have no interest in agriculture. Regardless of what you do, they will never be persuaded.

This is my thoughts for the Minister and Associate Minister and in English it is called “farm gate price”. This means receiving payment upfront. Here is an example I grow my watermelons and when they are ready I take them to this group of people to buy. They pay me straight away and send my watermelon to sell here in Rarotonga. It is up to him how much he will sell the produce in Rarotonga. If he want to increase the price that's entirely up to him. I think this is how we can improve agriculture in the Outer Islands.

In the Outer Islands if you miss a flight or you cannot get your goods on the flight that's it you lose all you produce. This also applies with the northern group islands in terms of their fish. There should be buyers stationed on the island and they store the fish to await the arrival of the ship.

My second thoughts is that there should be funds given to start off these projects. I have heard this has happened on Mangaia with SRIC. I do believe these are ways we can encourage our young ones to be interested in agriculture.

If you have a look at growers in the Outer Islands who have extra money to spend and this becomes their own funding to pay for tractors to plough their land. How these things are to be achieved we will hand it over to the Minister of Agriculture as they have better ideas on how these will be initiated.

I'd like to talk about education especially the University because this is one of the biggest obstacles our students face and that is finding accommodation when they go to University. This was mentioned in the House by our young Member of Parliament yesterday. It is cheaper to pay for your school fees than to pay for accommodation.

We will probably say how did that Mauke know. I sent two of my granddaughters to school and I paid their school fees myself. After two years I couldn't afford to pay accommodation fees anymore. This is true because I have now sent them to Australia to live with their mother because it is cheaper for them. So Madam Speaker those are my thoughts especially with our University students going overseas.

I would also like to acknowledge families living in New Zealand who are accommodating our students. Students who receive scholarships are fine because Government pays for their expenses. So Madam Speaker this is some of the thoughts that I would like to speak about education. So I stand here to give my full support to the Appropriation Bill before the House today. May God bless us all during our debate for this Appropriation Bill. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Member. Are there any further speakers, I see the Honourable William Heather you have the Floor.

**HON. W. HEATHER:** Thank you, Madam Speaker for the opportunity to speak in the House. I would like to acknowledge you and all the staff members working in this House each day of our sitting.

I would also like to acknowledge the hard working staff of the Minister who has put this Appropriation Bill together.

With your indulgence Madam Speaker, I would like to greet the people in my constituency. Firstly I'd like to acknowledge the people of Puaikura from Tuoro to Toreaiva and from inland to the seaside. Tinomana Ariki and all the traditional leaders of the village and also the religious leaders, Kia Orana.

I also want to acknowledge my younger brother who has retired from this House as a DPM in the past for all the good work that he has done for our country. Sometimes it's a difficult situation because we were both on opposite sides of the House and sometimes I feel uncomfortable challenging him because he is my younger brother. However, I would like to pay respect to him and to thank him for his good work and for being in the position of Deputy Prime Minister.

I would now like to speak to the people in my constituency Ruaau. I would like to thank and greet my opposing candidate Arama Wichman. Campaigning times are over my brother so it is now time to work together and achieve good results for our village.

I would also like to thank my Chairman and Committee members for the hard work they did to bring me back into this House. Without their support I would have not returned to this House today but their endless support made it possible for me to return to this House.

To the Kaumaiti, your wife and family, to Tere Taio and his family and also to my Chairman Avaiki, his wife and family, Kia Orana to you all. Thank you also to my supporters, to aunty Tina who is now sick in hospital, and also to her husband Tamaka Tamanui in New Zealand, Kia Orana.

There are also other people that I would like to thank and acknowledge. I think it is only right for me to acknowledge and thank my younger brother who is the Superintendent at the Prison, he is also known by many as Black. He was in the House earlier this afternoon. I thank you so much my brother and your wife for lending me your endless support during the campaign period.

Madam Speaker, I will now come back to the Appropriation Bill before the House today. Firstly, we understand that our budget is three months overdue. This is also affected by the petitions following the general election. However, we hope that we will have the opportunity to look into this Bill carefully before passing it in this House. The Democratic Party Manifesto says, “*Our people, our priority*”.

I would also like to bring to the House a saying before expressing my views. This is what it says, “*You give a man a fish, he will eat for the day, you teach a man to fish, he will look after his family forever*”. This is the main thought that I would like to bring to us while we discuss this Bill in the House today.

We have water issue on Rarotonga and in the Outer Islands today. The Honourable Member for Mauke previously mentioned that when there is no water, we can't plant, there is no tourism, no education and no health services. So how can we remedy these issues? We also understand the difficulties we encounter to charter a boat to take water tanks to the Outer Islands of the Northern Groups. Why don't we look at a machine to turn sea water into fresh water? These are some ideas for us to get water. There are also areas on Rarotonga where we can drill holes to get water.

I remember in 2010 when I was looking after the portfolio of a particular Minister. I met someone who was Australian and he was the one that did the water work in Mauke. I took him around to identify a place to build a big water tank and to look at an appropriate place to dig underground water. We were able to look at different places and we also went to Highland Paradise which is up the mountain and water runs from the rocks. He told me there is a lot of water on our island and we can extract water and store it for us to use during the dry season.

I would now like to talk about the Vote Item for the Ministry of Health. We can see the allocation given to the Ministry of Health and we all know the issue about the lack

of doctors in the Outer Islands. If we can address this issue, it will be really good. We also heard the comments made about flying doctors to the Outer Islands. If we can achieve this, this issue will not be raised again in this House.

In the past, we had discussions with the Speaker concerning mental illness. This issue is increasing on our island and as well as the Outer Islands. Before we suspended for our break, the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister's Papa, Tararo Ariki called me. He said to me, boy I am at work and no one is looking after me. He went to the Ministry of Internal Affairs to look for help but help was not given. These are some of the things that we would need to address if we claim that we love our people. This *papa* holds the title of Tararo Ariki and at this time of old age, no one is there to care for him.

I would also like to talk about the Vote Item for Tourism. We all know about the weed that grew in the sea of Ngatangia and Titikaveka. I understand that this problem is still an issue and hasn't been solved. Therefore, I would like to encourage our Government to look at this issue so that it will not become a problem with our tourism industry. This is our food bowl.

I will now talk about Infrastructure. We can see today that our roads are full of cars, motor bikes and buses. My question is, what can we do about this? I have a proposal to make for you to consider. Maybe a system should be put in place where an owner of a vehicle uses the bus twice a week as transport. This is a proposal for us to consider. We should put some money aside for this purpose.

I would also like to talk about aid money that we receive in our country to assist us. \$60 million was given to us by overseas donors to help us. In this \$60 million if we do not look at improving our fishing industry or other important areas, we will not be able to improve our situation. These are my views to our Government to help improve our situation.

In closing, I would like to touch on the cost of living. The cost of electricity, telecommunication, food, transportation and of course finance is an issue. These five major operations, our people encounter problems. If we look at solar energy, this has been completed in the Northern Group and we are now moving down to the Southern Group islands. Thank you so much to the Government for doing this.

When we look at Telecommunication and the cost of living especially the cost of operation, the cost of food as well as importing of goods from New Zealand and of course the money that we loan from the banks, this is one of the major problems that our people face. I urge our Government to look into this issue.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, if we can look at achieving these five major things that I have mentioned, it will be a great help to our people.

So this is the direction for us. If you haven't seen the Democratic Party's manifesto, it's available here for you to read.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, I thank the Government and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. Thank you very much and God bless.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Member.

I see the Honourable Minister, Vaine Mokoroa. You have the Floor.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Madam Speaker, I rise to give a statement of support to the Appropriation Bill before this House. Like previous speakers, I would like to convey a Kia Orana to the people in the village of Nikao.

