



FORTY-NINTH SESSION HANSARD REPORT

49th Session

Fourteenth Meeting

Volume 14

THURSDAY, 26 MAY 2022

MR SPEAKER TOOK THE CHAIR AT 10.00 A.M.

OPENING PRAYER

MR SPEAKER (T. TURA): Please be seated. I call the House to order. Greetings to you all on this beautiful morning. We also extend greetings to our people on the island of Rarotonga, to those in the North and Southern Groups. Greetings also to our Chaplain for conducting our service this morning. It was a beautiful message, topped with the wonderful prayers that he delivered.

I will not forget our staff of Parliament, from the Clerk to his Assistant, the Interpreters and other staff who work for Parliament. I want to thank them for their hard work as some of you are not aware that they finish work at 4.00 a.m. and start work again at 8.00 a.m.

We will now go to Question Time. I will ask the Honourable Member Tingika Elikana to take the Floor and response to the question that was raised to him yesterday. Please be patient with me, thank you.

Let us start again, there is some change to our programme for today. I will call the Leader of the House, the Honourable Tehani Brown.

MS T. BROWN: Mr Speaker, I move:

That Standing Order 66 (b) be suspended and to proceed with Question Time for half an hour only to enable the House to deliberate with the Appropriation Bill 2022

MR SPEAKER: Thank you Leader of the House. I call for a Seconder to the Motion?

Seconded by the Honourable William Heather

The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

MR SPEAKER: Question Time will be for thirty minutes instead of one hour. I now call the Honourable Tingika Elikana; you have the Floor.

MR T. ELIKANA: Thank you Mr Speaker.

I would like to thank my friend from Akaoa for the very beautiful question he asked yesterday. Fortunately, Mr Speaker I could not answer it yesterday and I was given the opportunity to reflect on what my answer will be overnight and this morning.

You will recall Mr Speaker and Members of this House, that when I referred to opportunities in the Northern Group islands it was as a result in the context of the successful trip by our Prime Minister in his discussions with his French Polynesia counterpart. I was referring there Mr Speaker, to the potential of greater tourism numbers directly to the Northern Group and the need for rebuilding the airport infrastructure both in Manihiki, Penrhyn and also Pukapuka.

Since the question was asked, two very important events intervened in that period until my answer now. As you would appreciate I prepared for these response when the question was raised. I will highlight these two events in the reverse.

This morning we just listened to the Reverend presenting our text this morning. He referred to Revelations and the text is very inspiring in this time and period when John in his vision referred to seeing the new Heavens and the new earth. In our Cook Islands Maori it reads “*Kite atura au ko Ioane i te rangi ou e te enua ou*”. In the context of what we are going to go through soon, I Member of Parliament for Pukapuka can see the new earth and the new heaven with the advent of tourism to the Northern Group. I am sure my friends from the Northern Group, including the Leader of the Opposition can only see good things for the Northern Group.

MRS S. NAPA: Point of Order!

MR T. ELIKANA: Mr Speaker, is she going to raise a Point of Order or just standing.

MRS S. NAPA: I have asked for a Point of Order.

MR SPEAKER: A Point of Order is raised. What is your Point of Order Honourable Member?

MRS S. NAPA: Mr Speaker, the Member for Pukapuka is waffling, he needs to answer the question as this is Question Time.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you may continue.

MR T. ELIKANA: I think I should waffle a lot because waffle is something I like. If you want some, you can go to the Punanga Nui and buy it from there.

But that aside I know the second event. When I went back yesterday and tried to prepare myself I thought I would just check my Facebook, because I follow both political parties on Facebook and I came across the Democratic Party Facebook. Low and behold, they were asking for suggestions from members of the public in developing their policies. So, Mr Speaker that concerns me because after four years, they are still considering their policies.

MRS S. NAPA: Poin of Order Mr Speaker!

MR SPEAKER: What is your Point of Order Honourable Member?

MRS S. NAPA: I see the Honourable Member for Pukapuka is wondering away from answering the question because we have a lot of questions that we want to raise.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Member, can you come back to the question raised.

MR T. ELIKANA: Mr Speaker, the question that was asked did not say that I should answer it with a yes or no. That is the difference in the way we ask questions and the way they ask questions. My friend who asked that question left the door open. So, I am trying to fit everything into the door.

MR SPEAKER: Get it in one door now.

MR T. ELIKANA: Mr Speaker, the point I raised my concern with him seeking the appealingings of the public at this stage after four years of them having the opportunity to do it, it is because what I might be seeing about development in the Northern Group they might put it into their manifesto and tell the public it's their idea. That is my concern Mr Speaker.

The question is whether fresh fish and taro can be sent to Rarotonga. Mr Speaker as I said when I spoke on the mertis and principels of the budget, I gave hints what is the opportunities available if we open tourism to the Northern Groups. Unfortunately, I am not prepared to expand on those thoughts because the Opposition is going to take it and write it into their manifesto.

MR T. TUAVERA: Point of Order Mr Speaker!

MR SPEAKER: A Point of Order has been raised.

MR T. TUAVERA: The question was, if he can send taro and fish to Rarotonga? Not elaborate on tourism or other things.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Member, can you please answer the question.

MR T. ELIKANA: Thats the problem Mr Speaker. The question is open ended. You listen to the Honourable Member for Tupapa, George Angene asked the question yesterday and he said answer, yes or no. They didn't say that. So, don't blame me.

MR T. TUAVERA: You are an educated person.

MR SPEAKER: A Point of Order has been raised.

MRS S. NAPA: Can we please move on with the Question Time here. We have a lot of questions from the Opposition.

MR SPEAKER: Please Honourable Member, answer the question.

MR T. ELIKANA: I am going to take a little while to answer it because it is open but hey, to be fair to my friends over on that side who have asked the question, the short answer is, yes. It can be done but I am not going to give you the reason so you cannot write it in your manifesto. Thank you.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member Tingika Elikana, I see the Honourable Member Nooroa Baker; you have the Floor.

MR N. BAKER: Thank you Mr Speaker. I will not ask questions to the Member from Pukapuka anymore otherwise he will go around the world and come back to our Parliament before he tell us the real story.

So, my question Mr Speaker this morning to the Honourable Member of RAPPa, the Honourable Albert Nicholas. Mr Speaker I believe the Associate Minister for ICI knows about something that happened in the past. I was told that our roads in Akaoa or Puaikura was priority on the government list to be fixed.

The people of Puaikura was surprised that the whole project was moved to Tupapa. That is why I was surprised to hear that Puaikura's road was not completed, and I understand it was going to be sealed with the hot mix in 2016. I also believe that there was a machine that was bought and it was a chip seal machine. I want to know why that machine was bought and why it was not used. Who owns that machine?

So, that is why I was a bit disappointed when I heard that Puaikura's road was supposed to be completed but the road work was moved to Tupapa. Thank you.

MR SPEAKER: I see the Associate Minister, Albert Nicholas; you have the Floor.

MR A. NICHOLAS: Mr Speaker, just for clarification, is this an open ended question or does the Honourable Member just require a yes or no?

MR SPEAKER: It is an open closed question.

MR A. NICHOLAS: Thank you Mr Speaker and the Honourable Member who have asked the question to me. For this question, I consider that it is directed at a time when I was not Associate Minister, and even before the time the present Prime Minister was the Minister Responsible.

I believe this question is referring to the time when the former Member of Parliament for Akaoa, Teariki Heather was the Minister Responsible for the Ministry and also the Deputy Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker I see the question that has been asked requires two parts of the answer. Firstly, the question is why was this project discontinued when it was supposed to be carried according to plan. Secondly, it relates to a machine that was purchased by the then Deputy Prime Minister for the road sealing. I believe at the time, there were some issues about this machine in terms of

purchasing the machine. So, can I request for this part of the question to be deferred until Question Time tomorrow.

To answer the first question as to why the road project in 2016 was not completed according to plan. I suggest for you Honourable Member to get the proper answer from the former Deputy Prime Minister at the time. I am still unsure why this road project discontinued because this man was was not only the Minister of ICI at the time, but also the Deputy Prime Minister of our country.

My question this morning was, why were the roads in Puaikura not sealed during his time. I was in Cabinet at the time and it was Teariki Heather who stopped the work from going ahead. I recall that under the leadership of the former Prime Minister, Henry Puna, he suggested that the first road to be sealed would be Harley Street.

The proposal was to start the hot seal tarsealing from Harley Street through to Puaikura. However, due to some issues, the then Deputy Prime Minister did not want the roads to be sealed. His preference was for the roads to be chipped sealed. During that time, the then Prime Minister and the rest of the Members wanted the roads to be hot mix sealed. For this reason, the road sealing went to Tupapa and around Takitumu. As you may be aware, right now the roadwork is on the border leading to Puaikura. Like what the Prime Minister told us in the past days, when the sealing of the remaining areas in Takitumu is completed, the work will start in Puaikura.

To conclude my response to the Honourable Member, this question is better directed to the former Minister of ICI and Deputy Prime Minister when you see him on the road.

On the second part of your question, I will respond to this question tomorrow when I return to the House with facts and background information about the machine. Thank you.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you Associate Minister, Albert Nicholas. I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa; you have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you Mrs Speaker.

My question is to the Minister George Angene because when I look at his attire, it is like the students of Takamoā Theological College. I thought he was going to conduct our Opening Devotion in the House this morning.

However, my question is, we know you are constructing graves for some people around the island and you are providing free services. There are some households in Matavera that wants concrete water tanks. Some households also received sponsored plastic water tanks during the cyclone in 2015 and they are now damaged.

The question is, have you considered constructing concrete water tanks free of service for our people starting in the village of Matavera? Thank you.

MR SPEAKER: I see the Honourable Minister George Angene; you have the Floor.

HON. G. ANGENE: Thank you very much Mr Speaker.

Thank you for the question Honourable Member from Matavera. The question is whether I have considered constructing concrete water tanks? Yes, since I have already started constructing graves free of charge, tree trimmings for free, cleaning households of the destitute for free then I see no barrier for me to construct concrete water tanks for free. There is nothing that George Maggie cannot do, that's my game.

(Much laughter)

So, in response to the question that if it can be done? The response is I can do it, through your assistance in your district, Ngatangia and around the Cook Islands. My service is available and to also train someone in the districts to construct water tanks. Thank you.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate; you have the Floor.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you Mr Speaker. My question is to seek clarification from the Minister for Foreign Affairs. This is in reference to the status of PR. My question is regarding those foreigners who have married locals and have been here 2 to 3 and maybe up to 10 years. What is the situation with their PR application now?

MR SPEAKER: Thank you. I see the Honourable Prime Minister the Minister of Foreign Affairs; you have the Floor.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Speaker and thank you Honourable Member for his question.

I can update you the PR applications closed on Friday last week. The Immigration team is going through the first part of the process to eliminate those that do not fit the criteria that has been set before they start going through the second part of the process. They will then review the criteria for those who have passed stage 1.

We know that this House passed the Immigration Act that limits the number of PR's to 500. Of course, these Permanent Residents criteria are PR's in their own right. Not included in this 500 over and above are those PR applications from people who are partners or spouses of Cook Islanders. Therefore, there is no limits applied to those criteria of PR. However, there is still qualifying criteria for spouses of PR and one of them I am aware of is that they must be in a committed relationship for at least 5 years. The Residency criteria also applies for New Zealanders 5 years and for those who are non-New Zealanders 10 years.

The other criteria that does not fit in the limit of 500 are those PR applicants who are over the age of 70. Again, there is no limit on granting PR to those who are over the age of 70.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister, I think there is a lot more to say to complete your answer. Can you do that tomorrow?

HON. M. BROWN: I can do it now in 30 seconds.

MR SPEAKER: Carry on.

HON. M. BROWN: In the next two weeks, we should have the final assessment from the team from Immigration for the consideration of those who have successfully qualified for PR. Thank you Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister and thank you Members for your questions and answers. We have come to the end of Question Time.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Interrupted debate in the Committee of Supply. I now resolve Parliament in to the Committee of Supply.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

MR CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, yesterday we were interrupted in the Committee of Supply by adjournment. We will now go to our next Vote Item, which is on Corrective Services.

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$1, 729, 457 for Corrective Services stands part of the Schedule?

I see the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Member William Heather; you have the Floor.

I was going to give the Floor to the Minister Responsible for Corrective Services, he looks white this morning.

(Laughter)

MR W. HEATHER: Mr Chairman, on this Vote Item, we are looking at our inmates in prison. I would like to dwell on Output 2 regarding the area of retraining our youth in there to reintegrate them back into society.

Mr Speaker, I am happy with this. I really believe it should be increased because I am happy with the work they are doing here.

Regarding the work scheme where they come out to assist the community with the Wardens, I am very pleased with the work they are doing here. That is why I am suggesting to the Minister to increase this Appropriation.

Some of the programmes they run and train our inmates are, planting, cleaning, grass cutting and others with the hope that these programmes will help them when they are released back into the community.

Mr Chairman, if people see the good work that these young people do, they will be inspired to continue helping them. I know this because my own son brings an inmate home and I am very happy to support him.

I have also done this during my time. I have brought an inmate home to teach him to grow pawpaw, kumara and bananas and I eventually left him to work unsupervised. I spent four years with this young man before he completed his sentence and then returned to Aitutaki.

During those times, we eat together during our meals in the morning, lunch and in the evening. I used to teach him the Word of God and his livelihood and not to return to his old way of life. He became a very good friend of mine. When I travel to Aitutaki and when I return to Rarotonga, he would give me some fish and other produce for my family.

Therefore, Mr Chairman, I support this Vote Item and to also request the Minister to give them an increment to support the work they are doing. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa; you have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you Mr Speaker. I think I will be the last speaker on this Vote Item.

I give my support to this Vote Item. You will recall that those of us who were in this House in 2016, the allocation for this Vote Item was \$700,000. There is a difference if you look at the allocation for the Vote Item today and I believe it is because of the influence of the current Minister in Charge of this Ministry. He has been fighting for an increase in this Vote Item and now we see the allocation is over a million. The type of work they are carrying out at the prison today I would say it is moving ahead.

How did I know about this? I know because I have a son in jail and he told me about the good work that the Minister does. The Minister mentioned in this House in 2019 that he always visit the prison twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. My son told me that the Minister for this Ministry always visit them daily.

I would like to support the views from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to increase the financial support in training our children living in this place. I am supporting this Vote Item because my son is now into planting. During his time living home, he never want to plant but today, he is helping me with planting. That is the reason for my support to this Vote Item because of the good work the Minister for this Ministry is doing to train our young people. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Member, Nooroa Baker; you have the Floor.

MR N. BAKER: Mr Chairman, before I give my thoughts, I rise to give my support to the Vote Item for Corrective Services.

The reason for my support is that I am one of the people that visits this place. When we pay them a visit, we will notice the change in this place. Some of the children in there comes from New Zealand. They were in trouble the reason they went in and they do not know how to plant. Today, we will notice that they know how to plant, they know how to mow lawns and they know how to keep their homes clean. We know for sure that an increase in this Vote Item will go towards training our children.

I took about five children from this place and these five children are no longer in that place and their lives have changed. Why, because they have been trained in this place to do the household work and for them not to go and steal but to be strong in doing their work in their homes. So together with the Member from Ruauu and the Member from Matavera, I give support to this allocation and if possible, to give an increase. Therefore, I thank the Minister for the work that you are doing for our children and even those who are responsible in looking after our children there. We encourage you, we thank you because these are our children. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Minister George Angene you have the Floor.

