



# FORTY-NINTH SESSION

## Hansard Report

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**THURSDAY 13 JUNE 2019**

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

**OPENING PRAYER**

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

Thank you to our Reverend this afternoon for his beautiful message that should serve to guide us through our deliberations this afternoon.

Greetings to all the Members in the House today, and those of our friends in the Public Gallery, our people listening in – greetings to you all in the Name of our mighty Lord.

I shall not end to say thank you to our friend, Peter McHugh, who is still with us until his departure tomorrow.

Honourable Members, we will begin the business of the day and that is on Question Time, and being Thursday, it will be for one hour and I leave the Floor open to you.

**QUESTION TIME**

I see the Honourable Member, Tetangi Matapo.

**MRS T. MATAPO:** Good afternoon Madam Speaker and to all of us – greetings.

My question is to the Minister of CIIC. Not long ago, a project was conducted to remove asbestos from the roofs of some schools in Mangaia. My question Minister is, because the project is not completed, what is the plan to complete this project and when is it to be done?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable Minister, Mark Brown.

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

My answer is, I do not know at this point in time when this project is to be completed, what the plan is? I will go and enquire and come back to you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. I see the Honourable Tina Browne. You have the Floor.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Greetings to all of us this afternoon.

My question is to the Minister of Marine. When we deliberated on the issue of the Pearl Authority, and when the responsibility was going to be shifted to Marine, my question is, is there a plan or initiative to revive the black pearl farming in Rakahanga?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. I see the Prime Minister. You have the Floor.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Greetings Madam Speaker. Good afternoon to you and to all of us.

Thank you to the Honourable Member for this sound question, because I cannot forget the time when the pearl shell grew in the lagoons of Rakahanga. The growth was so abundant. However, it has disappeared until now.

I have not discussed this with the new Head of Marine on those thoughts, but thank you for posing this question. I will certainly do that and I will come back to you on that and all of us, so we all know what is happening and what the Marine is planning for this. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. I see the Honourable Manuela Kitai.

**MR M. KITAI:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Greetings to all of us in this House this afternoon.

My question is to the Member of Parliament for Arenikau. Why has he waited so long to move to this side?

*(Much laughter)*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Actually. I will interrupt you.

Actually, that is not a proper question in the sense it does not have anything to do with your work in relation to Parliament. It is your political business. If you refer to your question explanation you are only to ask a Member of Parliament questions in relation to their responsibilities within their work as a Member of Parliament in Government. But it seems that the Member wants to take the Floor.

*(Much laughter)*

Actually, let us stick to the procedure. If I allow you to do this, it will become a habit. So I will say that we will not accept it because it is a personal issue. This is about what is in relation to your responsibilities as Members of Parliament, not as politicians.

Thank you.

I would suggest you look at Standing Order 93 when you are preparing your questions to the Members.

Thank you. The Floor is given to the Honourable Tina Browne.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** My question is posed to the Minister of Police.

When we deliberated on the budget for the allocation for Police, I illustrated the situation with the Police on Rakahanga. Are there plans to provide him with an office, a laptop and stationeries?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. I see the Minister of Police.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Thank you Honourable Speaker. Greetings to you and all Members of Parliament.

To answer that question from the Leader of the Opposition, I can donate one of my personal laptops for the Police Officer in Rakahanga. No problem. But I shall meet with the Commissioner to address the stationery and the office. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate.

**MR T. MAOATE:** Thank you Madam Speaker, Kia Orana to you and the staff this afternoon. To the Prime Minister, Ministers and everyone on the Government side, the Leader of the Opposition and our team on this side, good afternoon.

My question is on sanitation in Aitutaki. I am not quite sure whether it is ICI or the Minister of Finance but I will put this on the Table.

I went through the Budget but I have not found anywhere in there, maybe I have missed the funding to solve the issue that I discussed relating to the lagoon pollution and everything else.

My recollection is that, a few years ago, there were some funds allocated towards the sanitation in Aitutaki.

The question is, what happened to that fund or what programme has Government in place for the Aitutaki sanitation.

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

**HON. M. BROWN:** Madam Speaker, you will be aware that this is a question that relates to the current Bill before the House, so it's not an appropriate question to ask at this time. However, I can say that the appropriation for Mei te Vai ki te Vai which is the design stage of what we are looking at for sanitation does include Planning and Design for Aitutaki as well. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much can I just ask that you speak up a little bit at the back there because it's very difficult to hear from here so you have the Floor Honourable Member for Ngatangia.

**MR T. TUAVERA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do not have a question but I am asking the Prime Minister, I know he has given me the answer to the question I asked him, but the people would like to hear what the Prime Minister told me.

The question I asked him on that day was, regarding the people who worked for the Ministry of Culture in 2015 who were not paid.