After listening to so many speeches from previous speakers, I see it most fitting to the verse from *Proverbs 16*: “*The preparations of the heart belong to man but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes but the Lord weighs the spirits. Commit your works to the Lord and your thoughts will be established.*”

Verse 7 goes on to say: “*When a man’s ways please the Lord he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. Better is a little with righteousness than vast revenues without justice.*”

Kia Orana to all the people of Nikao, the three pillars of the village – Reverend Oirua and other denominations in the village of Nikao, the Aronga Mana of Nikao and all those who are working for Government today.

Madam Speaker, I also pay tribute and acknowledge your reappointment as well as the appointment of the new Deputy Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Special Kia Orana to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, my colleagues as Ministers and Members of Parliament on this side.

I would like to say a big Kia Orana to the Leader of the Opposition and all your Colleagues sitting amongst you. I make special mention to Aunty Mau who has been holding the fort in this position for the last 22 years. She has been a good aunty, a good mother, a good provider not only for me and my family but for the whole of Nikao. This courtesy is also extended to the people of the Cook Islands and all those who are overseas.

I say Kia Orana to the people who are listening to our radio broadcast, especially those in the Outer Islands and Nga-Pu-Toru, in the Southern Group and the Northern Group.

Coming back to Nikao, I would like to pay special acknowledgement to the Committee of the Kopu-Tangata-O-Te-Aroa of Nikao, the tribe of love. To the Chairlady, Rachel Ponini and your husband and family, thank you very much for your dedication and commitment in the time that we have built ourselves towards the past election. To all the Committee members who was part of this venture, thank you very much and *meitaki maata* for your contribution and time in making this journey a success. To the many sponsors for their generous sponsorship, thank you very much.

To all the elderly, the pensioners and the new-born in the village of Nikao, Kia Orana in the name of our Lord. To the Pu Tapere of Panama, Pokoinu, Tepuka and Rangiura – Kia Orana. I would also like to pay special courtesy to my parents, my brothers and my sisters, to my in-laws and to all the families that are based here in Rarotonga, the Outer Islands and overseas. Thank you very much for your support in bringing me into this House. I am deeply honoured and grateful for your help and for believing in me to deliver for our people in Nikao.

I will now come back to the Appropriation Bill before us and share my thoughts on the Bill and also to support the name, “The People’s Budget” we gave.

Madam Speaker, we have just tabled the amendment to the Child Benefit from 12 to 14 years. This is addressing the benefit paid to every child from birth to 14 years old. That is why this budget is called “The People’s Budget”.

Madam Speaker, we have ratified the ILO Convention and the main focus is to eliminate child slavery and promote and enhance safety for our working people. Again, this Budget looks after the welfare of our people and that is why it is called the people’s Budget.

I deliberately delayed to stand up and express my views because I wanted to hear the views from the Opposition side of the House. Like previous speakers, we would like to thank the Deputy Prime Minister and your good staff, the staff from the Ministry of Finance – Garth, Angie and all the MFEM girls, worked very hard to deliver what we have in front of us today.

Yesterday, I heard the statement from the Member of Parliament, Te-Hani, and I must commend her speech and the comments made by the Honourable Member. She focused her speech mainly on the Youth and what she can do for our Youth. She spoke about the \$45,000 that was allocated by this Government in the Police Budget to assist with the youth programme that the Police Service administers.

If we look in the Budget Book, the \$45,000 is allocated for the next three financial years. The purpose of this \$45,000 is to enable the Police Service to carry out youth programmes specifically targeted at young people who are delinquents, who perform criminal activities and who appear before court so they can be assisted through a rehabilitation programme.

There are three programmes set in this financial year for this \$45,000 apart from the target training for troublesome youth. There is also a programme to assist those turning 16 years to improve their driving skills. The Police Service is hopeful that with these training programmes in place, we will be able to reduce the number of accidents and loss of lives on the roads.

The third programme that the Police Service administers is what is called, Blue Light. This programme engages social activities, training to manage the abuse of alcohol and so forth. This programme is run in conjunction with the New Zealand Police.

I heard the Member of Parliament, Honourable Selina Napa, mention earlier on about the lack of Police representation in each of the three villages in Takitumu. In this

financial year, \$400,000 has been allocated not only for the recruitment of Police Officers but as well as the adjustment of salaries for all Police Officers on all the Outer Islands. In the next five years, the Police will be recruiting a total of thirty Police Officers which will hopefully address the issue of staff shortage on the island.

I will now move on to the issue about cost of living that is discussed in this House. Again, Madam Speaker, you know that we have increased the minimum wage rate from \$7 to \$7.25.

I urge my colleagues to go on Google now where you will find the minimum wage rate for Samoa which is \$2.30 and that's Samoa Tala. If you look at the minimum wage rate for Fiji you will see that the minimum wage has just increased from \$2.32 to \$2.68. If you look at the minimum wage rate for Tuvalu its \$AU3 so in comparison with all of our regional countries we will all agree in this House that we are one of the best performing countries in the region.

I would also like to come back to the issue on water that has been discussed in this House. I would like to direct everyone to page 148 of Book 1 in the Budget Book. You will see that there are a number of water projects that's been done on Mitiaro, Tamarua, Aitutaki including Te Mato Vai Project here in Rarotonga. This also includes the clearance of the back road for Te Mato Vai purpose in Titikaveka.

Today as we speak, we have one ICI staff and one staff from the Office of the Prime Minister who has just left the island of Penrhyn. Part of their project is to rehabilitate the community water tanks in Penrhyn and this is a 2 million dollar water project coordinated by SOPAC Fiji.

I commend the Deputy Prime Minister for such a detailed Budget Book and I also heard the Member of Parliament for Tamarua asking for so many things that should have been reflected in this Budget Book. I think the Deputy Prime Minister and my colleagues will agree that the reasons why those are not reflected in here are just a lack of communication between the Member of Parliament, the Mayor and his or her EO. All of these requests as submitted by the Honourable Member from Tamarua could and would have been addressed had it been reflected in the Budget Book. But that is not a big issue.

One of the positives that I have heard in the discussions in this House is to work together as a team. We would like to urge that each Member of Parliament for each of the Outer Islands as well as the Mayors and the EOs, that all these good initiatives that have been tabled in this House be consolidated, costed and put forward as initiatives in the next financial year.

I am not sure how flexible we are in changing some of these initiatives in here but I believe we are here to discuss critique or endorse this Budget Book. Thank you, Madam Speaker I have nothing further to say.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Minister I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate you have the Floor.

**MR T. MAOATE:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Greetings to us all this afternoon. Honourable Prime Minister, Ministers and everyone in this House greetings to you all. To the Leader of the Opposition and Members on this side, greetings. To you Madam Speaker and to all the staff and again congratulations for your appointment.

I'd like to speak to my people in my constituency. I would like to say Kia Orana to the bereaved family in Amuri, Papa Parama and Tiriakau for your daughter who have passed away. To Barry and the children I give condolences to you all. Papa Terepoto William and the children for the passing of Mama Metuakore, I convey my condolences to you. This lady is a very outgoing woman from the village of Amuri and she is always full of life. I give deepest condolences to the family. May God comfort all the families for your loss.

Kia Orana to all the people of Aitutaki, the Outer Islands and to all the people on Rarotonga.

I will now come back to the Appropriation Bill before the House today. The Minister is saying that this Budget is the people's budget. \$268 million is a lot of money for our nation. I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for engaging the staff from the Ministry of Finance to explain this Budget to us. The Honourable Tama Tuavera spoke earlier on about the Budget and he focused on the Pa Enua. I felt for him because the Prime Minister attacked him for expressing his views and concerns.

I support the position of the Member Tama Tuavera and that of the Prime Minister also. The Prime Minister spoke about the Heads of Ministries and I would like to say that these HOMs have no experience about living in the Outer Islands the reason they find it hard to assist the needs of the people of the Outer Islands. It has been eight years since the CIP was in Government. The issues the Honourable Tuavera highlighted has been around these many years and the problems have escalated during the last four years.