HON. G. ANGENE: Thank you Mr Chairman for giving me this time to speak.

Greetings to you and your staff in this House, greetings to you all. Greetings to you Honourable Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers and all the government supporters, greetings to you. Greetings to the Leader of the Opposition, your Deputy and all Members in the Opposition side, greetings to you all.

To those listening by radio and those watching live, greetings to you all. To my people of Tupapa Nui-o-Au from those who are holding positions and to our children, greetings to you all.

Mr Chairman, we are now discussing the allocation for the Corrective Services and Probation and I believe this allocation is sufficient. The people who have prepared this Appropriation know why they have allocated \$1.7 million for this Vote Item. When we look at this Appropriation in accordance with our children in prison, it cost us about \$50,000 to care for one person, for the bed, the food and for the people that keep them there, it is about 50 thousand. If my officers at the Corrective Services are telling me that they don't like that and they want to change and increase, I would have spoken to the Prime Minister.

As mentioned by the Member Tupa, in 2019 I fought for the Vote Item for Corrective Services to be increased because I believe for over thirty years their allocation was never changed. Therefore, the Officers in the Ministry for Corrective Services are happy for this increase in their Vote Item.

I call the prison house the centre of the earthquake in our country because when one or two inmates escapes there is a commotion in our community because the news broadcast of an escaped prisoner always bring fear to our people.

I became the Minister Responsible for our prison and I believe this is God's plan for me to go back to this place and look after our young people. During that time, the then Prime Minister, Henry Puna confirmed that no other person is the best to look after the portfolio for Corrective Services but George Angene. I have the highest qualifications in the government to do this kind of work and I believe that Mr Chairman.

The reason I returned to this place. There is a song that says, "*When I look at the things happening, I am saddened*". What a pity because during my time, we were not called prisoners but slaves. That was my frame of mind during those times because I was there and the challenge for me is to go back there and serve our young people. As mentioned by the Member for Matavera, Vaitoti Tupa, it is a weekly routine programme for me to visit the prison twice daily, in the morning and in the evening and three times on Sunday.

The reason I do this is to ensure the young people are trained and have the privilege to be visited by their loved ones and spend times together. We also built a church and a shelter where families can come and visit their love ones and sit down comfortably.

I would like to thank the Secretary of Justice, Mr Tai Joseph and also the Senior Superintendent Mr Purua for their support in running this service. There is a scripture that says, who will separate us from the love of God, is it prison – no.

The only issue that the prisoners have is the crime that they have committed. There are many kinds of crimes committed – small, middle and big ones. I can tell you that none of the crimes that our inmates in prison have committed can compare to the ones that I have done. That is the big reason why I always visit our prison to help our prisoners by sharing my experience. I don't call them inmates but my children and family.

So, Members of this House and to all our people on Rarotonga, when you want help around your home, you are welcome to take them to your home to work for you, they are available. To our people, when you see them around go and say hello to them.

There are many good things that this Ministry have completed during my time as their Minister, especially the maximum lockdown. I have been in this place for a year and I believe while I was in there, it drew me to the Lord. It is in here that made me read and study the Bible, learn to speak English and other serious upskilling activities.

When I was an inmate, the place was like a pigs pen but I have done many improvements such as tiling the entire room, proper toilet and bedding for the maximum block. During the old days I used to complain that we did not have a proper dining area to sit and eat our meals but I can confirm to this House that I have managed to get tables and seats for a proper dining area for our young people to sit and enjoy their meals. I also thank the Honourable Prime Minister for allowing the workers from CIIC to do some renovation work on areas of the building requiring renovation and now it is all done and the prison has a facelift.

I would like to thank all the parents of our young people in prison who have taken time to come and visit our children and give them good counsels and encouragements. I have been encouraging the young people in this place that when they leave the prison not to return back there because I only teach children once. I do not believe that this is a bad place but in the public's mind it is a bad place because of what they are saying about it.

As stated in the book of Matthew 25:36, "...I was in prison and you came to visit me." Also in Matthew 7:1, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged." Why are you looking at the pip in George Maggies eyes when there is a log in your eyes. To my staff working at our prison, offer a word of prayer for our children in there. I can confirm to you that one day there will be no one living there. When I became the Minister for Corrective Services, there were 86 inmates in prison and today there are only 34 inmates. So, we can see the difference because of the work that the staff had carried in there and the changes on our young men because of the influence of God to bring this change around.

Some of our young people have now received training at the ICI centre. Last night, a thought came to me as to how we can train our young men. To those of our people with motorbikes that are no longer running, please bring them to the prison services so that it can be a practical training for our young men to fix them. However, when your vehicle is fixed you have to pay the person responsible for fixing it. But if I was to take your bike there then you will be lucky because you will not be paying

Therefore, those are my thoughts and thank you Honourable Members for patiently waiting while I make my speech today. You can see me wearing my white suit because I have a place to go at 12.00 p.m. and I will be away for about five minutes to ordain me on another title. Please do not copy this title. I will be ordained as a Dur not a Sir, that is the title. Yes, this is just to entertain us and to keep us awake as I can see some of you falling asleep.

God bless us all to continue serving our people and that we may win in the Elections and be back in the House again.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I now put the Question:

That the sum \$1, 729, 457 for Corrective Services stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

Before we move to the next Vote Item, I was reminded of an agreement made prior to this Sitting that only one Member would speak from each side to each Vote Item. Thank you Honourable Members.

CROWN LAW – debating time is for 1 hour or less.

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$1, 204,000 for Crown Law stands part of the Schedule?

I am also reminded that Members should speak to the Vote Items only and not on the Principles again.

I see the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Tina Browne; you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you Mr Chairman. I rise to offer our thoughts on the appropriation for Crown Law. On top of the greetings, to the Prime Minister and your side, to those of us on this side of the House, greetings. To the staff of the Parliamentary Services in the House working as well as those in the kitchen preparing our meals, greetings. To our two Interpreters doing a good job, greetings. Greetings to all of us in the Name of our Lord.

I support this appropriation for the Crown Law Office however, I want to make a comment on the appropriation for Crown Law.

I do believe this office is one of the most important office in the country. Sometimes we do forget that the responsibility of Crown Law is to draft our legislations. They also prosecute those taken to Court, not just in the Criminal Court but also in the Civil Court. When I look at this, it shows the Crown Law is starting to consolidate our laws and the last time this was done was back in 1994. I am very encouraged seeing this because if our laws are not consolidated then it is up to you to look where to find the amendments and mark you own Act.

I read in Book 2, and this is reminding us especially during Parliament Sittings like the Parliamentary staff they do not get enough sleep. I do know during the public consultations for the Immigration Bill, the lawyer that was assigned by Crown Law to do the work was very busy. Therefore, when I look at the Organisational Chart for Crown Law there are three vacant positions at Crown. I know the responsibilities at Crown Law requires these positions to be filled. I know last year they advertised a position and the positioned was filled.

If the Attorney General can look at the appropriation for Crown Law because not only is that there are not enough lawyers, we see that during Parliament Sittings, Crown Law advises Government. We do know that there are not enough lawyers; Crown Law then advises Government and then Parliament at the same time. It has been stated in the past two years that in this situation, Crown Law only gives advice to Government and Parliament should secure its own legal advisor. We know this does not happen because there are not enough funds in Parliament to secure their own legal advisor.

One of the things I am happy about the Crown Law Organisational Chart is their relationship with the New Zealand Parliamentary drafters. The idea is ready to initiate a legislation it is referred to Crown Law then it is referred to the New Zealand Parliamentary drafters. I would also like to request the Attorney General to offer our thanks from the Opposition side to the Crown Law for the hard work they did in particular during the COVID pandemic for COVID Act and the numerous amendments that followed. On that note...

MR CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, I have to interrupt you.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Mr Chairman that is the end of my speech.

MR CHAIRMAN: Oh, thank you Honourable Member. It is now time for recess and we will continue after we return to Parliament. Committee of Supply is now suspended until 12.00 p.m. today.

Sitting suspended at 11.28 a.m.

Sitting resumed at 12.00 p.m.

MR CHAIRMAN: I call the meeting to order. Before we suspended we were on the Crown Law Vote Item. I see the Honourable Prime Minister; you have the Floor.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Chairman. The appropriation for the Crown Law Office in my view needs increasing. However, at this stage, this is what we can manage but there is no doubt that the staff in this Department put in significant hours in the work that they do.

Like the Leader of the Opposition said, this department is one of the unsung Ministries of government during the COVID period that we have come through. While Te Marae Ora, the Ministry of Finance and others and rightfully so played a major role in helping us through the two and a half years of the pandemic, the Crown Law Office also is one that is worthy of mention.

They were also one of the offices who worked throughout long hours to try to complete Regulations and Ministerial Orders in order for us to protect our people at certain times during the last two years. Therefore, I acknowledge that full credit should be given to this Ministry and we have developed Mr Chairman a good cohort of young qualified, very clever lawyers within this Office but like many careers, we need to make sure that we are competitive in our remuneration to these lawyers.

Like other specialised professional careers in the Public Service such as Doctors, Nurses, Engineers, these people can be enticed to much higher paying jobs overseas. So it is a reality for us that we must, in order to retain the best minds that we have, look at ourselves as being part of the Regional or the International work force. There is no doubt outside Agencies or companies would look to hire some of these lawyers if we did not keep up with our remuneration levels. That is why I say I have no doubt that in the future we will need to increase the appropriation to this Ministry because not only do we have openings to fill in certain key parts but we have to be competitive with the salaries.

As I have mentioned earlier, what we have is a good cohort of good young qualified lawyers that are learning the ropes and coming through very, very well. This is one office that upholds the integrity of its work to the highest standards. So any suggestion that they can be unduly influenced by political influences not only should it be refuted, it is actually insulting to those lawyers in that office. Therefore, Mr Chairman I stand very strongly to support this Appropriation for this Department. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$1,204,000 for Crown Law stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT – debate time is for one hour.

I propose the Question:

The sum of \$1,566,750 for Cultural Development stands part of the Schedule?

The Floor is open to any Member. I see the Honourable Member, Vaitoti Tupa; you have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you very much Mr Chairman. I stand to support the Appropriation because I can see the allocation that has been scheduled for the projects to happen, and I am referring to Administrative Payments. I am happy that the Government have remained with the Appropriation in support of this and for the provision that the House of Ariki should come under the Cultural Development because this is one of the important areas in regards to the House of Ariki and our traditional practice. When we bring the House of Ariki under this Ministry, we will also recognise the improvement that will be given to our traditional doing.

As we all know, last year the House of Ariki administered by Parliament so I agree with what the Government have done to bring the House of Ariki under Cultural and in the things that they will do, it will be supported by the Cultural development.

We know today the Ministry of Culture have facilities where the meetings for the House of Ariki can be held and being under the Cultural development they will be supported strongly.

I also believe that the Archive Division is under the Cultural Development and this will connect with the functions of the Are Ariki. It is also fitting with the Museum having our artifacts and craft under the same umbrella with the Cultural Development working with the House of Ariki.

That is the reason I stand to give my support for the appropriation given to the Cultural Development and to the House of Ariki. I did not only look to the top I also looked to the side. Thank you Mr Chairman.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$1,566,750 for Cultural Development stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

That completes the Cultural Development Vote Item.

EDUCATION – debate time of 1 hour.

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$20,175,619 for Education stands part of the Schedule?

Honourabl Members the Floor is open for debate. I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa; you have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you Mr Chairman. For the Appropriation for the Ministry of Education I strongly support it. I also support for the increments to the wages and salaries of the staff of the Ministry. The Government has allocated \$300,000 to support this increment, they also have set the minimum wage here. This is a big support from \$8 to \$8.50 an hour.

I want to come back to the issue on supporting our children studying overseas. Mr Chairman I am talking for myself and my daughter who went has gone overseas to study. She is studying overseas for four years. I want you to calculate how much I have spent on her. I am satisfied for what I have spent on my child because I want to tell you Mr Chairman that my daughter has completed her law studies in March this year.

Even though I have asked her to return back home and work for the Crown Law but she is pursuing to complete her studies for a Masters Degree in Law. My question that I am asking is whether this Ministry is able to take a portion of this appropriation to support our children studying overseas. This is an example, the accommodation that my daughter is renting I am paying \$500 a week. She completed her studies from Waikato University. Just consider a months rent which is \$2,000 and for a year it will be \$24,000 and for 4 years it is nearly \$100,000. But the comforting part is, she has completed her studies. So, who will not be happy as a parent that their child has completed and graduated from her studies.

So, I am happy and supporting the increments to the salary for teachers and I am hoping that as soon as we pass this budget they will receive their pay rise straightaway. So, I would like to ask Government to look at ways where we can support our private students who are going overseas to study. I strongly support this appropriation. Thank you.

MR CAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member, I see the Honourable Tetangi Matapo; you have the Floor.

MRS T. MATAPO: Thank you Mr Chairman and greetings to all the Honourable Members in this House. I stand to give my support to the appropriation for Education. I first give my sincere appreciation and encouragement to all the Principals and Teachers who are doing their task and

work very well in our schools, and to all our children who have given the opportunity to all our teachers in the schools and our education staff the privilege of work and income.

I believe that our teachers will be very happy for the increments that they will be receiving. I just want to make some comments on the output set out in this budget allocation, Output 5, infrastructure and support. I would start from our schools in Mangaia because I hear that there is renovation work to start in our schools in Mangaia. I am therefore supporting this work and strongly recommend that this work should be carried through until it is completed because if we fail to do it now it will become a big issue later.

Secondly, for our people to see the plans that will be carried for these renovation because there was a project proposed for the schools but it never took place, which was the upgrade of school grounds especially to make it safe for handicapped children and our elderly when they enter the school grounds. This is one of the projects that should take place for the safety of our children and their parents.

The schools in Mangaia are still the old buildings with many steps going down and upward. This needs to be made safe and fixed. However, I am happy to read about the plans that has been prepared to improve and develop the schools. This is one of the written letters – quality landing and teaching requires quality infrastructure. The reason why I am commenting on this is because when we read it, it sounds good but when we actually go to the school it is a different story altogether.

Secondly Mr Chairman, I would like to refer to the accommodation for our Outer Islands scholarship students. This has gone to the extent where parents will accompany their children to Rarotonga. I am speaking on behalf of my island Mangaia and this is the case today with this matter. When the parents accompany their scholar child here, there is a breakup with the families back home on Mangaia and this will decrease the population on the island.

Mr Chairman, I also see the assistance that will be provided for the training of teachers. Following up on what I have already said on the first day, my encouragement is to restart the Teachers Training College to train young teachers to replace the old ones retiring. Therefore, Mr Chairman if we do not train any new teachers then there will be a reliance on expat teachers from abroad. We all know there is a disparity when expat teachers are paid compared to our local teachers and at times, this is disheartening on our local teachers. Therefore, I am standing here to stimulate what I have said in getting a training school for our teachers.

Therefore, I stand to give my thank you to all the teachers and parents who are giving support to our schools so our future will be in good hands. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you honourable Member. Before I allow the Honourable Selina Napa to talk, I would like to welcome the Secretary of Education and Secretary of Culture to Parliament. Greetings to you both. Now, the Honourable Selina Napa; you have the Floor.