In the eyes of the people of the Pa Enua, Government should assist them every year. This attitude is on Aitutaki and Rarotonga. The business sector does not agree with that kind of attitude. Our job in this Honourable House is to find ways to assist our people in the Outer Islands and the Prime Minister is saying that would be a hard thing to do.

I believe there are many attempts by Government to assist the Outer Islands apart from the pearly industry in Manihiki. There are many natural industries that can be started by our people in the Outer Islands, for example, the coconut oil. This is one project that has been considered by past Governments but it was not taken to its full course.

I remember a project was started in the Northern Group islands to grow coconuts for producing coconut oils but today we are still importing the Tiare Monoi from Tahiti. When we go to the local market we find these 100ml bottles. The shops around the island are selling these for more than \$10. If we sell a litre volume we will be profiting \$100.

Producing the oil in the Northern Group and waiting for the ships, one does not worry about the oil decaying because it will not go off. There is also the business of drying the fish for export or tuna jerky. This is the same situation as the oil, the product does not go off. It can last for a long time until a transport or a ship arrives to ship them to the main island to be sold. Another business venture for the Pa Enua is the kikau broom. Today, kiaku brooms are sold at \$20 each.

I believe there are many ways that we can help our people in the Outer Islands to make a livelihood for themselves. This will make the business people on Rarotonga happy because they will have suppliers in the Outer Islands to boost their business.

The Minister of Finance mentioned that Government have funds to assist our shipping companies like Tapi Taio and Malcolm Sword, which is about half a million dollars. I sat and listened to the response given to the question about subsidy for air transportation. I come to the half a million allocation to subsidies our shipping. I look at the Te Maeva Nui culture which is an important event. However there was a lot of spending especially the shipping of our people to Rarotonga. Our estimate was that \$2 million was spent on this cultural event.

If we can spend this big amount of money for such an event, I propose that we send a ship up north each month and bring the people's craft to Rarotonga to sell.

I will now speak on the subject about the minimum wage. I commend the Minister Mokoroa for informing us about the minimum rate for other Pacific countries compared to what we have.

For example, when you buy a carton of chicken on Rarotonga and then take it to the Outer Islands, it costs more. So it is only right for us to assess whether this minimum wage is appropriate. My personal view is that this is the minimum wage we can afford right now.

When I look at our budget I think we can actually improve on the minimum wage. If you follow the policy of the Democratic Party, it sets its minimum rate to \$10.

About the Ministry of Health allocation, I support and like all the ideas expressed about Health. However, I would like to speak about our status in Aitutaki, especially our medication and also our dental needs. There were comments that it is expensive to come to Rarotonga to see a private doctor or dentist. We all know that we are not privy to these services in Aitutaki. Patients from Aitutaki are referred to Rarotonga if they are not able to be treated in Aitutaki. Doctors and nurses from Aitutaki also come to Rarotonga to seek further assistance for patients from Aituaki. Sometimes they are restricted to what they can do so they have to seek advise from the doctors in Rarotonga. We criticise the Health system because sometimes they seems to wait until patients are at their worse before they are referred to Rarotonga. I however believe that the Minister of Health is looking into this area.

Looking at the subsidies for SOEs, there is an allocation of \$120 million to be paid to the Bank of the Cook Islands. I don't believe we should subsidise \$120 million. That's a lot of money for this bank because their interest rate is quite high and yet it's called "The People's Bank". Rightly so, this \$120 million should be allocated to

reducing the interest and not directly paid to them. I am sure when I get a loan from this Bank, the subsidy won't come to me. I will support this Bill if the Minister looks into this.

Ministerial Support – I would like to express my disapproval for this allocation. The Prime Minister previously mentioned about working together in this House, however, when I look at our Members of Parliament on our side, all the wage increase is only for the Ministers. Where is our increase in salaries so we can support this Budget? So there is my disapproval for this. Maybe if there is a change of Government tomorrow and they become the Opposition, if they are treated the same way as we are today, I will support the allocation.

I will now talk about our road works. I am not happy with what the Member for Mauke said because he said he is Maukean. I am saying he's Aitutakian. The workers working on the roads in Aitutaki are doing a great job. They said the Prime Minister has asked them to stay in Aitutaki until all the work is completed.

With regards to our water, I would like to share with us something that happened in Aitutaki. With the distribution of plastic water tanks, during the hurricane, some plastic water tanks were damaged. They all collapsed or were damaged during the time of the hurricane due to the force of the hurricane. There are today some homes on Aitutaki who don't have water tanks. There are cracks in the water tanks and there have been attempts to repair them but it hasn't helped.

So, I would like to ask the Minister of ICI to look into this issue as I don't believe this is a big project to undertake like the other projects.

Concerning our nodule which is our money from the ocean. I would like to talk about this project. This was actually started by Sir Albert Henry, about 60 years ago and it is still being addressed today. The Government in those days actually paid an American Company to do some research to see whether these nodules were actually in our ocean.

In those days there was actually a young man by the name of Tom Marsters who was part of that venture. Today, he is still young and he is our Queen's Representative. He was one in the team when the Professor told Sir Albert Henry, we will not see this project happen in those days. Maybe our current Queen's Representative will see this venture into fruition today.

In 2008, we established a law concerning our minerals. The Government of the day in those days asked the Opposition to be part of the project. The Prime Minister at the time, including Cabinet agreed to involve the Opposition Members, the Member Tom Marsters and the Member Nandi Glassie to be part of this project. As the Chair of that Committee, we were able to establish the Seabed Mineral Bill.

We have known of many, many companies in those days that tried to engage into the mining of our nodules so they can benefit most of the shares.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, your extra time has expired but you can round up. I'll give you a few minutes to finish off.

**MR T. MAOATE:** Thank you Madam Speaker.

I will end here so thank you very much. I cannot complete what I have to say in a few minutes.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Member. I think all Honourable Members have spoken except for the Minister of Finance.

So may I call the Minister to conclude the debate on the Appropriation Bill please?

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you Madam Speaker.

I note there is only 15 minutes left before we adjourn so I think I will wrap up my speech on the principles and merits of the Bill in the next session.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. Parliament will suspend now and we will return at 7.00 p.m.

**Parliament suspended at 4.45 p.m.**

**Sitting resumed at 7.00 p.m.**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Please be seated. Parliament is resumed.

#### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

Interrupted debate on the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill. Before we suspended, we were ready to offer the Floor to the Honourable Minister of Finance. You now have the Floor.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On Friday, I delivered the Budget speech and during the delivery of the speech, I was remiss Madam Speaker in acknowledging the staff who was responsible for putting together these two Books. So I would like to take this opportunity Madam Speaker to acknowledge those who were responsible for doing a lot of work that was involved in compiling the figures over the last seven months.

I would like to thank the Opposition Members for acknowledging the Budget staff for their hard work and also for the session by the staff with them at the Opposition office this morning to go through the Budget.

One of the things that we are very proud about the Ministry of Finance Madam Speaker is that we have developed the capacity of our local Cook Islanders to be in charge of these very important areas.

So the Secretary of Finance, Garth Henderson, and his Budget team includes the Budget Manager, Angelia Williams, Edwina Matenga who is the Senior Budget Analyst, Rufina Teulilo who is the Budget Analyst and they were supported by the Economics team in the Ministry of Finance made up of Natalie Cook the Economic Adviser, Ian Hayes a Senior World Bank Economist who we have managed to secure his services at the Ministry of Finance as a Senior Economist and also Yulia Chinek who is also an Economic Analyst at the Ministry of Finance. Only one male is in this team of Budget Specialist females, Madam Speaker. But they put in very, very long hours, Madam Speaker in compiling this Budget. Their work was made more difficult because it was interrupted by the elections that we currently had. Immediately after the elections, they got their skates on, worked overtime to put this Budget together in time for this Parliament sitting.