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you Mr Chairman. Greeting to you all.

I have some thoughts on the Vote Item for the Ministry of Education. When I read in here some of the intentions of the Ministry are for those looking to better their situation in education particularly in the use and preservation of the Cook Islands Maori language.

I think when we look at this appropriation, it is good and I support it but I would just like to bring my thoughts to Output 2 on Learning and Teaching. Sorry, Output 3 Learning in the Community, Te Kakaia: Supporting parents in their roles in their child's education programme. It also says there are at least four Community Clinics on Rarotonga doing this programme.

Can the Minister clarify exactly where this community programmes are taking place? When I look at this programme, it does not only involve our students and parents and there is a great progress in Information Technology (IT) today. For us parents when we look at the technology today considering the mobile phones we have limited knowledge and experience but our children are very knowledgeable and capable at this and they serve to teach us in some cases. So, we should be identified where we can be involved in this programme to help us because when we look at some of the objectives of the Ministry of Education that says Providing education to all learners and there is a saying that says, *'You are never too old to learn'*.

Coming back to Administered Payments for Education and under the Government Funded Scholarships. Whether it is in this appropriation to subsidise our students intending to take courses at the USP. I do want to commend this initiative provided by government to assist our students that is to provide subsidy students working in the country and assisting them to study at USP. I believe this subsidy is for this year and next year.

I also see our youth are taking advantage of this programme so I commend the government for this good deed because I know one of the struggles of our children on Rarotonga is taking out loans for their USP course fees especially those who have just left school and have joined the workforce. This is one of our complaints about the minimum wage, we consider it is not sufficient to assist our students going into learning but government should be commended for providing this subsidy to support them.

I also see another private school funding an amount of \$2,663,000 because government has set aside funds to assist our private schools. My only issue with this is there are some of our government schools with very good Principals, sorry, all our government schools have good Principals to manage the school. I see that through this kind of subsidy some private schools have drawn out some of the Principals from our government funded schools. How do we maintain our Principals in our government schools in order to keep the high standards in our government schools? I know in the Takitumu School when the principal left to teach in a private school, the parents took their children to where this teacher is now teaching. I have no doubt the replacement Principal is a very good teacher and manager as well.

I do say that the students today are very fortunate at the learning situation in our schools especially at the primary level as some of them are receiving Red Cross Certificates and how to use a Defibrillator Machine. One my child knows how to use this machine and I am very happy with this kind of training because this may serve to help one of us should we collapse. I also like seeing

some of the schools taking their students to the Pa Enuu to learn the life in the Pa Enuu and I enjoy that.

The latest one is the Rising Star Competition that have started last week. I am happy to see the parents support our children playing sport. Therefore, I would like to commend the Ministry of Education for working together with this Organisation by Teina Rongo.

I read one of the Reports from previous years regarding the health of our students and one of the major issues is the increasing rate of NCDs. I was very surprised when I attended the event and saw the participation by the students of all sizes and all makes, the tall ones, the medium ones, the short, the wide ones and the skinny ones taking part in sports.

For those of us in this House, parents if you haven't seen your children and grandchildren in the sports, if we finish early on Friday take the time to go through Arorangi Sports field and they will be so happy to see us there supporting them.

Lastly, my views on the bus service. There is a budget administered amount of \$26,325. I do see our school buses going around the island and it is full of students. I would like to commend the bus drivers because they are very good at looking after our children. However, I would like to see a bit more commitment from government in giving them a bit more money because the status of the bus, when you are on the bus, we have an accident with one child on the bus at one time. Regardless whether this is a private business we should assist to ensure the safety of our children travelling on the bus because the situation was one of the school children exiting the bus and he was cut with a rusty bit of steel on his feet, a deep cut. You can imagine how angry the parent was but what can you do.

That is all I can say on this issue but I am looking at this \$26,000, is this for Rarotonga only or for the rest of the Cook Islands but I do not know what the situation is there.

To the Secretary of Education, your staff, the Minister of Education and all of you in the Education area striving to work hard for our children, may God grant you the strength and the wisdom to carry on the good work that you are doing.

My comments also go out to all the Principals of our schools on all the islands and your staff, may God grant you the strength and the devotion to the education of our children. In addition, I know today, the Ministry of Health is working closely with the Ministry of Education to provide our children healthy lunch for a healthy life style education programme. I did see a note that came back through the lunch box of my little baby saying do not put this food and that food in but to put in coconut and fruits and I was very happy to see this.

My last challenge to the Ministry of Education in particular when we come to the Parents Day where children are adorned with lolly *eis*, somewhat like what the CICC does during the Teretere Programme where visiting church members are full of lollies. I want us all to work on this and to see how we can cooperate in changing this lifestyle and our overall aim is to battle NCD so this rate will drop right down. Those are my thoughts, thank you very much.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. You have given me some hard time identifying the definition of the words *Principles* and *Merits*. I now see the Honourable Minister Vaine Mokoroa; you have the Floor.

HON. V. MOKOROA: I enjoyed listening to your thoughts concerning the Appropriation given to Education, and I hope the Secretary is taking note of the good comments that have been made starting with the access of school students. I believe these are the programmes that will go together with CIIC because that is the Ministry responsible for maintaining all the school buildings in the Cook Islands except for Mangaia.

I am happy to hear the comments from the Member for Titikaveka when she said that we should do away with giving our children lolly *eis* during the Prize Giving ceremonies. I really wanted the Member for Ngatangiia to be present because he is always commenting on NCD. I think the Secretary can give a directive to the Principals not to allow lolly *eis* in schools and that will make the Member for Ngatangiia happy.

Mr Chairman, as mentioned by the Member for Titikaveka, there is a programme that have been started in the schools to encourage our children to eat natural food but not food like cooked pork, chicken or taro not that kind of food but vegetables and fruits. Through this programme, this is teaching our children to eat the right food to reduce NCD.

In this year's Appropriation, government has set aside \$20,175,619 for the Ministry of Education. When we look at this figure this is the number three priority for government behind MFEM and Health. This shows our Nation the wish of this government to promote and lift the standard of health and education in our Nation.

The Member for Matavera have commended the salary rise for teachers and the government has set aside \$1.34 million for the next four years to increase the salaries of teachers throughout the whole country. \$124,000 have been appropriated to renew the focus of education and this is called the Education Strategy. The \$26,000 that the Member for Titikaveka was talking about is for the bus for Aitutaki.

In regards to reference made by the Member from Matavera about our children going overseas to study and then returning home. You will notice that the Ministry of Education has always been advertising in our local newspaper to apply for assistance with the paying of their student loans.

In reference to our children from the Outer Islands on a scholarship, my government has increased their allowance from \$75 to \$150 a week. This amount of money will be given to the guardian or carer where the child is staying. For each Outer Island scholarsh student, they will be paid \$250 for establishment needs like uniform and stationeries. These are the supports that are given to these fortunate children by the Ministry of Education.

Mr Chairman, I would like to say thank you very much to all our teachers in the Cook Islands especially during this period of time that we have come through the pandemic. When we look at the number of teachers who were asked to isolate themselves today, there are 40 right now in comparison there are 74 children from here and also the Southern Group islands ,74 who are being

isolated from school. This number has been greatly reduced in comparison to the numbers in March.

Therefore, I would like to thank all the principals of each school and all the parents because their focus is not only for the schools but also the prevention of our children from sickness.

There was mention about the need for an appropriation for the training of our children. Our government is always giving to USP the sum of \$205,000 per annum. This is a programme administered by our Ministry of Education to encourage our people at USP so that they can achieve their qualifications through USP. If they get their qualifications from USP this will be recognised around the world. The highest qualification that they get from USP is an increment by government to their salaries.

That is the reason why we see principals and teachers taken away from their posts because of their qualification achievements.

Finally, Mr Chairman I would like to thank the support from the Opposition to this appropriation and those of government especially the principals and teachers in all the schools for your contribution in supporting our schools. Thank you very much.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$20,175,619 for Education stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

That completes the Education Vote Item.

ENVIRONMENT – debate time of 1 hour.

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$1,634,067 for Environment stands part of the Schedule?

The Floor is now open for debate. I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa; you have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you Mr Chairman. I maybe the only one speaking for the Opposition on this appropriation before the Minister Responsible stands up.

I stand to give my support to this appropriation especially for Output 3, which is the Puna Orama. This is part of the Environment which connects us to outside partners around the world. It is through this that we have signed agreements with international bodies and their commitments in working with our government. I believe this is one of the important part in our government and

country. We also see other developing countries who want to establish partnership with us in the Pacific.

I want to give my support to Output 3 and ask, what are these partners going to provide for our country. That is my reason of supporting Output 3. I want to ask the government to bring climate change under the administration of the Environment. We all know that climate change touches all of us and in particular our environment. In 2012, the then Prime Minister, who was also the Minister of Environment asked me as Head of Ministry for Environment at the time if it's possible to bring Climate Change under the Prime Minister's office.

He explained to me his reasons for wanting this shift. Based on his explanation, I agreed with him to relocate Climate Change from the Environment Service to the Prime Minister's office. The main reason that he asked for this shift is because during that time climate change was associated to the solar power. That is the reason I agreed with him in 2012. So, what we have discovered now is that the solar system around our islands are completed.

I believe it is time for climate change to go back to Environment. When we look at the programmes that is carried out by Climate Change and that by Environment Services, they are closely associated. I would say most of the Government Ministries can work together with Environment. When we consider this programme Ridge to Reef it is inclusive of all Government Ministries including our Pa Enea.

Why I'm suggesting this is because I started this programme. It was myself and the Minister Responsible for ICI at the time, Minister Vaine Mokoroa. At that time, we were responsible to find funding to strongly support Environment. I also thank the Member for Pukapuka, Tingika Elikana for supporting the programme at that time because he was the Solicitor General.

He also helped us to prepare our policies. I would say that the project objectives of the Environment is going well even if we have been through some difficulties in the past but for those who are involved with Environment they are doing their work well. Even our part with the Agreement that I have discussed with the Prime Minister because the Prime Minister is responsible for Foreign Affairs and under Foreign Affairs they are responsible for confirming the terms of Agreements with entities outside of our country.

Therefore, in Output 3 it will remind and reflect on our relationship with these partners and contribution in supporting our partners. We are not in partnership with them without any contribution but we are contributing back to this partnership. However, according to their contribution I would say it triples to what we contribute to them. These are the benefits that we will receive when we enter into the partnership with them.

Therefore, Mr Chairman, I stand to give my support to the appropriation for Environment Services and again enforcing the thought that Climate Change should be returned under the Environment Services. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Member Terepai Maoate; you have the Floor.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you Mr Chairman and greetings to all of us again in the Name of our Lord.

Just a thought on the Environment appropriation. I give my support to this appropriation. I will comment on our situation in Aitutaki may this will touch on the other islands as well.

I do believe that some of the other islands do not have an Environment legislation and I want to talk about the policies on Environment Impact Assessment (EIA). In any development, especially on Aitutaki, if we want to build a house on the coastal area or on the hill slopes, in past, you do not need to get any permit to build as there were no laws on this. Now, we can see there are side effects to the land as a result of the development.

In our homes, there are discharges of wastewater from our washing machines or pig feeding areas running into the lagoon. We have accepted for this law to be enforced. I am not objecting to this law but I think we did not give enough thought to this Act. We all know that today, it is a very costly exercise to build a house especially for those who are on a low income and that is the reason we are recommending for a minimum wage of \$12 an hour.

So, what is happening today is if you want to build a house on a hill, you would need an engineer which is an expensive person. As you may be aware that in Aitutaki, we have bush engineers like bush mechanics. To start building, you have to secure your piece of land, you need a surveyor, a lawyer, you have to pay for their airfares, accommodation and transport before even starting to build your house. On top of this is the EIA, which is more cost, and a burden to the individual to the point where you cannot build a house. The main thought here is to look at this department for EIA. Firstly, there is no qualified person out there with the expertise in this area.

When I look at the appropriation for the OPM, there is a person responsible for transport maintenance that travels around the islands and this has been going on for a while. So, we need an EIA engineer to travel around the islands and help our people as this is one of the barriers to our business people. We are blessed in Aitutaki as we have a Surveyor and a Land Agent available but not an EIA engineer. So, to the islands where the Environment Act has not been enforced please thread carefully. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Terepai Maoate. I can see the Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Chairman. I am very happy with the appropriation for the Environment Services and also in particular with the recent appointment of their new Director.

The new Director Halatoa Fua brings a wealth of experience to an organisation that is going through a restructure. We all know the protection of our environment is important for us as a country to protect the beauty of our environment that is an attraction for visitors and also to protect our island from any abuse of our environment.

There has been a number of functions for Environment Services and one of them being Regulatory Function where consents and approvals are required if any work is to be carried out at certain identified areas. Moreover, areas such as our foreshore, areas around our streams and areas on slopes. On top of that, they have another role, which is the protection of our Biodiversity. They are also responsible for the protection and management of our protected island of Suwarrow.

As mentioned by the Member for Matavera, the Environment Services is responsible for a number of Conventions that as a country we have signed up to. Of course, this week we tabled in this House the Regulations for the Montreal Convention. So as a country Mr Chairman, we have recognised the importance of protecting our fragile environment which is why if we wanted to do any sort of activity on protected areas we need to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment or EIA.

I hear the comments by the Member for Aitutaki because these compliance measures there is cost associated with getting engineering profiles for anything to be done on the hills and also engaging someone to do an EIA. Having a number of qualified people to do EIA here on Rarotonga, I think the opportunity arises for someone to be able to do EIA in Aitutaki. I mentioned that with more people now building on the hills and up the slopes, certainly there is a need for an engineering expertise to make sure that any cutting of the side of our hills and mountains does not cause any problems later on with slips and landslides.

At this stage, I would like to pay tribute to the former Director of National Environment Services, Joe Brider who passed away tragically last month. One of the foremost experts on our biodiversity, a specialist in plants and botany. His loss and the loss of his knowledge is considerable. So, we can only hope that there is upcoming young scientists who will be able to fill that gap with the knowledge that Joe had. Nevertheless, the new Director of Environment Services at the helm, I am very confident that with his very great sense of pragmatism, we will be able to see significant movement in the area of our environmental protection, which is coming. I would not say under threat, but to find compromise with the development of our tourism industry.

If I could just come back to the comments made by the Member for Matavera, himself as a former Director of Environment Services, to move climate change related matters under the Environment Service and there is certainly merit in looking at this suggestion. We have to be mindful however, in climate change there are two main issues. One is adaptation and building resilience against the impact of climate change and the other one is mitigation, which is what do you do to reduce carbon emissions.

Of course, in these areas the project work that is involved does not quite fit under the Environment Service. So, if you look at one example of adaptation, protection against more intense cyclones, the construction of cyclone shelters is one outcome of adaptation. Storage of water during times of more intense drought is another outcome of adaptation. So construction of water tanks, construction of cyclone shelters is more suited under the Ministry such as ICI or CIIC.

In terms of mitigation and reducing carbon emissions one of the outcomes is increasing the use of solar power and so installation and maintenance of solar panels and batteries is not so much a function of the Environment Service but more aligned to a company like Te Aponga Uira.

However, certainly it is a policy development areas that could be accommodated under the Environment Service.

So, I am sure our debate here is being heard by the Environment Service and I am sure there will be some discussions on how we can improve the effectiveness of climate change and the Environment Service moving forward.