I know with the skills that this team has, other Pacific countries will be looking at them and offering them a job in their country. One thing in our favour Madam Speaker is that we are able to offer far more competitive salaries than what our lower paying Pacific neighbours can offer them but certainly we cannot match what New Zealand or Australia can offer, not yet anyway but we are getting very close to New Zealand salaries for highly paid senior staff.

I want to say thank all the Members in the House who have spoken on the Budget before us. To the Government side and to the new Members who have spoken on the Bill, and also to the Members in the Opposition, I thank you all. I was very patient in listening to some of the comments from the Opposition side. I really thought they would come up with some strong comments on the Budget but what I heard was weak comments just like rotten tomatoes. It is easy to dodge the rotten tomatoes they were throwing and it can be sent back into their mouths.

The first comment that was made, and I want to respond to that, is from the Member for Aitutaki regarding the funding for the Office of the Ministers and the Office of the Opposition. He asked why the appropriation for the Opposition is less than that of the Ministers. I have looked at this Madam Speaker and I think when the appropriation was prepared for this year, the budget for the Members on the Corrective side was taken out because they are now coalition with Government and what was left over was given to the office of the Opposition. I think that is the reason their appropriation is not the same as the Minister's office.

We also heard Madam Speaker the comment consistently coming that not enough money has been appropriated to a whole lot of areas. Not enough for this, not enough for that, not enough for this. Not enough money for the pension, not enough for Agriculture, not enough for Health. But then they say there are too many workers in Pukapuka and too many workers in Rakahanga. So I am trying to balance whether they want to cut the number of workers in the Outer Islands and spend more money on Agriculture. Because that's what it sounds like, Madam Speaker and that's the difference between the Government and the Opposition.

We don't look at the Outer Islands as if it was a business plan and how much money they are going to make and what profit we are going to earn from that island. We look at them as people, as Cook Islanders who deserve the help of their Government. That's why this Budget is called the People's Budget, not the business man's budget.

I recall the first Budget, Madam Speaker that I tabled in 2011. That Budget was 172 million dollars. Last year we tabled a Budget for 274 million dollars, one hundred million dollars more. How did we do that, Madam Speaker? Very simple we didn't work hard we worked smart. Because circling this world is millions and millions of dollars designed to assist countries like us to help lift the living standard of our people.

We saw in this year's budget 61 million dollars from overseas development assistance, this is aid money. We had nothing like this ten years ago, Madam Speaker but it is not just the aid money.

In 2011 our GDP was 320 million dollars, gross domestic product. This is the money that circulates in our country. This year, Madam Speaker our GDP is 420 million dollars and this shows the measure of growth in our economy driven by the increase in the number of visitors and tourists that are coming into our country. How did we increase the number of tourists? With good Government policy and good Government planning and good appropriation of funding into areas that will generate income for our people. As our GDP grows, Madam Speaker and as the number of visitors grows in our country there is more opportunity for our people to earn more money.

What did we do to that money? That was the question raised by the Member for Ngatangiia. Where is the money? Our first two years, Madam Speaker we increased the salaries of teachers, doctors and nurses. Increased the amount of money we put into classrooms and increased the amount of money we put into our health system.

We re-opened our nursing school to start training our own nurses but most importantly, Madam Speaker we used that extra money to help those people who cannot earn money for themselves. We increased the money of pensioners, we increased the child benefit, we increased the baby bonus, and we increased the minimum wage. This is where we have been able, Madam Speaker to grow the economy and use the benefits to ensure that those most in need are not left behind.

However, a big part of our Budget Madam Speaker is on Capital and it is this partnership that we have with our fellow member countries, in particular New Zealand, Australia, the European Union, China, Japan, Korea and so forth, that we have been able to use their money, their development assistance to help us rebuild our major infrastructure projects on water and also the conversion of our power from diesel to renewable energy.

Te Mato Vai is currently at \$65 million. I would expect that to head up to \$80 million. Renewable energy conversion for the Northern Group and Southern Group, Madam Speaker is over \$50 million. These are basic necessities for the life of our people, Madam Speaker and this Government has found a way to be able to move our standard of living into what our people expect. These projects don't take one year, Madam Speaker. You see them in the Budget this year and they will be finished next year. No, they take years to develop.

And one of the things that is constraining or slowing down the pace of Capital implementation, Madam Speaker is the ability of our private companies and our own Government to be able to implement these major works which is why we would see in

this year's Budget an amount of money that is rolled over from last year. Technically, that's not quite correct because what happens, Madam Speaker as you are well aware is that unexpended funds from this current financial year will be reappropriated through this Budget process into the Budget for this year of 2018/2019.

So we are seeing that there were funds appropriated for Te Mato Vai, a significant amount was not utilised in the last financial year due to delays but with the projects now under implementation we would see a significant proportion of that capital of \$44 million being diverted and used as the Te Mato Vai project moves forward. And we would expect Te Mato Vai under the current project estimates to be completed by the end of 2019 – next year.

We will also see the opening and commissioning of the last of the renewable energy programmes for Mangaia and Mauke to be opened in the next few months.

And very shortly, Madam Speaker, the signing of the construction contract for the Manatua Cable. We will see the utilisation of the \$15 million that has been set aside for this particular project.

So these are the big items Madam Speaker in the Capital budget but there are a number of smaller capital items and these are what has been brought up by some of the Members in their comments, such as the amount of money allocated for bridges and drainage and our new Minister of ICI has, I have to say, hit the ground running in terms of making sure these projects are implemented in a timely way.

The road projects again, another one. It has been identified that if we want to have good roads we must first ensure that we have good drainage on the side of these roads. So that is additional work that will be done on our roads Madam Speaker including the road works that are anticipated to take place in Muri and it would be great to have the Member of Parliament for Ngatangiia to be helping out with the Ministry of ICI in ensuring that our landowners are on board with making sure that we can extend the road a little bit.

The new project that will be before our country, Madam Speaker once the Te Mato Vai and the renewable energy are completed is the sanitation project. And of course this started with a pilot project in Muri back in 2014 with funding support from the New Zealand Government and the European Union and our own money from the Cook Islands. And this managed to convert nearly all of the seaside domestic septic systems into new modern septic systems. The new project Mei Te Vai Ki Te Vai, Madam Speaker, is doing the feasibility study to determine the best sanitation project that we can implement for this area in Ngatangiia all the way through to Titikaveka. And again, Madam Speaker, we are talking a significant millions of dollars to put in place modern sanitation systems to protect our lagoon.

And where are we going to get these millions of dollars from? New Zealand has committed \$20 million already to this project but that is nowhere near enough. This is where, Madam Speaker, we look for funding that is available from our development partners. This is the money that has been criticised by the Opposition of us trying to find money to help our people.

As I recall the statement made by the Leader of the Opposition: “Give a man a fish he will eat for one day but teach him how to fish he will eat the rest of his life.” Well that is what we do Madam Speaker. I am like a fisherman but I do not fish for fish. I go and fish for money. That is my job. This is not begging. You find a way. Because the reality, Madam Speaker, if you build a modern septic system, Madam Speaker it will cost the same amount of money whether you are building it for 10,000 people or whether you are building it for 100,000 people. It is like buying a plane. You can buy a plane for one person. It will cost you \$100 million for a plane or you can buy the same plane and fill it with 50 people. So the difference, Madam Speaker, is the number of people who are paying for this one cost. So putting the cost on our country for these major modern sanitation systems, Madam Speaker, would be totally unaffordable for the small number of people that we have. This is why we have to look, Madam Speaker, at other financing such as development finances but also now increasingly climate financing and that’s what I mean, Madam Speaker, by not working hard but by working smart.

This Budget, the Members will notice is slightly less than last year’s Budget. It’s \$6 million less and the reason for that, Madam Speaker is not that we’ve cut the Budget – no. It is that the amount that we are spending on Capital has been slightly reduced and it hasn’t affected the operations of any of our Ministries.

So it is important for us as Members not just to look at this year’s Appropriation but to look at what this Appropriation this year will do for us for future years and I know it is the job of the Opposition to cast a critical eye over the Budget and make their suggestions on things that they think are not sufficient.

I would like to ask the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to please refrain from making comments about our Papa, Papa Maeva and claiming that the Ministry of Internal Affairs failed to provide him with the assistance he required. If you want to complain about the Ministry of Internal Affairs, you may do so but please don’t mention the name of our Papa, Papa Maeva. If you are going to use it, use it in a positive way.

In 2013, Papa Maeva made a request to me. He was away in New Zealand and Australia for a very long time to be with his family members. When he returned home, he found out that his pension has been terminated. For him to qualify for his old age pension, he was required to live in our country for one year. Government amended the Act during that year which provides that if you have been collecting the old age pension and you left our country for a long period, when you return to our country and find that your pension is terminated, you will continue to collect your pension rather than waiting for a stand down period to qualify for your pension again. This Papa was the advocator of this change and all we did was enforce the amendment based on his request.

Today, our old people who chose to travel overseas to be with their families for a long time will immediately receive their pension as soon as they return to our country. This is the type of comments we want to hear if we want to mention names in this House.

Madam Speaker, we heard a lot about money and it is good that we are financially in a very good position to deliver a lot of things to help our people. But let us not forget that we can also be wealthy with the things that money cannot buy. We live in a country Madam Speaker that the rest of the world considers a true paradise and yet we are complaining about our livelihood. We have the love of our families and friends which money can't buy. We have our unshakeable belief in our faith and in our God and we also have our good health which many of us take for granted which can be taken away like that. So yes, money can deliver a lot of things to help our people but there are important things that money cannot buy.

At the end of the day this is a budget and the purpose of the budget is to provide the services that we have promised to our constituents. Therefore Madam Speaker, I conclude my comments on the principles and merits of the Appropriation Bill and look forward to the debate in the Committee of Supply.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Deputy Prime Minister. I will now put the Question and the Question is:

**That the Appropriation Bill 2018/19 be now read a Second time?**

**Motion agreed to**

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. As per Standing Orders 306, I now resolve Parliament into the Committee of Supply to go through the Bill.

Honourable Members, we will begin with Schedule 1. As per Standing Order 307, (2) to (4), the Speaker may allocate time for the items. If you remember our last budget, we spent three days on Agriculture and there were twenty seven items to go through. So I have allocated according to the amount of funds given per Ministry as well as the importance of the Ministry as I have heard you debate in the last day or so.

For Agriculture, we will allocate an hour if the Opposition would like to use the thirty minutes and thirty minutes for Government if they would like to use that and we will go down to Education, the same process will be for Education. The same for Finance and Economic Management, the same for Health and this is mainly according to the large amount of funds allocated to these Ministries.

With Agriculture, although it is not a large amount, it is and has been of great interest in your debate, the same for Police, Tourism and the Cook Islands Investment Corporation. If you do not use that time that is allocated, we will just move on however, if we come to another item that you want to debate on, strictly on that amount and no principles and merits anymore.

I believe you have made arrangements as whose going to speak on your behalf on these items. Let's begin with Agriculture.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY – DAY 1**

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$1,082,887 for Agriculture stands part of the Bill?**

Are there any speakers? I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa you have the Floor.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you very much Madam Speaker. I would like to express my views regarding the allocation for the Ministry of Agriculture. I want to mention about the allocation under their outputs.

If we look at Output 1, it talks about Research and development. I would like us to look at bullet point 2 where it says Horticulture support. If we look at the appropriation for this Output, under Operation, there is an allocation of \$20,000. However if you look carefully at this allocation, there are a lot of explanations as to what kind of work will be carried out. That is the reason I mentioned in my maiden speech and also during the Appropriation Bill that \$20,000 is not a lot of money for this allocation.

We are shown that this is an important section of Output 1. One example is pest and diseases control and identification because this happened in our country in the past. I would like this area to be strengthened in Output 1. As well as that under the bullet point relating to soil and water management because when we look at our current climate it is very dry, despite our collaboration and work with the Environment as well as the Water Services on the conversation of water.

I mention this because the growers are looking at the situation of water to assist them with their planting.

Now we look at Output 2 under Biosecurity. Under the allocation of operation for this Output, there is \$20,160 that has been appropriated. I believe under this Output of Biosecurity it is one of the important issues for our country. It is observed that in other countries when yachts call on them there is no proper inspection on these vessels. I would like us to really consider as to how we are going to strengthen this area.

As well as the area of export, my concern in this area under Agriculture is to do with the security at the airport. This is the area where our fruits are being treated. I believe at this time this facility is no longer under the responsibility of Agriculture. Therefore I would like us to pay attention to this area as to how we can strengthen it or revive it so that it does not become a problem for our country. As well as working closely with our Outer Islands as well as other international countries.

We do require Biosecurity border control to inspect these vessels coming into our country. This is the reason I am highlighting these areas, yes there are allocations here but it is not adequate.

I would like to mention Output 3, livestock development. Under the operations there is an allocation of \$5,000.

This is an area I see that our livestock farmers encounter problems on Rarotonga and in the Outer Islands. Maybe this is why in Nga-Pu-Toru wild goats and pigs roam around. This is a major issue according to the Members of Parliament from these three islands. There are many wild goats and pigs and they find it hard to herd them together.

When I look at this area, it has become back to front where in the past we use to fence our animals in a pen instead of our plantations. Yet today we have to fence our crops instead of our animals. When I look at the area about animal diseases, there are insufficient medications for treating our animals. When you look at the list of bullet points under Output 3, there are many, and yet there is only \$5,000 allocated.

I now come to Output 4, under policy and projects. I have no issue with the allocation of \$4,022. However we still need to strengthen this area especially in the area of new initiatives. Maybe we can get assistance through development funding from outside. So I have no issue in this area of the allocation of \$4,022.

Under Output 5, under corporate services, I see there are adequate funds of about \$119,461 in the appropriation, but when I look under the outputs especially the area of providing support to the Ministry's operations, it is not sufficient.

Madam Speaker this is all my thoughts on the Appropriation under Agriculture.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Honourable Member and I see the Honourable William Heather.

**HON. W. HEATHER:** I do not have much to say Madam Speaker because much has been captured by previous speakers. I would only like to bring to the Floor the submission for subsidy to the animal feed that we are purchasing to feed our livestock. The cost of animal feed is rising, as well as the medication for our animals. We know sometimes in the past the Ministry of Agriculture gave permission to our local farmers to inject and medicate their own animals. I would like to request the Minister to consider this matter seriously because there are local farmers who are overdosing their animals with these medications. This is not appropriate because I have been advised by the Vet they have tried to prevent this problem.

As mentioned before regarding our water issue, if there is no water, it is useless to raise livestock, because today, one is required to have a septic when you feed animals. The cost for feeding animals is increasing which affects all areas of feeding animals.

I want to mention about the biosecurity border control at our international airport because I see the good work done by the staff working there. I know this because one time I was stopped by the quarantine staff at the airport. I had on me a branch of flower for my wife from New Zealand. I was happy because I was able to show them my permit from New Zealand. I can see that they carry out the responsibility that was given them. I congratulated them that night for their good work and in ensuring that our borders are protected from pests and diseases.

That is all my thoughts Madam Speaker.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Honourable Member and I see the Honourable Wesley Kareroa and you have the Floor.

**MR W. KAREROA:** Kia Orana Madam Speaker and all the Honourable Members in this Honourable House.

We are all requesting Government to increase the Appropriation for Agriculture. To me everything has been allocated before this Budget came to Parliament and if there is further increase for Agriculture, it will affect other allocations in this Budget. I remember asking the Public Service Commissioner about a certain tree which was planted in Mangaia 20 years ago. This tree is the pine trees in Mangaia. I am not sure about the business plan for this tree but I am sure when it was time for harvesting the pine, nothing was done.