As one of the very few people, I guess that has had the good fortune to visit the island of Suvarrow. One of the things that was mentioned to me by people that were on our trip to the island of Suvarrow is they would love to see an opportunity where our school children would be able to take a trip to Suvarrow to camp on the island. Maybe as part of a senior year programme to appreciate the beauty of our untouched islands in our country and to get an understanding of why we work so hard to protect our islands. Maybe it would stimulate one of these children to take on a career in bio-diversity, in environmental science and protection, a whole range of areas and because Suvarrow does not have an airport, the only way to get there is by boat. So I look forward to the day when we do get our customised vessel that will be able to take passengers in comfort and safety to these islands where we have no airport.

With those words, Mr Chairman I commend this allocation to the Environment Service.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$1,634,067 for Environment stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

FINANCE AND ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT – debate time of one hour.

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$30,121,577 for Finance and Economic Management stands part of the Schedule?

I see the Honourable Member Vaitoti Tupa; you have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you Mr Chairman. I will not say much about this Vote Item but to refer you to Book 2, total for the outline for this Appropriation. There are 23 pages and it is in that Schedule it will provide what has increased, what has decreased and what has been set aside. For example, personnel will be moved to other areas and also the sum that is given to POBOC and part of the administration we will see that there is an increase and then decrease and also there is an allocation for Regulations and about \$5 million have been allocated to prepare us for this pandemic.

There is also an appropriation to support Red Cross and we will discover the reason why this appropriation will go to Red Cross. I do believe these are the reasons why there is an increase for this Appropriation because of the other areas that they have covered.

But in regards to projects to be paid, when you compare to last year, that is the administered payments, you will notice from last year there was an Appropriation of \$45 million. However, at this time, we could see the effect of the pandemic is going down and even the Appropriation for this area have decreased and we will see that \$22 million have been appropriated.

Also in this Ministry, we will discover that they are looking at our expenditures. It is comforting to know that it will also look at people who are paid. From last year's allocation, \$5 million was assigned to pay for personnel, and this year's Appropriation, it has increased to \$6 million. I believe this is inclusion of those who are appointed into new positions and also to increase the wages for the present workers. That is why I am commenting because when we look at the appropriation there has been an increase in some areas, a decrease in other areas and to set aside in other areas.

So, I would like to thank Garth Henderson who is responsible for this Ministry and to also thank the Budget Team for the advice you gave the PAC Committee. In this group of people that came to advise the PAC committee there were four ladies and one man. These four ladies that I am talking about they are young girls and they are fully qualified. That is the most satisfying part that these daughters of ours have taken upon themselves with their good qualifications to work for our people in this Ministry. I believe that these foreign qualified men are training our own young people to have that knowledge in that field.

The explanations of the budget was delivered to us in a workshop format by these young ladies. Even with the questions that we raised with them, the young ladies gave us clear satisfying explanations. The support given by the two foreign men shows us their confidence in the young ladies and they are training them well for the future.

I had us look at Output 3 and I note there are about 7 Outputs in this Ministries appropriation. I would like to make reference to the Minister Responsible to consider for this year and next year. These are the purposes under the Output 3 to encourage our economy for the Cook Islands. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Tina Browne; you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Kia Orana Mr Chairman. I stand to discuss on this part of the appropriation because this Ministry is known to us as the power house. When we look at the organisation structure of the Ministry of Finance, I would say that one will be scared to apply for this position. For the reason being it will be a heavy burden to lead this Ministry.

There are two things that I want to raise in my discussions. One is in regards to Output 3. I would say in my understanding, there are some difficulties in it. I have no problem with the amount of funds allocated here but we want some good outcomes from the director of this output. Even though we have not discussed the PERCA report on this Output 3, I am concerned here with the

many recommendations and complaints in the report. Maybe it is possible for you the Minister in Charge to discuss with the Financial Secretary in regards to the director.

On my way to the Northern Group, we met on the plane that arrived from Pukapuka and this is a team from MFEM who have been in the Northern Group islands to train all the administration staff in finance. We travelled by boat from Rakahanga to Manihiki with the administration staff from Rakahanga. I believe the plane from Pukapuka landed in Manihiki that morning and at 1 o'clock that afternoon, they had their training. I believe this training is very appropriate for all administration workers in the Northern Group because we are receiving complaints that some of the reports from these islands are not well done.

I know that the administration staff from Rakahanga is very happy to take the training and after the training in Manihiki then the MFEM staff will go with the Rakahanga admin person to check on their accounts. To the Minister Responsible, can you convey our thank you to the Secretary of Finance for having this training programme for our people in the Northern Group.

My second submission is in regards to the Statistic division. I have no problem with the allocation for this output. We know that when it comes to the Election times, they become electoral officers. When I look at their allocation it is specifically for their statistics role. The question to the Honourable Prime Minister is, where is the allocations for the election spending because we are coming to that period of time. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Leader of the Opposition. I see the Deputy Speaker; you have the Floor.

MR T. ELIKANA: Thank you, I will be very short Mr Chairman. I stand to answer the question raised by the Leader of the Opposition in regards to the allocation for the Electoral Office.

The short answer is covered within the Electoral Act. There is the provision within that Act which allows for appropriations without coming through Parliament. That is the short answer because we have not called the election yet so we are waiting until that is done but there is no need to come through Parliament for the appropriation for the electoral office for the elections. That is the short answer.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member, I hope the Leader of the Opposition is satisfied with your answer. I see the Honourable Prime Minister; you have the Floor.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Chairman. I thought the Associate Finance Minister was going to take a little bit longer to talk about this Ministry. Yes, but quite right the announcement of the general election triggers a statutory appropriation to cover the cost of running a general election.

But in terms of Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, I guess this is one of the Ministries that other Ministries hate because they tend to blame them that they do not give them enough allocation in their appropriation or their budget proposals that are put forward generally come back with lots of red lines through it by the Budget Team. Then, of course, on the RMD

side, they are there collecting peoples money. So people do not find them that friendly I guess when they are there to make sure your income tax is paid, make sure your VAT is paid, make sure your customs levies are paid.

But I have been working with the Ministry of Finance for a number of years now Mr Chairman, I have to say I find them very very friendly. Again, this is one of the most important Ministries in the governments' structure and I really have to acknowledge the work of the Budget Team who worked alongside the members of our Budget Committee. Our Committee has been the case for a number of years we draw from the senior level of the Public Service, not the HOM, the next level down to be part of the group that assess the Budget Proposals that are put through. The purpose of this Mr Chairman is to provide our senior Public Servants with a greater appreciation of the wider government budgets rather than just being concern with their own Ministries budget.

Even though we are debating the Budget now, in June the work of this Committee commences back in November and in that timeframe Mr Chairman, they have to perform a minor miracle like Jesus feeding the 5,000 people with five fish and three loaves of bread. I have to say that in the most difficult circumstances in this year, the Budget that they have prepared is really quite remarkable. So I would like to give my appreciation to my Budget Team for the hard work they have done in getting us to where we are today in going through this Appropriations.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of our RMD (Revenue Management Division) which is responsible for the collection of government revenues. Again, during a situation where mainly their job is to Process Returns that are provided to them. Over the past two years, they have been the agency responsible for processing the payments for Wage Subsidies and also Business Grants. Using the systems provided by Cook Islands National Superannuation Fund which virtually everybody is a member, they were able to use this system to make sure that payments were accurate made out to businesses, companies, sole traders so that money was not wasted.

I acknowledge the remarks by the Leader of the Opposition in terms of some of the PERCA cases that have come before us regarding complaints against the Revenue Management Division. Just to say that there are two sides to these stories but certainly the aspect of Public Service and providing a service to the public in a timely and fair way is very very important as part of the principles of Revenue Management and where something has been done wrong then it does need to be put right.

In saying that also, if something can be done better then we will certainly look to change the way we do things to make it better. One of the things that the House can look forward to is the amendment to the Tax legislation which will allow for the submission of VAT Returns on a quarterly basis for certain businesses rather than on a monthly basis. This amendment Mr Chairman has the impact of reducing the number of Returns that are assessed by 60 percent. So, for certain businesses whose turnover is below a certain amount they will have the opportunity to submit four Returns a year rather than 12 Returns a year. We look forward to the amendment coming before the House.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of our Treasury Division. The Treasury Division is responsible for managing the cash flow of the country, not only managing the cash flow but also

managing the currencies that we as country receive. Some of the work that the Treasury Division has done over the past years has resulted in our country making significant savings in terms of currency exchange rates. Because we have our loans denominated in New Zealand dollars but some loans are in US dollars and some loans are in Chinese renminbi so this Division is responsible for making sure that whatever revenue is collected in certain currencies can be put towards expenses in those currencies such as loan repayments without losing any money due to currency exchange. Something that we have been able to do now for a number of years and certainly saved, I guess protects us from risks of currency exchange fluctuations.

Another Division that does a significant amount of work in collecting money to our country is the Development Coordination Division, which is responsible for managing our Donor Aid Programme. This is the Division you will be familiar with responsible for the Japan Grassroots Programme, the India Grant Fund and numerous other funds where support is provided to our country. Of course, not forgetting our Output 6 division, The Major Projects and Procurement Division and this is an important Division to streamline and fast track major project work or major procurement, the issuing of major contracts, this Division was established as an office to manage across government these particular activities of procurement, contracts and projects.

At a time over a number of years, I guess since going back to the reform was when decentralisation was the key theme each Ministry was responsible for its own affairs. This of course led to fragmentation, it led to inability to consolidate on procurement and purchases which cost the country more money. So this Division was set up to try and address those issues, to ensure that projects were not delayed but to make sure that we get value for money, the best return for procurement and also for contracting.

One of the things that is currently in place now, right across all government agencies and island governments is the implementation of our Financial Management Information System (FMIS). This is a project that will have the end of its life this year whereby all Government Agencies will be hooked on to the new FMIS system to streamline and centralise accounting finances and reporting to the Ministry of Finance. This will remove a huge burden on Ministries and Island Administrations in no longer needing to provide monthly reporting.

Ministries and Agencies will just need to input their data, their information on income or expenses into the information system and it will consolidate and produce your reports for you in a very timely manner. What this means Mr Chairman is that delays in producing your financial report for auditing will become outdated and I look forward to every government agency being on this system very, very soon.

The other beauty with this system Mr Chairman is that because it centralises and consolidates all accounts, government can now if you wanted to find out how much does the government spend, for example on fuel.

Previously Mr Chairman, you would have to get the fuel account of every government agency, every Island Administration and manually total these up to get an idea of how much is spent on fuel. Once this system is fully implemented, that sort of information is available at a push of a

button. You can find out how much you spend on photo copying paper, virtually every expense and this makes planning and it makes reporting much, much more efficient.

This project did not just start overnight Mr Chairman, the FMIS project started nearly five years ago and it has been a long process of installing these systems into every government agency and across every Island Government.

So I would like to acknowledge the team responsible for this who have been doing a great job over the years and we look forward to this system being used to its full potential to make our job in terms of reporting financial reporting much more timely.

This brings us to the Statistics Office, Mr Chairman and quite rightly as put by the Leader of the Opposition, as soon as an election is triggered the Statistics Office takes on the role of the Electoral Office. But of course, the good news is that the Statistics Office has been doing this for a number of elections now and they are very capable of getting straight into the Electoral Office responsibilities. It may be something to consider in the future that we may want to establish a separate Electoral Office to manage By-elections and elections as they arise. There was a standalone Electoral Office prior to 1996, which was dis-established, back then as part of the structural reform of all government agencies.

However, right now Mr Speaker, I think the appropriation that we have before us for the Ministry of Finance as pointed out is less than last year because of the reduced amounts that have been allocated under Administrative Funding to combat COVID.

So I would like to congratulate the Financial Secretary, all his Divisional Heads and the staff in the Ministry of Finance for the tremendous work that they have done over this financial year and also the previous financial year to get our country into a strong financial position as we move into the recovery – there's the recovery landing right now. Every person that comes into the country, Mr Chairman is a consumer, they spend money in our country, and every person that spends money there is a tax collection on what they spend on in VAT so this, Mr Chairman is the sound of the plane land is the sound of our recovery.

Therefore, Mr Chairman I commend this allocation for the Ministry of Finance before this House.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$30,121,577 for Finance and Economic Management stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

FINANCIAL SERVICES DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY – debate time of thirty minutes.

I see it is time for our afternoon break. Honourable Tina Browne, you can continue when we resume. Sitting is suspended now and will resume at 3.00 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 2.25 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 3.01 p.m.

MR CHAIRMAN: All be seated. I bring the House to order.

Committee of Supply is resumed.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

I recognise the Leader of the House; you have the Floor.

MS T. BROWN: Mr Chairman, I move:

That Standing Order 307 be suspended to enable the House to complete the debate on the Appropriation Bill 2022 in all its stages by 5.00 p.m. today

MR CHAIRMAN: I put the Question:

Sorry, I call for a Secunder?

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Mr Chairman, I would like to ask if we are permitted to speak to this Motion?

MR CHAIRMAN: Yes, you may do so.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: On this motion moved in the House. My understanding is the debates on this Appropriation will be shortened. I am concerned because this morning we had a different arrangement where we were asked to give up half an hour of Question Time and then when we reach 5.00 p.m. the sitting will be extended for more debate.

Just now, we are told and of course I had been watching our list and progress has been slow I have to say, and we are now told that if we do not finish by 4.00 p.m., there will be a Motion to shortcut the whole process so that we can get the Appropriation Bill passed. I have a problem with that Mr Chairman.

The reason being, this is the most important Bill that any Parliament can pass once a year and we have been talking at least, I have been hearing from the other side from my colleague we should work together and cooperate. Well show your cooperation today and let us work together and get this Bill through in the way that it should be. Thank you Mr Chairman.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. Can the Honourable Prime Minister?

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Chairman. As we can see that our time for our sitting is limited to today and tomorrow and with the other couple of Bills that we have before us, I would be more than happy to consider any suggestions that may come from the Leader of the Opposition as to how best we can accommodate the passage of the Budget and also the other Bills to come by tomorrow.

MR CHAIRMAN: I see the Leader of the Opposition; you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Prime Minister, when it was indicated to us that we have not much time, we did consider only one speaker and we started off by doing that and then it sort of went away. So that is one way of doing it, one speaker from our side then the Minister Responsible, and we are ready to be strict about that.

My second suggestion is that we extend the time and if we follow one speaker per side and say no more than 10 minutes, we will get it through. We may have to extend the time but then if we do extend the time we will probably get there and everybody is asleep. That is my suggestion.

HON. M. BROWN: Mr Chairman, I am quite happy to accept that recommendation that we have one speaker from each side on the Vote Items and limited to 10 minutes, we will get through. If there is a need to go pass our Sitting time of 5.00 p.m. then I would recommend that we do move a motion to extend it to allow us to fully complete the discussions on each Vote Item. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: I think you people should have solved that before we started. Once again, may I remind all Members of Parliament, only one speaker from one side, before we were like school children where we all started talking.

MR T. TUAVERA: Mr Chairman, her motion needs to be amended because she cited 307 (2).

MR CHAIRMAN: Can I have the Honourable Member for Ngatangiia to repeat.

MR T. TUAVERA: I move:

That we amend the motion to 307 (ii) in the Standing Orders

MR CHAIRMAN: I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Sorry, I call for a Secunder?