The last report when the Public Service Commission came to value the plant in Mangaia was that it only amounted to \$18million. To me if all efforts were made to harvest this forest we would have made enough money so there is no need to borrow from other sectors such as Education and Health and put it somewhere else because this ruins our whole plan.

Even though I have made a request since last year to conduct a survey and to value this resource to see whether it has increased or decreased, nothing has been done. I am asking Government again to send someone to value this forest, not just the one in Mangaia but also the one in Atiu. Those are my thoughts to find a way to increase the allocation for agriculture so it does not masque the appropriation. Hopefully, I don't come back next year and report that no survey has been done. That is all I have to say Madam Speaker.

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

**MR V. TUPA:** Madam Chairman, just to make use of our remaining ten minutes, I will take us back to Output 5 Corporate Services. I consider this output as one of the most important area because it also deals with our relationship to other agencies outside our country because Agriculture is affiliated to the Rotterdam Convention. The mandate under this Convention is to look into pesticides that are sent all over the world. I assure the House this is one of the most important areas because I have attended meetings when these organisation were merged.

The three Conventions that merged were the Basil Convention, the Rotterdam Convention and the Stockholm Convention. Their arrangement under the BRS Convention includes pesticides as well as hazardous waste.

I know that in past years very few of our people are involved in these meetings. I believe the suitable people to attend these meetings are those officials specialising in these three areas because every two years Ministers participate in these meetings. We can get assistance under the Rotterdam Convention in the area of agriculture and that is why I rose to illustrate this area under Corporate Services.

Even though they have been allocated \$119,461 but the work that is being allocated under this is very important and when we consider all the bullet points under Output 5 these are all very important areas. That is why I highlighted our relationship with all these organisations, as well as the relationship with growers and planters as they represent us and give their thoughts on agriculture in this country.

I can vouch in this House that in the Pacific, the Cook Islands have been trail blazers ahead of other Pacific Countries. I remember the comments made by the Prime Minister last year that we always open the door or initiate discussions on any issues throughout the Pacific. That's why I am always very proud when we the Cook Islands go to these meetings we initiate discussions or question issues of this nature.

I can highlight that there is only one member from the Pacific that has been elected on to this BRS Convention. The representative from the Cook Islands was selected and I became the representative for the Asia Pacific under these three Conventions. I can assure you that within the Asia Pacific Region it's over a thousand representatives in these organisations. This is the area of the Asia Pacific and that is why I say I am proud of our Cook Islands people as mentioned by the Prime Minister last year when we represent the Cook Islands in these meetings. Therefore, my request to the Minister and the Associate Minister is to select our people again to represent us at these three Conventions. These meetings are held in Geneva, Switzerland. Every two years this meeting is held, the Minister or Associate Minister attends to represent us.

This is not only in the area of agriculture but on the whole national representation for the Cook Islands from Ministries to Ministers. I highlight this point because we need the right people to represent us at these meetings and to bring back what they have gathered that will benefit our country. This has been stipulated under Output 5 – Corporate Services.

To make up my time, under Disaster and Emergency planning, and under the area of assets and security, I believe this can be covered under operations but if not we can make a request for funding to these organisations. One organisation that we can request for funds is the FAO.

These are my thoughts that I would like to share with us in this House Madam Chairman. May God help us all in this House.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much and I see the Honourable Member Patrick Arioka.

**MR P. ARIOKA:** Thank you Madam Chairman. I would like to thank the Opposition for the questions and queries concerning the list of Outputs that are listed under the appropriation for the Ministry of Agriculture. I am also happy to hear that the Opposition has been thorough, they have done their homework to investigate the points as well as the funding appropriation for each of those Outputs.

Madam Chairman, just to give some explanation to set the scene so that our Members of Parliament as well as the Opposition would understand how the programme was put together and listed in our appropriation tonight.

In 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture took a bold step to try and develop the sector policy as well as the strategic goals for next three years and I am happy to report, Madam Chair that that process was overwhelmingly participated by our own people particularly our farmers and growers on Rarotonga as well as in the Pa Enua. Although that sector policy and strategic goals are yet to be published and submitted to Cabinet, I am happy to say that we are in the edge of the final stages to make that available to the public and therefore the key points that has been identified by the Opposition has been clearly rightly so been clear that those new initiatives as well as the programme has been set out for the next three years.

Most importantly, Madam Chair are the key steps that puts us on the right direction in forming the foundation of the sector for the next three years and therefore allow me to go through the key points that have been raised starting from Output 1 of the Crop Research Division.

First of all, Madam Chair, we had the privilege and opportunity to be assisted by our funding partners from New Zealand as well as our Crop agencies in Fiji which is the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in assisting a lot of the programmes under the Crop Research Output.

We are so fortunate that that assistance has allowed us to further progress our plans and programmes for the next three years. For example, Madam Chair, the Pests and Disease Identification Programme for the Cook Islands was assisted by the Manaaki Whenua Land Care Research of New Zealand.

That programme was to put together a team of biosecurity officers including research officers but also our Pa Enua Agriculture staff and therefore that training was crucial to help maintain the skills and knowledge in pests and disease identification. To date, Madam Chair that programme has been effective because what we are trying to do in trying to achieve is to make sure our borders for biosecurity are well protected.

I take note of the comment concerning the yacht inspections and the programme that we have for 2018-2019 is going to address those biosecurity concerns.

The Cook Islands is at a pivotal period where we are going to experience a number of incursions and hopefully not, particularly with the rhinoceros beetle concerning our coconut industry. This pest, Madam Chair, is becoming so prevalent in the countries of Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands and it's becoming a serious problem to the coconut industry.

The Ministry of Agriculture has taken a bold step to make sure that we are ready to protect our borders, particularly on islands that are a port of entry to the Cook Islands, which are Penrhyn, Pukapuka, Atiu and Aitutaki. Therefore, the two Outputs – Output 1 and 2 are working in tandem to try and address this key problem for the Cook Islands.

I also take note of the points raised concerning the airport area cool store that has been used for treatments of our produce. The Minister and I are working hard to make sure that we could have an opportunity to use this facility to try and improve the imports of our produce from New Zealand. It has to be an important facility because it is the

only barrier that allows produce in and out of the airport facility but I also take note of the concerns raised by the Member of Parliament for Ngatangiia that this facility should have been opened and making sure that it should help with our Pa Enua produce be stored and contained.

And therefore that is the second point that the Minister and I are looking forward so that when the Pa Enua are producing we have a facility to store produce to be available to the tourism market here on Rarotonga. But I am also happy to report, Madam Chair that the private sector is also interested to be part of that market in facilitating produce from the Pa Enua to Rarotonga. At their own initiative and interest they chose to have a look at this opportunity to be facilitated by them.

Moving on to livestock, Madam Chair, we had the opportunity of visiting the Southern Group Islands and I am happy to report what animals are of serious concern on these islands. If agriculture has to be productive we need to consider this as a first priority and therefore this cannot be a solution that we just fence our crops but we need to deal with the source of the problem right at the source core.

The Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Pa Enua has allowed us to initiate and put to the Island Council and the Island Government the importance of culling wild animals and we are happy to report that the community themselves are interested to take this programme on board as a programme to help generate revenue to the islands.

The livestock treatment issues concerning our farmers and growers in the islands as well as here in Rarotonga have been an ongoing but improving progress so far. I am concerned about the livestock welfare that is being raised by our own people because we are not addressing treatment issues. We are addressing people issues treating their animals and therefore the Livestock Division is doing its best to try and improve the knowledge and skill of our own people when they are taking care of their livestock.

Therefore, Madam Chair, we are taking serious steps to address those issues. That is because, Madam Chair we need to show to our people that are arriving into our country, particularly our tourists, that we are serious in looking after not only our livestock animals but also our pets.