Secinded by the Honourable Selina Napa

I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

I see that we have gone too much eating today. Before we suspended for lunch, we were on the Financial Services Development Authority.

FINANCIAL SERVICES DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY:

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$453,703 for Financial Services Development Authority stands part of the Schedule?

Can I have a Member speak on the Vote Item. I see the Leader of the Opposition; you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you Mr Chairman. This is one of the sectors that was a major revenue earning once upon a time for this country. Then some years ago we ran into some difficulties and of course the Trust Companies either shutting down and now we have very little income from the revenue from this industry.

Last year, we past in this House the International Relationship Property Trust Act 2021. This was to accommodate a new plan by the industry to assist with the promotion of our financial sector in this country. The appropriation for this Ministry is quite small, it is about \$453,000. We would like to support this and hope that the plan going forward is going to work and that we might see some revenue coming from this sector. Kia Orana.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Minister Vaine Mokoroa; you have the Floor.

HON V. MOKOROA: Thank you Mr Chairman. FSDA's goal since 2020 is by 2025 is to improve employment in the industry by 30 percent and to increase the contribution to our economy by 50 percent. Our people in the industry are great wealth managers and trusted service providers.

Our industry players are compliant on the world stage and innovative in developing products as world first. As mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, in the last two budget, this government invested in the development of a new product for the industry. This is the first new product in many years and it is called the International Relationship Property Trust. This budget tabled and debated today is about taking that product to market in an impactful way.

If you go on Facebook, you will see our papa Reuben Tylor letting the world know that the Cook Islands is open for a new business product providing solutions no other country has done today. We should be proud. This government is investing an additional \$200,000 into marketing this product and the industry's existing products and the industry themselves have committed to matching these marketing dollars with their own expense in true partnership. The Financial Service industry is one part of our economy we expect to sustain our economic base. Along with

tourism, this budget moves us further down this pathway so, let us have faith in our Offshore Banking industry.

With those few words, I commend the Budget for this House to support. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$453,703 for Financial Services Development Authority stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

FOREIGN AFFAIRS – debating time 10 minutes each side.

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$3,011,795 for Foreign Affairs stands part of the Schedule?

The Floor is open for debate. I see the Honourable Tina Browne; you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Mr Chairman I stand to share our thoughts in regards to this appropriation.

The Foreign Affairs is an important Ministry for us. I agree with the Report that one of the milestones achieved during the last three or four years is the new Immigration Act that was enacted last year. I think that government would have spent quite a bit of money on the consultation process of the Immigration Bill, which was widely consulted.

It is even more important because now as the Prime Minister indicated earlier, the process for Permanent Residence has started and I am aware that many people have been waiting for a long time. Some has to reapply; they have previously applied some years ago. It is also an opportune time for Immigration to weed out those Permanent Residence that has left the country and do not continuously reside in the Cook Islands and of course create the vacancies for those that are residing here to fill.

This is also a Ministry that engages in or establishes diplomatic relations with other countries and these relationships are always good for us, which will hopefully lead to bigger things. The Opposition side has no objection to the appropriation amount.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Prime Minister; you have the Floor.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Chairman. The Immigration Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Immigration as I mentioned earlier are now going through the process of

reviewing the PR applications. The Ministry received over 300 Expressions of Interest for Permanent Residency either in their own right or as a spouse of a Cook Islander. Once they have completed the Expressions of Interests those who have made it through that stage will then go through and be invited to apply formally for their PR application. After that Mr Chairman, later on this year, we will be reviewing those PRs that no longer qualify have either moved out of the country or for whatever reason do not qualify to be PRs and those will be removed and struck off. If this provides openings for additional PRs to be considered will certainly look forward to a new application process later in the year.

Prior to COVID Mr Chairman, we opened a High Commission in Suva, Fiji and of course when COVID came and the borders were closed now for two and a half years it stranded our warrior in Suva who is there to this day as the High Commissioner of the Cook Islands to Fiji. He is no less of course than that famous Mitiaro warrior Jim Armstead.

With the borders now open Mr Chairman and with a number of meetings due to be held very soon, I am looking forward to being able to go to Fiji to officially open our High Commission. Fiji is a central hub in the Pacific for a number of various organisations. Organisations that do not have a place in Wellington. This include of course the Forum Secretariat Office, the Asian Development Bank subregional office and numerous other agencies that are based in Suva. So having a High Commission office in Fiji is the natural progression into expanding our diplomatic representation in the region.

So in addition to our Wellington High Commission and the Consul Office in Auckland, we now have the High Commission in Fiji. I would like to commend the very small team that we have working at Foreign Affairs in the various Divisions, the International Division, the Pacific Division for a lot of work that they have had to do over the last two years in engaging virtually over zoom with our partners. Although virtual participation is useful, this in a way is as good as actual face to face participation.

So with travel borders now opening up, Mr Chairman we look forward to participating face to face at a number of important meetings that are coming up. Just like my recent visit to French Polynesia last week, the face to face meeting with the President of French Polynesia resulted in a number of other separate meetings we were able to have with various people to push our programme of air transport connectivity through French Polynesia. I know our team are looking forward Mr Chairman to representing our country at various International meetings and forums that we have not been able to participate in for the last two years.

I support this allocation for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$3,011,795 for Foreign Affairs stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

HEAD OF STATE:

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$251,206 for Head of State stands part of the Schedule?

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

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Mr Chairman, I have a very brief contribution to make.

In the past, I have always been concerned with the residence of our Head of State. I am aware that any money that would be appropriated for his residence will not appear here, it would probably appear in the Cook Islands Investment Corporation Appropriation.

Perhaps I should draw to the attention of the Minister of the Head of State to ask the Minister of the Investment Corporation whether the land issue for the Head of State's land in Titikaveka is 90 percent completed. This is probably not the ideal time to push that barrel about a new residence because of our financial situation but I would like to ask the Minister to at least give it some priority in the future because it is quite embarrassing for a Head of State to have no Official Residence.

The Appropriation is quite small but when I look to the left on the blurb, it says no milestone achievements. We support the Appropriation.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$251,206 for Head of State stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

HEALTH:

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$20,588,832 for Health stands part of the Schedule?

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

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you Mr Chairman. A few thoughts that we want to share on Te Marae Ora. I am reading the background of Te Marae Ora and it says, Te Marae Ora is committed to ensuring people lead healthy lives and therefore we all should be working closely to ensure that our people lead a healthy life style. Unfortunately, we are however, burdened with a high rate of obesity, high risk of NCD.

It was great to see that last week was hypertension week, in other words, hypertension is high blood pressure. I am looking through the five Outputs it is being described in here that Te Marae Ora is actually trying to tackle NCD in our Nation. Hypertension in our country is a major cause for our ill health and the problems we get out of hypertension is stroke, heart attack, kidney disease and leads to dementia in our nation.

I am still looking around in the Appropriation and I do not see any allocation that is given for dementia because dementia is on the rise in our nation as I can see and when I looked at the World Health statistics, it is one in four for men and one in five for women. So, with the Budget allocation that has been allocated for the Ministry of Health, maybe the Minister can explain which area in the Appropriation that will be given to address this problem of dementia. I assume it will be under Output 3 Primary Care and also I am wondering whether the government have even considered looking at a hospice to take care of our people who have come to this end. We now know that there are different kinds of cancers and the number of cases are increasing.

Output 3, which is the Primary Health care and one area that has been talked about here, is reducing waiting time for patients. I am speaking on behalf of the women because when we go to the hospital to be checked we would not get the result until about a month later. I think in the Budget 22/23 it is talking about reducing the waiting time for patients and the women is included in that waiting time.

Also under Budget 22/23 there is an area here where it says, CT scan services established and how do you access this service for the CT scan whether we have the resources to work this machine for us here.

There is also mention in the structure here about traditional medicine but I do not see it allocated in any of the actual Budget of 2022/23 and whether Te Marae Ora accept traditional medicine to help cure our people.

Otherwise, I would like to take this time to say thank you to the Minister and all the staff of Health for their hard work. There was just one question that I wanted to put to the Minister out of curiosity for me, during the period of COVID some of our people when they were admitted to the hospital, they caught COVID from the hospital and how was that possible?

Despite that, I agree that this is one Vote Item in the Budget that we should not be politicising. We all need to work together for the wellbeing of our people and whatever illnesses there are in our country, we should all be tackling the problems together.

At this time, I would like to congratulate all the nurses that are going to graduate tomorrow because you tried your best to continue studying and that is why you will be graduating. On behalf of all of us Members, we support 150 percent this appropriation for Te Marae Ora.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Rose Browne; you have the Floor.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you Mr Chairman. Greetings to all of us in the House and to all our people listening in. I would like to thank the comments from the Opposition and their support for this appropriation. We do know this is one of the most important Ministry in our country. We do have our nurses in the Ministry of Health who cared for our new born babies until the time we depart this world.

To the Honourable Member for Titikaveka, you are right we should not treat this Ministry with political intensions but to work together for the benefit of our people. We all know that we were not able to increase the remuneration of our workers in this Ministry because they came through the exact time of the period of this pandemic. So, I will work hard to ensure that they are included in the increments in next year's budget.

There were many areas that were improved in the Ministry of Health as we came through the pandemic. So, I would like to thank government and our Leader of the Nation because this is a national issue. So, it is only appropriate that our National Leader fronts for us and assist by those of us in the Ministry of Health. I also thank the appropriation and the financial support given to us to improve these areas for the pandemic and for the future.

We have an increase of \$300,000 in the appropriation however, there were other support that came outside of this. From our partners like the government of New Zealand and Australia, WHO, SPC, UNISEF, Japan and China. We extend a big thank you to them for supporting the proposals from the Ministry of Health. But there remains much work for those of us in the Ministry of Health to do.

There are improvements, developments in facilities and we see the new building for our mental health illness. This will be completed shortly and I would like to commend the Minister for CIIC as well as the Minister for Corrective Services for their support to this project. There is also an extra allocation for bringing specialist nurses to look after those in this new facility. There are many others like the improvement of the hospital in Mangaia and the building of the new hospital on the island of Penrhyn in Tetautua has been overdue.

We return to this major issue of NCD. I do accept the comments presented in this House to review the status in our nation again. I am glad to announce that it has been started in the Ministry of Health. Added to this the programme through our schools encouraging our children to eat healthy food. Working in cooperation the Ministries of Health, Education and Agriculture in starting our children while they are still young on the path of good health.

For the few minutes of my speaking time. I would like to say thank you very much to those in the Ministry of Health, from the Secretary to your doctors and to all the nurses. To all the different sections in the Ministry of Health as well as all the different departments that assisted during the pandemic and to our people in the Outer Islands for your support, thank you very much.

In closing, this is what we are doing tomorrow, the initiation of our nurses school. The starting of in-country training for our nurses. Thank you to our government for supporting this and also the Whitireia Polytechnic in New Zealand, and WHO because these nurses will not pay any fees from

the first year to the end of the studies. They will be receiving a wage from the first year to the end of their studies and after the three years study, a new lot of 20 intake will take place.

I do believe our budget is appropriate but we look for improvements in the new year. I present this to the House and thank you for supporting the appropriation for Health. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister, some of the critics want to see you in the paper and the TV in the future rather than other Ministers.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$20,588,832 for Health stands part of the Schedule?

Motiona agreed to

INFRASTRUCTURE COOK ISLANDS:

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$5,374,000 for Infrastructure Cook Islands stands part of the Schedule?

I see the Honourable William Heather; you have the Floor.

MR W. HEATHER: Thank you Mr Chairman. My thought will begin on Output 1 Corporate Support Services. It is not that I am opposing I do support however, I have a few comments to make especially in the building control.

As we can see, there is an increase in the construction of houses. When we consider hotels, some of them has no parking allocation at all and I can see a problem in the future so if this area can be looked into before it becomes a major problem.

I also give my 100 percent support to Output 2. I want to comment on Output 3 regarding road maintenance and drainage upkeep throughout Rarotonga. We know that during flooding spells, everything is submerged under water in the low-lying areas as well as to coordinate the civil emergency response as required in partnership with EMCI.

Back in the day Mr Chairman, I was part of conducting this type of work and there was no remuneration for it. It was on a voluntary basis. I do feel it is about time these volunteers are paid for this work.

If we look at Output 4, Waste Management Division, as stated by the Associate Minister they are looking into it so I have no problems with that and I support it but quicken the process so that it does not reach the New Year.

I give my full 150 percent support to this budget allocation for ICI.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your support Honourable Member. I see the Associate Minister for ICI, Albert Nicholas.

MR A. NICHOLAS: Thank you Mr Chairman and also to the Member from Ruaau for your thoughts. We have before us the appropriation for this Ministry and it quotes over \$5 million.

I will not speak much but I will base my comments on the amount of \$5 million. The main focus of this is allocation for the payment of personnel's in this Ministry. Within this is the contractual payment for our new engineer from New Zealand. This is one area in the Ministry that needs to be strengthened and that is those with expert skills. I want to confirm to our people listening in that the Head of the Ministry, Tamarii Tutangata is working very hard to drive this work forward for us. We have all the Outputs in Book 1 and those are laid out clearly.

I would like to highlight to us on Administered Payments of \$2 million and part of allocation of 3 quarter million will be going to our drainages and bridge maintenance. Another 3 quarter million will be allocated on Waste Management and as explained by an elder, before this is one of the major issues within ICI.

Like I have explained to our people listening in, this is one of the areas the Ministry is working hard to rectify. The strategic direction for this area is well established and this is not an easy issue. Because this government loves its people, the government is looking at purchasing an equipment to help us with waste.

Also under this Administered Payment is 3 quarter million dollars allocated to our Road and Drainage Asset Management. Further, under this Administered Payment, \$200,000 is allocated to Emergency Response work that occurs at untimely times. Since we all have access to the Budget Books, I will end my speech here. If you have any queries, please read it in your own time at home to understand it.

Mr Chairman and all of us, this is the appropriation for ICI for the coming year. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Associate Minister.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$5,374,000 for Infrastructure Cook Islands stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

INTERNAL AFFAIRS:

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$4,872,593 for Internal Affairs stands part of the Schedule?

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

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you Mr Chairman. I have some comments to make in regards to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. I do not know why we the Opposition side cannot give our support because this is one of the Ministries involved in helping our elderlies and our children. So on behalf of the Opposition we give our support to the appropriation given to the Internal Affairs but I just want to raise some points for consideration.

Firstly, we look at Output 5. When I look at the explanation for this appropriation regarding the administration of Films and Censorship, to date, I am not sure what is involved with this part of this Output but I noticed that there is a figure of up to 50 to 79 films that is needed to be rated per year. Also two, the number of films rated 80 to 95 films per year.

Looking at the number of inspections held per year is three and yet when you look at their goal it says, "*Good governance and effective public service performance*". I can understand why there is this number is low because a lot of people are watching movies on Netflix and other means and that is a free service.

So I would suggest why not use the appropriation for this part into supporting the Youth Programmes. I came to this House to observe the Mock Parliament that was performed by the youth last month. I want to tell you all that our children are really clever when I watched them during the mock Parliament. I can see their Administered fund is \$45,000 but I want to know what exactly that is involved. We are always referring to them as the leaders of tomorrow.

Under Religious Advisory Council, I can see only \$10,000 have been allocated for one year. I think they are doing a lot of work, praying for our Nation to protect us from disasters. So if we are saying that they are not doing anything, I recommend to you to get involved with small Prayer groups and you will see that they are doing a lot of work praying for our country. That is why I do not see any reason why we are keeping this allocation of censorship of films when they are readily available and free to us so this amount should be given to other areas where it can support the Religious or the Youth.

Those are my thoughts and we all support the Appropriation given to the Internal Affairs because we know that they will have the effect to our elderly and our children for their benefit. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Minister; you have the Floor.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you Mr Chairman, and thank you to the speaker from the Opposition for the thoughts that you have contributed in support of the allocation for Internal Affairs. We would also like to thank the Ministry of Finance for their continuous support to us in giving the amount of \$20 increase for our elderly, small it may be but it will be a big help for our people.

Although we were not able to give an increase for our children but we look forward to the future but there are other support that is given to our people, such as mothers giving birth. In doing so,

we hope that it will encourage our young ones to have children to support our country because we want to add another six weeks maternity leave on top of the six weeks they are already entitled. We are still investigating this matter and I hope that our mothers who are listening will be happy to hear this. The ultimate goal for us is that each mother giving birth will receive at least three months leave.

We also gave support to our disables people and I believe that they are thankful because their entitlement was never reduced but they continued collecting during this time of the pandemic.

There are other areas where our Ministry is supporting and that includes providing services to our elderly living in their own homes. These are improvements such as their bathrooms and toilet and this is not for Rarotonga only but includes the Pa Enuā.

Regarding the minimum wage, we know there is a report on the Website and those of us who want to read it because this idea came from the Committee that was formed to look into the minimum wage. They made two recommendations to Cabinet and one was to remain at \$8 or to give an increase of fifty cents and that is why we accepted the increase to \$8.50 in order to help our people.

The hope is that we can increase the wage next year until we reach a stage when all will be satisfied.

So with the proposal that the amount of \$4,870,000 be appropriated for Internal Affairs, I strongly support and to say thank you to the Secretary Ann Herman and all your staff. May you continue to do your work by providing service to our people.

Just a last thought in regards to the question raised about the censorship. This has not been taken out because it is still under the Act that we are required to censor films that are brought into our country. Our main theatre is still screening movies including small shops who rent DVDs and in doing so, we are able to receive some revenue in order to help the Ministry. I do believe that the Head of this Ministry is listening to what has been spoken in this House that she can use it to prepare ourselves for the future.

Thank you very much for your support in this Appropriation, I strongly support this.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$4,872,593 for Internal Affairs stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

JUSTICE:

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$2,861,976 for Justice stands part of the Schedule?

I see the Honourable Tina Browne; you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Mr Chairman, this is one of the Ministries that have many problems over the years and not just this year. One Secretary comes in and tries his best and then move on. I can see the Member for Pukapuka is not present and I will talk about him. He served as Secretary of Justice and he obtained nothing.

I am satisfied that the person holding this Secretary of Justice position has been reappointed and I am happy with that. He is trying his very best to improve the weak areas in this Ministry.

I am looking at the appropriation amount for this Ministry and if we want to increase our support so that we will lessen all the issues that they are going through we need to appoint good people to the work and I am hoping in the near future we will see an increase in the appropriation.

I recall about last year and previous years, there was a requirement to appoint people specialised in certain field. I do not know if there was an appropriation for this or maybe a support from New Zealand. These people were given a short time to do this work and I do not think it managed well. I do not stand to criticise but I notice in Book 2, there is a provision for JPs in the Northern Group to be trained by JPs from Rarotonga going up north for this purpose. I know there are two JPs that have gone to do the training but they are still waiting for their warrant from the QR.

There were two JPs with the Registrar and deputy they went to the Northern Group to carry out a training. They were saying it has been over 10 years for someone from the Ministry of Justice to go up to the Northern Group and visit the island people. So, I would like the Minister Responsible for this Ministry and the Secretary for the appointment of two JPs for the island of Rakahanga and for making it possible for staff from the Ministry of Justice to go to the Northern Group to train JPs in the case there could be a court in Rakahanga.

Although there are some difficulties in this Ministry, but I want you to know that our Ministry of Justice is on the Judiciary that is so outstanding in the Pacific region. Especially our judiciary on the electoral petitions, we are one of the leading countries in the Pacific. Even the high caliber of the justices that we use in dealing with land matters they have the experience in hearing Maori cases in New Zealand. I am grateful to hear that our Justices of the Peace are receiving the training in criminal and land court hearings here in Rarotonga.

As a long term, vision must be that one local person be appointed as a Judge. We hope from these local Justices of the Peace receiving these trainings, we are hoping that eventually one of them will become a Judge dealing in land matters, criminal matters and civil matters. I now there is a dialogue between the Ministry of Justice and the Law Society because there are recommendations and complaints from the Law Society to our Ministry of Justice. To me this is healthy because it can only improve administration of Justice in our country.

I would like to ask you Mr Chairman for a short time to convey my condolences to Kopu Matua for her bereavement in the passing away of her mother. Kopu Matua is the Registrar of the High Court today. I have been told that her mother has passed away in New Zealand and her body will

be returned to Rarotonga on Monday. I do believe this is a voter for the Prime Minister in his Constituency of Takuvaine. So, from me and all my Members in the Opposition and this House, we offer our words of comfort and condolences to the family.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Leader of the Opposition, and I see the Minister Vaine Mokoroa; you have the Floor.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Thank you Mr Chairman and Kia Orana to all of us this afternoon. At the outset let me thank the Secretary of Justice, Tamatoa Jonassen and all your good staff for putting together a business plan before us. We look in Book 2, page 245 and 246, this should encourage us to read all the achievements and milestones that has been highlighted by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Chairman, apart from the training that was taken up to the Northern Group to train our Justice of the Peace. The Ministry has enrolled six of its senior core staff into a yearlong Certificate of Justice programme, offered through USP.

Mr Chairman, I have heard the comments and the pleas from the people of Aitutaki for the review of the court fees through one of their Member Kitai Manuela. The priorities around capacity building of COVID has delayed the launching of updated fees.

However, it is the intention of the Ministry of Justice over the next few months to launch and update review of these fees. It is my understanding that the land succession fees and photocopying fees will be reduced. The Ministry is looking at doing consultations on land reform over the next five years in accordance with its 5 years' Strategic Plan. In terms of the survey department in the 1990's the survey work was privatized with the survey department acting chiefly in an approval role rather than doing field surveys.

There has been several complaints from the people regarding the work of our private surveyors. The Ministry is working on drafting a new legislation to help regulate the survey industry to help improve quality and resolve disputes.

The Ministry is currently in their recruitment phase they would like to add three more positions in their criminal and civil division to address the capacity constraints that existed whilst before COVID. This must have been caused by the Member of Pukapuka during his days.

With those few words, I commend and ask this Honourable House to support this Budget Appropriation for the Ministry of Justice. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister I have a request to the Leader of the Opposition. You can vacate that seat and become the first Cook Islands Judge.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$2,861,976 for Justice stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

MARINE RESOURCES:

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$2 million...

Sorry, may I call the Leader of the House?

MS T. BROWN: Thank you Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, I move:

That Standing Order 307 is suspended to enable Parliament to complete the debate on the Appropriation Bill 2022 in all its stages today

MR CHAIRMAN: I call a Seconder to the Motion?

Secinded by the Honourable Tingika Elikana

The Question is:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Honourable Members, we will continue in the Committee of Supply on the Vote Item for Marine Resources.

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$2,234,000 for Marine Resources stands part of the Schedule?

The Floor is open. I see the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera; you have the Floor.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Mr Chairman. I will not be long on this matter because as we can see from the budget of last year and the budget of this year there is a significant difference to the budget. My only concern is the Marine can perform their duties in safeguarding our fishing areas or in our EEZ. I see they have increased their personnel in both Outputs 1 and 2. The concern here again is that if that personnel have increased I hope that the job is getting done.

I just want to talk about an opportunity to expand the contribution of fisheries to our GDP because we do have opportunities up north to expand this. I do see in here that government is looking at aquaculture but I want to remind government that our people overseas and our people locally they do love our seafood. I must take this back to Penrhyn because I have seen buildings up there that can be refurbish. I know they have just finished building their shelters and now the hospital is going up, therefore these four buildings are still sitting there.

To expand the contribution to GDP, we should really look at how we can utilise these buildings throughout the northern group. I have researched the growing of our clams. I have spoken to the people in Aitutaki in the agriculture in Aitutaki and I have actually been there to develop or to grow these little things into paua. I know this can happen to the black pearl shells and I believe that is where the korori comes from. Not long ago, we had korori at Minister Tapaitau's mothers' unveiling and I could not believe how big these kororis were. So, this is something we can fall back on and give our people up north jobs. I think this is something that they would look forward to.

Coming back to Output 2. Compared to last year's Output we are not talking about anything new anymore. I think it is because of COVID and COVID seems to have cut everything out. I think we must get above COVID and try to beat COVID by doing what we should be doing to make sure our country moves ahead. As in Health, we have hit into a wall and forgotten about other things like dental and so it is the same as we are in Fisheries we have hit a wall and forgotten about other ways of improvement. I am hoping that our Fishing Licences will be improved because seven years is coming. Mr Prime Minister is that correct to renew the Fishing Licences? Therefore, I hope that we come above 18 cents a kilo just to expand on the money coming into the coffers. We on this side agree half-heartedly to the budget because it had been slashed but if government wishes to talk to Marine maybe you can increase the budget for Marine. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Minister Robert Tapaitau; you have the Floor.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Thank you Mr Chairman. This year's budget I think has been formulated to provide a balance between people service delivery and sustainable marine resource management. With a new Strategic Plan in place, this budget will support MMRs improvements towards the long-term sustainability of marine ecosystems and resources and livelihood opportunities for the benefit of the Cook Islands people. This includes supporting national priorities ensuring that policies and planning contributes to our countries economic recovery and resilience.

As the regulator for Marine Resources, management key areas of focus for this budget and a medium term include that sufficient resources are provided to fund staff positions and ensure that key roles are provided for. A strong Ministry needs strong staff complement with the compounding issues of physical restraints and competition across local and international employment markets for our skilled people. Investing in strengthening and supporting staff capabilities is absolutely necessary.

Improving coastal fisheries management will also be a focus in this year's budget. It will facilitate access to Marine Resources that supports the livelihood and wellbeing of our people. This includes an approach to develop conservation and management measures at both the local and national level. This includes supporting government wide initiatives to improve lagoon and ocean ecosystem management, continue to pursue our partnerships with local governments and communities. Supporting our fisheries and black pearl sector but also ensuring that adequate information is collected and reported to clearly identify what activities are working and where the Ministry can best focus its resources to support.

Sustainable development opportunities and the continued pursuit of investment to create diversification of fisheries development opportunities and economic stimulus. Re-engaging in front line compliance and enforcement activities to ensure Maritime security and fisheries controls and monitoring are bolstered and continue to be effective.

Continue successful delivery of the fisheries development small grants fund to local fishermen one that is welcome by the local fishermen. International engagement will continue to be an important area of MMR's work to secure our rights and access to fishery resources and advance the Cook Island Strategic interests. This is vital to maintaining sustainable fisheries as well as deriving the benefits we gain from fishery resources such as food security employment and economic returns.

So even though the MMR budget is a lot less than what it was last year the team at MMR are doing a fabulous job.

Before I finish, I would also like to congratulate the HOM for MMR, Pamela Maru for her re-appointment as the HOM for MMR and also to all the staff that work for Marine Resources in Rarotonga and the Outer Islands so for me, I support the Budget. God Bless us all.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$2,234,000 for Marine Resources stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

OMBUDSMAN:

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$301,000 for Ombudsman stands part of the Schedule?

The Floor is open and I see the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Tina Browne; you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Mr Chairman, this Ministry is not too different to the Audit Office. PERCA Committee under the Audit Office deals with complaints from everyone especially the public. The Ombudsman deals with complaints from government employees against general mis-administration of government Ministries.

Last year, I was very impressed with the Report that was filed by the Ombudsman, the former Ombudsman and I was sad when I heard the news that he had retired. I recall that his Report dealt with firstly the number of complaints that they had received, the reports they had completed and the reasons why the other reports were not completed and the reasons why he gave in his report was that there was little cooperation from Ministries in the form of responding to queries.

I support the allocation or we on this side of the House support the allocation, it is a small allocation because we see the need for an Ombudsman Office who is supposed to be independent and impartial and responsible to this Parliament. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Minister, Vaine Mokoroa; you have the Floor.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Kia Orana Mr Chairman and thank you to the words of support from the Leader of the Opposition.

Taking on her concerns, on the 20th April the current Ombudswoman met with the Commissioner of Police and the Deputy Police Commissioner Akataura Matapo at their Office. This issue of non-response between both offices were discussed at that meeting. As a result of that, a Letter of Intent has been drawn up with a schedule of response times between the communications of a case to keep it on track with what is necessary.

This document has been looked over by the Crown Law Office and will be signed once agreed to by the Police Commissioner and the Ombudswoman.

Mr Chairman, in the short time that our new Ombudswoman has come on board we have built up a good working relationship with the Asia Pacific Forum to deal with human rights. Human rights will now become one of the key responsibilities for the Office of the Ombudsman.

Next month, the Judge Peter Boshier who is the Ombudsman of New Zealand with a small team will visit our Office here in the Cook Islands. This is part of their capacity and support programme to assist our Ministry and Peter will also be overseeing a mentoring role to assist both our Ombudswoman and the staff within the Parliament Office.

With those few words, I would like to thank all the support from this Honourable House towards the Ombudsman Office. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$301,000 for the Ombudsman stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES:

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$892,820 for Parliamentary Services stands part of the Schedule?

I recognise the Honourable Selina Napa; you have the Floor.

MR CHAIRMAN: Greetings to you all. Just some thoughts on the Appropriation for Parliamentary Services.

I heard the Speaker mention earlier on in the morning that we have to think of what we are going to speak in this House and we have to speed up because he sympathise with his staff staying back and working into the morning hours. I would say that this is because we have no sitting calendar and this is what happened all our work has been cramped together and so we have to deal from morning until night time. We fail to understand that the services that has been provided by the staff throughout the day and when we finish the meeting they will remain and continue preparing all their records in preparation for the Sitting in the morning.

Yesterday morning when I came to town through this way at 5 o'clock in the morning the light in this building was still on and the cars outside and I said to myself they must still be working. When I came in yesterday, I asked the staff whether they were still working early hours in the morning and they said yes because they needed their work to be completed before the Sitting of yesterday morning.

So, I will ask the government, and if we come into power we need to be reminded that there are workers in this House and they have been working from morning till afternoon and sometimes during the night. As it had been mentioned by the Member for Matavera, and I reflect those thoughts in saying that maybe there is not enough remuneration to pay for the staff here.

Some of the staff in this House have been working here for over 20 years in serving our country. So, what reward are we going to give them? I want to thank the present Clerk of Parliament when he entered the Parliament, the procedures of our Committee meetings and Sittings of Parliament flowed smoothly. Further, the way he is managing Parliament Services is admirable because my observation when we come into the House all the Papers has been prepared and ready for us to peruse.

We ask the question, why is there this kind of service provided to us, I would say it is because these staff who are holding top positions in Parliament know their roles and work and that is why they are providing the Members of Parliament excellent services.