If I may, Madam Chair, the Policy and Projects Output has been an important one that has worked hard to put together the programme and the plan and its vision for the Ministry for the next three years. Therefore, the Policy and Projects are still continuing that effort to try and build the capacity of our Pa Enua Departments in particular in improving their management skills and knowledge. And therefore, Madam Chair the policy is working hard to make sure that that programme comes to an end.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Honourable Member I will interrupt your presentation. Have you finished?

**MR P. ARIOKA:** No.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Alright.

We shall take our break now and return at 9.00 p.m.

**Sitting suspended at 8.30 p.m.**

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

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Please be seated. Parliament is resumed.

When we suspended, the Honourable Member Patrick Arioka was on the Floor and on the interrupted debate of the Appropriation Bill in Committee of Supply.

**MR P. ARIOKA:** Thank you Madam Chair. I was just finishing off and wrapping up the Output for Policy and Projects but I think it is important to note in this House Madam Chair that the workshop for Aqua Tourism has started today. That is supported by CTA and SPC of Fiji to put together key priorities and policies that would drive the Aqua Tourism in the next three years.

I had the privilege of opening this workshop this morning Madam Chair and I am happy to report that the number of private sector within the tourism market as well as outside of the tourism marker and fisheries were present for these major discussions.

The anticipated outcome for this workshop Madam Chair is to provide to Government priority areas and policies that would guide the Aqua Tourism for the Cook Islands. Therefore, the Outputs and programmes that have been identified under the Agriculture sector have taken into account those initiatives. It is timely that this happen because the Ministry themselves were trying to work out what is the best effective way of convening our private sector on the major topic for supporting Aqua Tourism. Therefore Madam Chair, the Minister and I are happy to congratulate the Chamber of Commerce for making the initiative a possible one and a start.

With regards to Corporate services Output Madam Chair, the increase for operations in this Output are the additional \$84,000 that is being identified under the new initiative. It is rightly so that this output will facilitate the disbursement of that funding to help our Pa Enua programme, skill and knowledge development.

I take note of the comments raised concerning the forestry sector under the Ministry and therefore, we are happy to say that the islands of Mangaia, Atiu and Mauke are being put under this programme. The very list of islands identified this as a priority area for the Ministry to assist. Out of the Minister's initiative and interest to pursue this, we have convened with the New Zealand Government to assist in facilitating and supporting a scientist to develop the feasibility study for forestry. It is an important study Madam Chair because we are not just concerned about the value assessment of that sector but we're more concerned about the environmental impact that will be posed if we were to harvest those trees.

Therefore Madam Chair, out of the initiative of the Island Government, the idea was to intercrop the forest with coconut varieties of superior quality and cocoa plantations. These are economic value crops but at the same time we are trying to make sure that the harvest is within the right parameters with less impact to the environment.

Regarding pesticides and the issues concerning the use of chemicals and fertilisers in the Agriculture industry, there is a major shift that the farmers and growers wanted to shift away from conventional use to organic use. It is this idea that was born from out of that list of consultations with the farmers that the shift of this paradigm and the use of conventional chemicals need to be done away with.

At the same time Madam Chair we are starting to see also new certified organic growers who are going to be pioneers to market their own products of organic value. As you know Madam Chair, our Nono industry is exporting nono under the principles of organic farming. Therefore, we are happy to report back Madam Chair that the production of nono is steadily increasing but we also want to engage the Pa Enua in this area.

We also learned Madam Chair that the Nono industry has made and has sat with Island Governments of Mauke and Mangaia to discuss further and good arrangements of assisting in increasing production for nono.

Therefore, I take note of the point raised by the Honourable Member for Matavera that the representative that should sit in the BRA's Convention should be an important one that represents the interest of farmers. So if it's going to be in Geneva, definitely I'll be on that trip to assist in that area.

Lastly Madam Chair, Airport Security plus the programme for disaster risk management has been an important one for the Ministry of Agriculture. The Honourable Members in this House must have read the news article that the Minister has opened the CROP Bank of Atiu and that CROP Bank was designed for that purpose. Therefore the whole purpose of the CROP Bank is to support islands that are being destroyed by cyclones by replenishing their crops and helping to recover in a much earlier and much quicker pace. These CROP Banks will be continued to be established on the remaining islands of the Southern Groups Madam Speaker.

On those note, I thank you madam Chair, those are my supporting comments to the Bill.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Minister, you have four minutes.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Kia Orana to you Madam Chair and to all of us in this Honourable House.

Because I only have four more minutes of speaking time, I can see that time is running out. Therefore I would like to thank you all for your wonderful comments Honourable Members on the Vote Item for Agriculture. The good thing about this is that all Honourable Members agreed for the Vote Item for Agriculture to be increased. I understand that we have complained during the last couple of years about insufficient funds for the Ministry of Agriculture. Although the increase to the Vote Item this year is small, we will notice that there is also assistance from donors outside our country.

In our budget is the allocation for the Pearl industry and the programme action for resilience livelihood for the Outer Islands and \$1.8 million was allocated for this which will help the people in the Southern and the Northern Islands. There are many ways we can give assistance to our people but your submission and views are collected and will be collated for future discussions in making future Budget appropriations in the new financial year. I trust that the Honourable Members will support the Agriculture appropriation this year.

I would like to acknowledge the former Minister of Agriculture and the Secretary of Agriculture, Doctor Matairangi Purea and the current Associate Minister of Agriculture, Patrick Arioka for their hard work in this area of Agriculture, until I came in to take over this area for a short period.

As you can see, as a woman, we do not say a lot but focus more on doing the work and successfully completing it. The Associate Minister of Agriculture, Patrick Arioka has explained to everyone the plans and visions we have for our people in this area of Agriculture.

I also would like to acknowledge all the growers that we have visited last month and our national College Tereora. To all of you listening I want to assure you that your thoughts and plans we have heard you and these will be put into the Master Plan for Agriculture. I stand to fully support the allocation for the Ministry of Agriculture and to extend to you all our appreciation for your support. Kia Orana.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Honourable Minister Rose Brown. And I would like to thank the Members of the Opposition for being able to keep to the time and also to the Members on the Government side.

I will now put the Question, and the Question is:

**That the sum of \$1,820,887 for Agriculture stands part of the Schedule?**

**Motion agreed to**

AUDIT:

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$1,084,252 for Audit stands part of the Schedule?**

**Motion agreed to**

CROWN LAW:

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$1,943,518 for Crown Law stands part of the Schedule?**

As there are no speakers, I will put the Question:

**That the sum of \$1,943,518 for Crown Law stands part of the Schedule?****Motion agreed to**

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT:

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$4,587,744 for Cultural Development stands part of the Schedule?**

I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa, you have the Floor.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you very much Madam Speaker, if I may be permitted to speak on the appropriation.

I see under Output 1, the cultural identity. This is listed as promoting our cultural event and all its art form and also the area to strengthen our cultural values among our support partners. I fully support all that is listed under Output 1. Even if the allocation is only \$35,000 under the operation here, I fully support this allocation.

Output 2 on cultural heritage – where we are to promote, protect and strengthen our creative and artist ownership. The allocation here is \$20,000. I support this because this area is in relation to copyright. Our copyright law is already in place under the Tauranga Vananga or Ministry of Culture Development. In this Act there are clauses relating to copyright. The problem about this is that it has not been legalised yet.

I would like to ask the Minister of Culture to have a serious look at this. The Ministry of Culture has looked at this law especially during the time when Sonny Williams was the Secretary of Culture. It was a serious burden then to push this through to make it a law for our country. The Minister of Culture was the former Deputy Prime Minister, Teariki Heather. I was working together with these people to push this law through. Come to today this copyright law is still here.