I want to applause you Mr Speaker as you are very fortunate that you have good workers in carrying out our duties in providing the services that is needed by the Members that represents our people in this House. When I look at the appropriation that we have allocated for Parliament and I have been in this House for many years and considering the work that they perform, I would suggest that this is not enough maybe we need to give them an increase.

Parliament is providing two services that I know and firstly they have a programme for women to train them and experience as to how Parliament operates and they also have a youth programme which they have been running for a couple of years. This is training our young people with the expectation they will be interested in standing for Parliament in their own constituency. In saying

this, I notice there are still more men in the House than women but our women representation are on the increase.

They are still organising training programmes for us the Members of Parliament. I know that Parliament is doing their work very well. I want to make government aware of their good service and I would like to remind government from the Opposition we want to see a Sitting Calendar in the very near future.

I want to assure you when our government comes into power we will at the beginning of the year provide you with a Sitting Calendar so you can organise your travelling overseas. There is an allocation that talks about the deliverable and I would like to ask the Minister in Charge as to the meaning of this. In output 1 it says, a more efficient parliamentary scrutiny exerted by a Parliament for some teeth. Maybe some of the works that we are doing there is not enough teeth in the things we are doing.

Therefore, we are required to sit in this House to go through the laws and Regulations, Standing Orders that we ought to do to perform so that our people will recognise that we are doing the job that we are paid to do. I guess you are the government and you are saying that you are the people that are doing most of the work and we in the Opposition is not.

MR CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member your time is up.

MRS S. NAPA: Oh! Finally, we in the Opposition give our strong support to this Appropriation. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much Honourable Member for your strong support. I see the Honourable Minister, Rose Brown; you have the Floor.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Kia Orana to all Members. I rise to give my support to the Appropriation that is set for the managing of this House where we always have our Sitting. To you Mr Speaker, the Clerk of the House, the Acting Deputy Clerk, the Interpreters, the ladies in the kitchen and other staff members doing their work in the House, thank you very much. To the cleaners of the House both inside and outside, greetings and thank you for your service.

We know that the staff of Parliament are working every day for the work that is assigned to them to do specially to service the Members of Parliament. We have seen some changes in the staff of Parliament. I thank the Clerk of the House for the changes that he has done in regards to the staff of Parliament. I support the submission from the Member of Teimurimotia regarding an increase in the remunerations of the staff of Parliament in the near future.

With regards to the question that you have asked, the Clerk will later explain to us the answer. I would like to mention of a young woman that used to work here in Parliament who passed away, Kimiora Vogel and it has been a while now. We pay tribute to her for her service to the House. As you are aware in the House at this time there are a lot of Atiu on the staffing I am not only going to highlight Atiu, I respectfully add Nga-Pu-Toru, adding Mauke and Mitiaro.

We will note, we have a Speaker from Mauke; a Clerk from Atiu; a Deputy Clerk from Mauke and a Chamber Clerk from Atiu. I am proud to stand before the House as most of the staff that serve in Parliament are from Nga-Pu-Toru and the rest of the staff for your part in serving our Parliament and above all, thank you for your support to this appropriation.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$892,820 for Parliamentary Services stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

POLICE:

I propose the question that the sum of \$5,666,000 for Police stands part of the Schedule?

I see the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera; you have the Floor.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Mr Chairman. I shall not be too long on this.

First, I would just want to look at Output 1, which is Crimes and Prevention because I see the personnel for Police have gone up by \$2 million. I think this would bring a smile on all the cops' faces because then they are assured that they would get a pay rise I suppose.

For the Administered Funding they have gone down by \$200,000. However, my colleague assured me on my left here that money would be used once the new Kukupa II arrives because this money is put aside for the fuel for Kukupa II.

If you look at number 2 under Output 2, it says to ensure that the Cook Islands water (EEZ) is free of any illegal fishing, boating activities and criminal activities. I just strengthen this that I am happy that the Police is getting a better boat but I still say that they should have a base up north. Again, it would not cost that much because there are three buildings sitting up there. These buildings used to house personnel up there. It would not cost much to refurbish them.

I would prefer the patrol boat to be go up north for four weeks and four weeks back in Rarotonga. This is the only way that I could see the boat being used for the right reasons which is to police our waters up north because this is where all the illegal fishing is happening. We all know prevention is the key to stopping any crime and I believe we have 10 new recruits in the Police force right now and from what I hear it is still not enough. So, we should encourage our young people to sign up and join the Police force because we have this thing that is the ones that goes to the Honourable George Angene's house and the other ones are on the other side. We should encourage our young ones to be on the right path during their lifetime.

Therefore, this budget I actually like this budget Mr Chairman. It is giving Police financial support as we all see on the road now they have motor bikes. I was actually quite shocked when I saw

three of them coming down the road. To me this is excellent for the Cook Islands, we are starting to look after our Police force because they are the frontline for us.

I would like to say hello to the Police Commissioner. I have only met the Police Commissioner once and I will not say where but I have only met him once and I would actually like to meet him again in his office. So, James I will come and see you very soon. That is all I have to say Mr Chairman on the Police Vote Item and I am sure they are in good hands with a budget like this and from this side of the House we support the budget for Police. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you the Honourable Tuavera. I see the Honourable Prime Minister; you have the Floor.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Chairman. I would just like to acknowledge some of the good work that is being done within the Police department.

Firstly, of course the appointment of our new Police Commissioner a few months ago to take the helm of the Police department. He has been very well received by the Police force and he has really started moving things along in the Police department.

I would like to acknowledge serving Police officers too who recently celebrated 40 years of service in the Police department and these two of course are Solo Tuaati and Aka Matapo who joined the Police in 1982. They were recognised in a special ceremony by the Police a few weeks ago and I was fortunate to attend their celebration at that time. The other acknowledgement of course Mr Chairman is the new Te Kukupa II which will be handed over to the government on the 10th of June and will make its way to Rarotonga and expected to be in Rarotonga in July sometime.

A special thank you to Commander Mark Te Kani for his work in coordinating not only the Kukupa II with the Australian Defence who are providing the vessel but also in the upgrade of the building down at the wharf which will have an additional floor added onto it as part of the upgrade of our Maritime office down at Avatiu wharf. This is one of the departments Mr Chairman, we will be looking to upgrade the salaries and remuneration of the staff to bring it up to more appropriate levels. So, I commend this particular allocation in this Vote Item Mr Chairman to our budget.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$5,666,000 for Police stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE:

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$3,199,200 for the Prime Minister's Office stands part of the Schedule?

The Floor is open. I can see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa; you have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you Mr Chairman. I want to confirm to us in Parliament that I strongly support this appropriation under the leadership of the Prime Minister. I also know of the appropriation increases and the decreases.

One part I would like the Prime Minister to have a re-look and I know the Prime Minister will understand what I am talking about and that is the (EMCI) Emergency Management Cook Islands. So, Prime Minister even though they did not receive any increases just take a look. The part I am looking at Mr Chairman is the strengthening of the EMCI Act 2007. But in hindsight of that Mr Chairman, I would like to congratulate the new Head of this Division which is Mr John Strickland. We know he came from the Police and now he is heading the EMCI. I know the Prime Minister wanted him to go to EMCI to re-look at the operations of EMCI and I know this new Head was able to review their legislation and I am advised this new legislation will be completed in the month of September.

Those are my comments to ask the Prime Minister to re-look and we support this Vote Item for EMCI.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much Honourable Vaitoti Tupa, you make our meeting lively. I see the Honourable Prime Minister; you have the Floor.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Chairman. I too would like to acknowledge our new Director for Emergency Management Cook Islands, Mr John Strickland recently from the Cook Islands Police Department. Already on the ball with the distribution of chainsaws and radio equipment to all of our Puna and our islands in response and in preparation for any occasion when we do have a natural disaster emergency. The Puna are starting to receive equipment courtesy of support from our development partners and I support fully the Appropriation for the Office of the Prime Minister. Thank you Mr Chairman.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$3,199,200 for the Prime Minister's Office stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION:

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$2,449,680 for Public Service Commission stands part of the Schedule?

I see the Honourable Tina Browne; you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Mr Chairman, this is an important Ministry. This Ministry is responsible for the Public Servants. I was happy to read their vision and this is what we want, excellence in the Public Service. I would like to give words of encouragement through the Minister of Public Service Commission to the Public Service Commissioner who have been in the role of Commissioner for about two years I think. In the short time that he has been in this role, I have met with him about three times.

I am very happy with his vision for the Public Service Commission and also the plan that he has to review the salaries of public servants and also to look at reforming the whole entire Public Service to be streamlined.

This is a big job for any person but during my discussions with the Commissioner, I formed the opinion that he is able to perform this job.

I am looking at the Budget and I do believe this is appropriate and we support this allocation for the Public Service Commission.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Tina Browne.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$2,449,680 for Public Service Commission stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

COOK ISLANDS SEABED MINERALS AUTHORITY:

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$999,500 for Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority stands part of the Schedule?

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

MRS S. NAPA: Greeting to all. Just a few thoughts that we want to contribute to the Seabed Minerals appropriation. I have heard that there has been a claim that we object to the activities of the Seabed Minerals Authority but during this time because we are at the exploration stage and firstly we need to do some exploration before we go into the actual mining.

When I look at their Appropriation under achievements and milestones, they have earned quite a bit for this Ministry.

We have heard the Prime Minister tell us that there are four applications received by the Authority and when I look under achievement, I am not sure how many have been granted and how many rejected.

I am looking closely at No.8 the achievement, the Advisory Committee is a body established by the SBM Act 2019 and comprises of Community Leaders whose role is to represent the views of their communities and share that with the Authority. I want to tell this House that I have never seen this Advisory Committee come back to the community to ask for their opinions and take it back to their meetings. Where did they get their information and why are they talking on behalf of the community when they did not meet with the people in the first place.

If this is the spirit, this is the request to the Government that the persons they appoint to this Committee should be nominated by the people so these Members can go back to the people to ask for their thoughts. We are not looking down on the Advisory Committee but when I look at the persons appointed to this Committee, these are friends of the government.

From the Opposition we support this Appropriation because this is still at the exploratory stage but when the time for mining arrives this is the time that we are required to work together. Government working closely with the Opposition and also it is a time that we need to consult with our people and there are many who want to see the mining and reaping the benefit before they die. From the Opposition we support this Appropriation.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Prime Minister; you have the Floor.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Chairman. I think this year is a historic year for the Seabed Minerals Industries in our country. It has been a long road process since we established our Seabed Minerals Authority office in 2013. And even longer still since we passed our first Seabed Minerals Act in 2009 and then the new one in 2019.

We spent a number of years in consultations with our people here in Rarotonga and especially in the Pa Enea. So, you can say Mr Chairman that we have taken very careful steps to get to where we are this year when we issued our first exploration licenses. Our Seabed Minerals Authority has been instrumental over the years to get us to where we are today.

When we invited applications for those who wanted to obtain exploration licenses, we received four applications. After very careful due diligence on these companies, only three made it passed to the next stage. Then after a very careful scrutiny with the licensing panel which is made up of international experts from around the world, only then we got to the stage where there were three successful applicants who now have received licenses to explore specific areas under their license in our seabed.

The amount of work involved in just the exploration stage Mr Chairman is quite significant for these three companies. They are required to submit work plans with estimates of their expenditure for the exploration work that they will undertake. Their own budget they will expect to spend amongst the three companies close to \$200 million in exploration costs over the next five years.

And of course over the next five years, we are hoping that some of that expenditure will spill into our economy. However, the exploration phase includes the mapping of the sea and floor involves

obtaining samples of minerals and nodules and it involves biodiversity checks as well. It requires quite a range of scientific and technical work in order for us the Cook Islands to consider the next stage which is the harvesting of these nodules.

Let me just go back to the advisory panel mentioned by the Honourable Member. The Advisory Committee is made up of open minded people from various sectors of our community. Just to casually disregard them as friends of the government is quite insulting. The Chairman of the Advisory Committee is Bishop Pere hardly someone that you would call just a mate of the government. Other members on this committee include Makiuti Tongia, who I believe was once a friend of the Democratic. A person like George George representing the business sector. These people have been involved in consultations throughout our communities, they have been part of our consultations as we have gone to the Outer Islands.

So, if the Honourable Member is upset that she did not know anything about these consultations or was not spoken to by these members of the committee then I suggest that you make an appointment to see the Chairman of the committee, Bishop Pere who will no doubt be all willing to talk to her and maybe provide her with some spiritual comfort.

However, for the next few years it is important for this particular authority because now that the work is done in issuing the licenses their work now will be in following up with these companies to make sure that they adhere to the programmes that they have committed to in terms of their license. Their work now turns to what literally what regulations are required to be in active and passed in order for us to be prepared for the next stage if we decide to move to the next stage of harvesting these nodules.

Let there be no doubt Mr Chairman that in 2015, when we first invited applications for licenses and we received none. 2022 is very, very different situation where we know that the global demand for the metals that are held in our nodules will exceed current supply. Which is why a number of international companies will look very, very closely at the results of the exploration of these exploration companies in the next few years.

If it can be demonstrated that we can successfully harvest these nodules in a way that does not damage our ocean and this will transform our economy Mr Chairman and provide us with the means and opportunity to further improve the livelihood of our people and the way that we live.

So, I would like to acknowledge the work by the Seabeds Minerals Authority, this is a small office with a small team. However, I have no doubt that they will expand as this industry grows and they will play a very significant role in the next few years as we look to diversify our economy.

So, I support this appropriation in the Bill for the Seabeds Minerals Authority. Thank you Mr Chairman.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. I put the Question:

That the sum of \$999,500 for Cook Islands Seabeds Minerals Authority stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

TOURISM CORPORATION:

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$8,172,000 stands part of the Schedule?

I see the Honourable Tina Browne you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Mr Chairman the Opposition is happy to support the allocation for Tourism. There are many reasons why we support this allocation. I will mention a few.

The first one is given that the fact that we are in COVID times and given the fact that we are relying heavily on tourism in our recovery plan. It is the right thing to do to support this allocation.

When I also look at the write up at page 351 and 352, we can see the efforts of the Private Sector in trying to find ways to keep some momentum as far as the Tourism industry is concerned. For example, the idea of the Round the Rock travel that is an idea that has come out of maybe Ewan Smith that has been quite successful.

I know of many families that actually took advantage of Round the Rock even though I think it is about \$3,500 or something like that but even then in the bigger picture it is cheap. It helps to give some revenue for the Pa Enea in the form of accommodation. I know that we in Rakahanga would have welcomed tourist to come on the island and we can share part of that revenue. Unfortunately, the transport between Rakahanga and Tukao is far too expensive and so tourists do not wish to travel across. It is expensive because of the cost of fuel so Rakahanga missed out and we will have to find ways to see whether we can be included in the Round the Rock travel.

The other thing I thought was very good for the Tourism Corporation to take on board is the control of dogs. Naturally, we think that the control of dogs should either be with the Police or some other Ministry but Tourism has taken this on board. I think we all know why because stray dogs are not only hazardous to us but also to our Tourism industry. I see there that the Tourism Corporation established a Committee that is made up of people from the Police, Agriculture etc. Yes, this afternoon we heard over board as the plane flew above us and I think all of us are thinking we hope that that plane is full of tourist. Therefore, we have no difficulty in supporting the allocation for Tourism.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Minister for Tourism; you have the Floor.

HON. P. ARIOKA: Thank you Mr Chairman. I rise to also support the appropriation for Tourism and also to thank quite a few people that are way overdue to be thanking them at this moment. I think all of us Members had a good read in the Appropriation Book and have seen significant progress in the work that Cook Islands Tourism has done so far.

One of the obvious people that I want to thank Mr Chairman is Mr Halato Fua, the former CEO of Tourism who has left Tourism in very good hands and has raised the profile of the agency to a very good progressive level where it is today. So, no doubt his tenure with Environment Service will actually show some significant progress and changes prior to his time during this coming months.

As we all know Mr Chairman, the incoming new CEO, Karla Egelton has been one of our own Cook Islander born and bred here in the Cook Islands. She has been chosen due to her work history as well as her professionalism has been successful to be the new CEO today. She comes with immense of experience and high qualification for the good work that not only she has done within tourism but also assisted in the Ministry of Finance programme for regular budgeting on an annual basis. No doubt, her appointment was fully supported by the Board of Directors and also with the support of Cabinet that we know that she will do her very best to hold strong the work of Tourism into the future.

I like to also acknowledge the Chairman of the Board, Ewan Smith and his strong Members of the Board for working closely with the Tourism Council in all the industries that we have come through the COVID-19 problems. One thing I think Honourable Members we have to thank for is the foresight to be able to determine and forecast the impacts that we have been experiencing and how quick Tourism has been responded to those in preparation for COVID-19. So in that period the team has worked hard to ensure that our hotels and accommodations are being resourced with pre-COVID materials and resources in preparation for COVID. This is all through the effort of the Board as well as working in close relationship with the Tourism Council of the Tourism industry.

So, I can say as the Minister for Tourism that the Tourism Authority has worked way and above the call of duty as well as demonstrated strong professionalism in the work that upheld the integrity of the organisation thus far. I as Minister is very proud with every staff who has played an integral role as well as been part of bringing us this far and at the same time responding to future forecast as we are stepping into the future.

I say that Mr Chairman is because in Book 1 there are Arrival Forecasts that are going to be a problem if we do not do anything about it. So, these Outputs 1 and 2 are actually being set as important strategies to ensure that we are able to increase tourism in the coming months. Therefore, it is this government that has made it a priority to make sure that we can increase volume of arrivals that would have a quick impact in pulling us out from this recovery.

Thirdly, Mr Chairman I like to acknowledge the hard work that the Committee who are responsible for the Dog Programme on the island. As you know we are in the period where more dogs needs to be neutered and that is happening in this week. I am also impressed with how much work the Police themselves has been encouraging the Committee to work hard together.

There has been a public outcry on a number of dogs needed to be put down and that was responded swiftly and in a timely manner. However, Mr Chairman make no mistake these are just the foundational work that needed to be done but the next tranche of work is going to put people to

account for owning dogs in their homes. If your dog is not neutered or registered, you will be visited by the Police. So, use this opportunity to bring your dogs to be neutered and get them registered, so they can be part of the system so we can monitor them more effectively.

Mr Chairman, I would just like to conclude on one important point which is the Pa Enea tourism expansion to the Northern Group islands. It is this government's intention that that programme must work well with the people of the island so there has been some preliminary discussions, there will be a continuation of those discussions to ensure that tourism does not have greater influence to change the way people live in their homes.

So, Mr Chairman I commend this Appropriation and has my full support in this House. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister. I put the Question:

That the sum of \$8,172,000 for Tourism Corporation stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

TRANSPORT:

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$1,199,330 for Transport stands part of the Schedule?

Are there any speaker? I see the Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Tina Browne you have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Mr Chairman, the purpose of the Ministry of Transport as stated at Page 360 of Book 2 is to create and maintain a safe projectable and cost effective environment for users of aviation, maritime and road transport operators.

It is not new that as far as the Northern Group is concerned, shipping has always been a problem. It has been unpredictable and expensive and now of course with the recent mishap of the Greena and we are left only with the barge and there is unlikely to be a new boat within the next six months this problem has been exacerbated.

I do not see in the Ministry of Transport's on Page 360 any plans for fixing the problem. When I talk about expensive, even the barge now has gone from 850 I think to travel up North to 1,400 and the airplane is 1,595. My friend across the floor is indicating it's even worse for Pukapuka, 1,778.

So when you are travelling to the Northern Group the cost is close to travelling around the world. Now it's worse for Rakahanga because it's 1,595 from here to get to Tukao. You cross on the boat at a cost of 1,500.

I am aware that there are two charges, one is for government officials and there is a rate for Rakahangans and the rate for Rakahangans are lower but when you add the cost, it is cheaper to go to New Zealand and back than one way between here and Rakahanga. Of course the additional problem with the Greena being landed on the reef is that passengers can only now go on the barge because the Lady Moana cannot carry passengers. Then of course, we hear that the Lady Moana has done her last trip and it is going to Fiji to go on dry dock.

So when I come back to the Budget and one thing I do not see in there and it might be provided somewhere else, there is an expectation to pay compensation with regard to a legal Court action that is pending in Court. I am aware that government is being sued for not providing safe transportation. No doubt probably if the case is successful the amount could be paid out of government's Contingency Funds.

My request to the Minister of Transport is to try and archive the objective of creating and maintaining a safe and a predictable transport by way of shipping to the Pa Enea. On that note, we support the Budget.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Minister, Robert Tapaitau you have the Floor.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Thank you Mr Chairman. I thank the Honourable Member for Rakahanga for her good speech.

Firstly, Mr Chairman when we look at boat owner's government is not one of them. These people own their own businesses. She is commenting on the state of the ships and that our people be transported by ship. We see there is a belief for them on that side they are still under this level with regards to shipping. That is why government want the work to be carried out on the airports in the Northern Group so your people the Member for Rakahanga travel on boats. The boats will be used for cargo.

I heard you say you travel to Manihiki and then travel across by boat. You are the Member of Parliament for Rakahanga and it is your responsibility to develop the airport there so that we can fly there. This is why I have always pushed for us to get our airports done in the North.

I do not know if you have been by boat. It is not a comfortable trip. We talk about travelling by boat and it takes four days to get to Penrhyn compared to a two to three hour flight. Let us not talk about the ships. If people from the Southern Group are flying let us not mention about boats. Let us get the service that we so deserve up North as well.

With regard to Lady Moana, I think she may have one more trip to the Southern Group islands before it goes on dock. Concerning the conditions of boats, before we went through the pandemic period the government was looking at purchasing a boat from Japan and we are still looking at it.

Let us not just concentrate on shipping, let us look at aviation too because to me, I am also from Rakahanga and I would prefer to fly from here to Rakahanga. To our people who are working in the Ministry of Transport I am grateful for the good work that you are doing and for the challenges

that we are going through. You have been thorough in your work. To the head of Transport, John Hosking congratulations on your reappointment and to all your staff, we thank you for the good work that you are providing.

Finally, I strongly support the appropriation for the Ministry of Transport. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister. I put the Question:

That the sum of \$1,199,330 for Transport stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agree to

TOTAL MINISTRIES, CROWN & STATUTORY AGENCIES:

No debate on this Appropriation.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$125,685,106 being the total Ministries, Crown & Statutory Agencies stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

MINISTERIAL SUPPORT OFFICES:

No debate on this Appropriation.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$2,458,000 being the total Ministerial Support Offices stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

OUTER ISLANDS:

I propose the Question:

That the sum of \$12,842,445 for the Outer Islands stands part of the Schedule?

We have only two speakers, the Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Mr Chairman, I really wanted if there was going to be an increase given, for this to be given to the allocation of the Pa Enea. We have heard in this House that it is the desire of Members that time is appropriate to increase the allocation and funds of the Island Councils in the Pa Enea. In fact, the time is passed.

Really, these are the office and people that really governs the island along with the island administration. During the pandemic period they were the ones that you the government along with Te Marae Ora the ones that communicated with to know what is happening on the island. That is my first comment on the budget for the Outer Islands.

The second comment, I would like to reply the comment made by the Minister of Transport. Yes, we had put a request when we were in Rakahanga last year...

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Point of Order!

MR CHAIRMAN: A Point of Order has been raised. What is your Point of Order Minister?

HON. R. TAPAITAU: I can give that to you in English. If she wants to respond to me, she can respond tomorrow for Question Time. Not now, because we are talking about the Outer Islands budget and not transport.

MR CHAIRMAN: Okay, thank you Honourable Minister.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Mr Chairman, one increase I want for Rakahanga is for the airport of Rakahanga. Maybe the Minister of Finance can allocate or locate a source of funds to be able to build the airport for Rakahanga so we can fly direct to Rakahanga instead of going through Manihiki.

The third I want to ask for an increase is in the wages of the government workers on the island. Regarding the matter of minimum wage, I am not sure of the situation with the other islands but in Rakahanga, there are two or three people receiving good pay but the rest is still on the minimum wage. With inflation of course, the prices of items in our stores have escalated. In Rarotonga today, the price of butter is \$12.50 imagine what the price will be up in our Northern Group islands. They will not be able to afford a packet of butter.

We in the Opposition do understand that we do not have sufficient funds. Maybe the government can relook at this and if there are extra funds then consider our people in the North. Thank you.

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

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Chairman. I stand to fully support the appropriations allocated to each of the Outer Islands. Just to note the increase of 50 cents on the minimum wage for the Pa Enua alone is about a quarter of a million dollars. So, it is a significant amount that even with the slight increase in minimum wage it does add all on to the total budget allocation.

But as the Honourable Minister for Transport was saying, we should be focusing on reducing the cost of transportation to get to the Outer Islands in order to maximise the opportunity for the Pa Enua to be part of our economic regrowth. So, I am very pleased Mr Chairman that progress on our Manihiki airport as a first step is well on the way. One of the biggest things that we have to

overcome in any major infrastructure project not just for the Pa Enea but also in Rarotonga is not the money but it is the land available.

So, I was very pleased Mr Chairman that the people of Manihiki agreed to the enduring agreement for their use of the land for the airport which keeps that land in the hands of the landowners but allows the government to come and do the work to seal the runway.

So, I would like to congratulate the delegation that went to Manihiki recently, led by our Deputy Prime Minister and also the Member of Parliament for Manihiki and the team from CIIC to explain to our landowners in Manihiki and to get the results that they did which was unanimous approval to use this legal framework, the Enduring Agreement to allow the work to get started.

So we will look at this template for Land Acquisition or Land Use where the landowners remain as the owners of that land. While it is us Cook Islanders that will pay for this airport to be sealed we are actively engaging without Development Partners to be able to fast track the work in sealing our other runways that needs to be sealed. That will allow the larger SAAB aircraft to land, take more passengers and as a result, to be able to reduce the airfare that people are paying particularly to fly to the northern group.

As the country recovers Mr Chairman and as we do if we are fortunate to start gathering revenues from other streams such as what we are doing with our diversification into our minerals. We would certainly look at putting more funding into our Pa Enea. Thank you Mr Chairman.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$12,842,455 for Outer Islands stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

GROSS TOTAL FOR SCHEDULE 1

The Question is:

That the sum of \$140,985,551 being the Gross Total for Schedule 1 stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

I put the Question:

That Schedule 1 stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

SCHEDULE 2 – PAYMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE CROWN (POBOCs)

The Question is:

That the sum of \$32,350,098 being the grand total for Payments on behalf of the Crown (POBOCs) stands part of the Schedule?

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$28,684,812 being the Gross Total for Payments on behalf of the Crown (POBOCs)

Seems different, my apologies for the small mistake from the staff probably, we are getting too late.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$32,350,098 being the Grand Total for Payments on behalf of the Crown (POBOCs) stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

The Question is:

That Schedule 2 stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

SCHEDULE 3 – COOK ISLANDS CAPITAL SPENDING

Cook Islands Capital Spending dealing with the Total Capital Spending of \$34, 159, 912.000

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$34,159,912 being the Grand Total for the Cook Islands Capital Spending stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

SCHEDULE 4 – OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

The Question is:

That the sum of \$91,452,403 being the Grand Total for Official Development Assistance stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

I put the Question:

That Schedule 4 stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

SCHEDULE 5a – OTHER EXPENSES AND FINANCING TRANSACTION

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$6,927,000 being the Total for Other Expenses and Financing Transaction stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

I put the Question:

That Schedule 5a stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

SCHEDULE 5b – LOAN REPAYMENT FUND (LRF) APPROPRIATION

I put the Question:

That the sum of \$14,517,283 being the Total Contribution to LRF stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

I put the Question:

That Schedule 5 (b) stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

SUMMARY

The Question is:

That the Summary of \$320,392,247 being the total Appropriation in respect of Schedule 1, 2, 3, 4, 5(a) and 5(b) for the fiscal year 2022/23 stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

We will now return to the Clauses of the Appropriation Bill 2022/23.

Clause 1 Title:

I put the Question:

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

Clause 2 Application.

I put the Question:

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

Clause 3 Grants and Appropriation out of the Cook Islands Government Accounts.

I put the Question:

That Clause 3 stands part of the Bill?**Motion agreed to**

ADDRESS:

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

I put the Question:

That the Address stands part of the Bill?**Motion agreed to**

CLERK AT THE TABLE: Long Title: An Act to appropriate certain sums of money out of the Cook Islands Government Account to the services of the year ending on 30th day of June 2022 and to appropriate the supplies granted in this period Standing Order 2033.

I put the Question:

That the Long Title stands part of the Bill?

Motion agreed to

I put the Question:

That the Bill be reported to Parliament without amendments?

Motion agreed to

MR SPEAKER: Parliament is resumed. I call on the Minister of Finance to report to Parliament the progress of the Bill through the Committee stage.

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

That the Bill has passed through the Committee stage with no amendments

MR SPEAKER: I put the Question:

That the Report be adopted?

Motion agreed to

I call the Minister to move for the Third Reading of the Bill.

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

That the Appropriation Bill 2022 be now read a Third time

MR SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I call for a Seconder?

Seconded by the Honourable Tingika Elikana

I put the Question:

That the Bill be now read a Third Time?

Motion agreed to

CLERK AT THE TABLE: Long Title: An Act to appropriate certain sums of money out of the Cook Islands Government Accounts to the services of the Year ending on 30th day of June 2023 and to appropriate the supplies granted in this period.

BILL READ A THIRD TIME

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, that completes the First, Second and Third Reading of the Appropriation Bill 2022/23. Congratulations everyone.

(Applause)

MR SPEAKER: Like I said, we have come to the end of this Session. I would like to thank all Honourable Members of this House for staying that long in Parliament. I would also like to thank the Clerk and the staff of Parliament for doing a good job.

I think there is a milestone we reached today. In previous Sittings, we sit then stop then have a break, go home and come back and resume at 5.00 p.m. to 10.00 p.m. or whatever but today we did a marathon. We started from 10.00 a.m. up to now which is 7.30 p.m. I think that is continuity in the Sitting. Thank you everyone.

I have a message for all of you. I was advised to remind you that tomorrow is Kia Orana day for us. Please bring the Kia Orana flavour tomorrow. Do not bring any artificial flavour into this House. Thank you very much Honourable Members, I know we need to finish off today.

Parliament is adjourned until 10.00 a.m. tomorrow morning. Can I ask an Honourable Member to close our Sitting with a Closing Prayer?

CLOSING PRAYER

MR SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Parliament is now adjourned until 10.00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

Parliament adjourned at 7.32 p.m.