The main reason for this Madam Speaker is because of our composers among our people. Our composers are still scattered and not really united on this matter. I found on one of my travels to Hawaii and Tahiti, this well known drum dance – “walk like a duck”. This drum dance was composed by Papa George Karaponga of Manihiki. In the hotel I stayed in, the Tahitians performing in the hotel was performing this item and claiming it to be a Tahitian number. They were claiming that it was composed by a Tahitian person.

We cannot fault these Tahitians and we cannot claim the rights to this item because we do not have a copyright law in place. That is one of the reason I wanted to speak on this appropriation. I am sorry for all the songs that the Member for Rakahanga has composed. We must find ways to protect what is rightly ours, something that belongs to us.

I would like to convey my appreciation to the former Secretary of Culture – Mr Sonny Williams and the former Deputy Prime Minister, Teariki Heather for their visions in

creating the copyright law. And today I would like to challenge the new Minister of Culture to advance this important law for our people. It is an important law for our own composers today.

I come to Output 3 and this is to do with cultural governance. As I have previously mentioned under the Agriculture appropriation, I am especially interested in the regional and the international engagements. And looking through these schedules we find there are many international bodies that we are engaged with, such as, UNESCO, YPO, IFACCA and so forth. These international agencies support the work of the Ministry of Culture and other cultural events in the pacific. Even if the allocation is \$133,000, I think this is a good amount to support the operation cost for the Ministry.

I wish to highlight what was spoken by the current Deputy Prime Minister regarding our relationship with these international organisations. How are we to take advantage so that we benefit from these organisations? That is the reason I am bringing this to our attention today.

I want to speak on administrative funding because under this section it is referred to as the *Kopapa Maori Board*. I support this even though there is only \$15,000 allocated for this work but I will ask that when these organisations are formed that some representatives from the Outer Islands be included.

Madam Chairman, those are my thoughts on the appropriation for the Ministry of Culture.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you, Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Madam Chairman, as mentioned by the Member Vaitoti Tupa, when I look at the appropriation for Culture, I am looking at the appropriation for Cultural Heritage.

Last year the sum appropriated for Cultural Heritage was \$341,000 and this year it has decreased to \$227,000. When I look at this appropriation I think it should be the same allocation as Cultural Identity and that it should be increased. Their responsibility is to secure our Maori customs and to protect our environment.

I will come back to the first output which is Cultural Identity and that is to strengthen our Maori language in schools and to make our Maori language on the same level as English.

I also ask the Minister responsible as I can see that most of the Bills coming into this House are only in the English language and only a few has been translated into our Maori language. I think we in this House should lead by example.

I come back to our Maori culture. We can see that this is being promoted but we want this to be on a higher standard and especially with the items that we are presenting during the Maeva Nui celebrations.

As an example, I will bring the example of the traditional singing by the group from Takitumu. What has been taught to the dance team, the traditional singing you don't emphasise or *tuki* in the traditional singing but in the traditional hymn that's when you *tuki* but when it comes to the time of the competition you don't understand how the judging is done.

So these are areas in our Maori culture that we need to look at and the same goes for the drum dances. I watch some teams dancing in the drum dance section during the Maeva Nui celebrations like the team from Rakahanga, to me they are losing their real dance moves from their island because they really shake when they dance the drum dance.

Seeing that you have brought this Bill into this House we need to look at the right and proper time that we can plan properly how we do this. These are my views for this and also looking at how we can look at the areas for our visitors to the island.

I am not sure whether an appropriation has been set aside for this area to help to buy back some of the old artifacts that we want to conserve whether it is in the cultural heritage or cultural identity.

I remember last year, I went to the Ministry of Culture to seek assistance for a piece of tapa cloth that was painted in 1853 on the Titikaveka Church which was put on the market in New Zealand. I sought assistance from this Ministry to see if they can bring this tapa cloth into our country because this is of historical value and I think it would have sat nicely in our museum if we were able to purchase this piece of tapa back. So if an appropriation is put in there then I will say this is good for the Ministry of Culture.

Thank you Madam Chair.

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

**MR T. TUAVERA:** Thank you Madam Chairman. I am endorsing what the Member for Teimurimotia said earlier because this is not the only artifact that was taken away by the LMS Missionaries from the Cook Islands. These are the people that came here and told us to go and cover our nakedness with clothes and they also told us to close our eyes when we pray and with the Bible in our hands. But when we opened our eyes to civilization, we had clothes on and they did not have any.

Madam Chairman, this is happening all around the world with artifacts, spears and so forth from the Cook Islands which have been taken away from us. But the sad thing is these are in private collections in Europe. If we want these things to be returned we have to find the money to buy them back because to me these things are important to us for our history.

The other day someone was talking about tattoo because some people are saying we in the Cook Islands do not tattoo our face and some are saying we tattoo our face. When the LMS came during that time, they killed our culture. Nowadays, we are saying that is our dance and that is our culture and other islands are saying it is theirs

because Polynesians don't record our culture we just pass it down with word of mouth.

When we look at the people who make traditional medicine, this is passed down in the family. You are not allowed to pass this knowledge to someone outside of the family as the medicine will not work. Traditional medicine is not prepared on Saturday or Sunday because the people who make the medicine say these two days are sacred. Usually, most rules for our local medicine are to take them for three days, so the days that these are prepared are Mondays and if it is not completed then Tuesdays.

So these are some of the things that we need to look at regarding our culture. We look at our dance. We look at our songs because on the island of Tahiti – I will give an example of the Kapa Rima from Takitumu. Parts of the CD are released. There is a group and the song is sung in Tahiti. Now I support the idea from the Member for Matavera of how the singer, Apiti Nicholas had moved on.

This is one of the powerful ladies in her time who tried to protect our songs not to be sung by any other people. We have a lot of singers that have passed on and now we are asking Government to look at it again carefully so that our composers are protected and not wait until our singers or composers have passed on, for us to look at creating a law. What the Member of Parliament for Matavera is saying is that he's going to compose a song for the Parliament and this song must be protected.

But on a serious note, Madam Chair, we must protect our culture. We must protect our heritage.

I now ask you, the Minister of Culture, we are in your hands now and we are looking forward to your recommendations of how we can protect all this.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much Honourable Member.

The time for debate on that has actually expired – the 30 minutes – 10, 10, 10 minutes have gone as per the stipulation.

However, Minister as it is your Department, I will allow you two minutes.

**HON. G. ANGENE:** Thank you Madam Chair.

Firstly, I would like to thank all the Members for your inputs to this appropriation so we can look into the comments that they have made. We are not just going to look at it but I am going to do it and it's going to be possible.

As I mentioned earlier, Madam Chair, my position is BAM – Bachelor of Action Man – and my belief is this is enough. I don't want to listen to any little issues that are not important but I want to share something that is important to the people to hear.

If there are no other comments, Madam Chair, I will say our closing prayer.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Honourable Minister for shortening your speaking time.

As there are no further speakers, I will put the Question.

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$4,587,744 for Cultural Development stands part of the Schedule?**

**Motion agreed to**

I call on the Minister for the Motion to resume Parliament or to report back the progress of the Bill to Parliament.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Madam Chair, I am pleased to report:

**That progress of the Bill through the Committee is travelling smoothly**

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Honourable Members.

Parliament is resumed.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I call on the Honourable Minister to please report the progress of the Bill to Parliament.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Yes, it has been a year since the last time we did this.

So I now report:

**That the progress of the Bill through the Committee of Supply is progressing very smoothly**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Minister and we will continue with the other agencies of Government as we go through the Committee tomorrow as our time is now coming to the end tonight.

Parliament is now adjourned until Wednesday, 26 September at 1.00 p.m.

May I ask somebody to close us with prayer and can I ask the Minister who was up last to say our closing prayer.

**CLOSING PRAYER**

Parliament is adjourned until Wednesday, 26 September at 1.00 p.m.

**Parliament adjourned at 9.55 p.m.**