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

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you Madam Speaker, thank you my friend from Ngatangia. I am happy to answer the question based on the information that I received from the Ministry of Culture. This matter has dragged on for far too long and it has been to the Public Accounts Committee. I have seen the comments and the report from the Public Accounts Committee and I agree with it.

In essence, the position is this. The complaints have been received by the current Head of Culture and the claimants I believe hired a legal counsel to deal with this matter. Immediately after the question was raised in this House, I had a very open discussion with the Head of Culture and he accepts that the claims are well founded and is prepared to pay whatever is agreed upon after mediation with the counsel of the claimants.

So I am happy to report that yes, the Ministry has accepted responsibility and liability for the outstanding payments and is now engaged with the legal counsel for the claimants with a view to agreeing on an amount taking into account all the circumstances of the case.

The greatest difficulty they are encountering is the lack of proper records to substantiate the claims. However, I am pleased that the Head of Culture is approaching this in the right spirit, with a view to achieving a settlement as soon as possible. And the best part is that, he assures me that he has enough provisions in his current budget to settle those claims. That summarises the response, thank you.

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

**MR T. TUAVERA:** Thank you Honourable Prime Minister for that response. I think the people will be happy to hear your response.

This question now is to the Minister of Police. On the 27 June 2016, an amendment to the Transport Act 1966 was passed and under (b), it says, make wearing of approved safety helmets mandatory for persons aged between 16 and 25 for riding motor cycles in Rarotonga.

My question is, there are still people under the age of 25 riding around with no helmets. What is the Police doing about this? Also, it sickens me to see a father with a helmet on, and a baby tied or a mother with the baby tied with a pareu round the back of them while they are on the motor bike.

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

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Honourable Speaker, thank you for the question from the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera.

This morning you would have noticed that the Police are doing blitz on the road. I know there was one in Nikao this morning, and yesterday evening, there was also a blitz here at the Met Office. I understand part of that apart from looking at the helmets those that are not complying with the helmet law, they are also looking at those with no Warrant of Fitness or expired Warrant of Fitness or no current Annual Licence.

You would have noticed that the reason why they are concentrating around Nikao this morning is mainly because of our students going to Tereora College. I am not really sure whether the same approach is being undertaken at Titikaveka College or Nukutere College.

As for the parents that are tying pareu around the children as passengers, I do agree that this is an area that needs to be looked at because there have been cases where children's arms had to be amputated as a result of the pareu being tangled in the wheel. I will convey your concerns to the Commissioner of Police and ask if he can assist in these issues that you have raised in Parliament. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Do you have a supplementary question? The Member for Ngatangia has the Floor.

**MR T. TUAVERA:** Thank you Minister for your answer to my question earlier. I still want to ask another question and my question is related to the same matter. This is in reference to young people around the age of 16 to 25 failing to wear helmets especially around night spots on the island.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Thank you for the supplementary question. The short answer to that question is, as long as they are under the age of 25 and they are not wearing helmet, they breach the Act and they will be charged

In such cases, I will also convey this situation to the Commissioner and ask that they specially look at those children that have left school and are breaching this particular provision after hours. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you to the Minister of Police. I see the Honourable Tina Browne. You have the Floor.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** I apologise to the Minister of Police, I have a question for you.

I actually believe that under your supervision the Ministry of Police will be better. For the last couple of years, we noted that quite a lot of police left the police force. In fact the numbers rose to about 16.

My question to you Minister is, is this problem being addressed or is it going to be addressed or has it been addressed.

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

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Thank you for the question from the Leader of the Opposition.

The actual number of police officers that left in 2017 is about 25. This is one of the highest turnovers of staff during that period, and even as we speak today, staff turnover within police is still continuing.

To retain our experience and long serving staff, something urgently has to be. Two weeks ago, I met with Superintendent Aka, Inspectors Areumu and Inspector Solomona. The main topic of discussions was the welfare and the situation of police officers in the Police Services.

I have been assured by the three men that the number of staff on each shift is still low compared to the number in the past. To answer your question, I am yet to meet with the Commissioner of Police and discuss a way forward how we can attract good calibre of recruit to replace those that have left the force.

That is why, today's budget, one of the purpose is to address those shortfalls within the Ministry. I know my colleague right beside me is happy to assist as a voluntary police especially for the village of Nikao. To conclude, like I mentioned earlier on, I will discuss with the Commissioner of Police on how best we can address the issue as raised by the Honourable Tina Browne.

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

**MRS S. NAPA:** My question is to the Minister of Police. Last night at a meeting for Vaka Takitumu that was organised by the police, they told us there use to be a Crime Stopper Programme, but this did not work.

Can the Minister please explain to this House about this Crime Stopper programme, and how this program can help the community especially with the drugs issue?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you and I see the Leader of the House.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Madam Speaker and all your staff, to both side of the House, Government and Opposition – greetings in the Name of the Lord.

I thought I will stand to answer this good question to take the burden away from the Minister. The question is about the Crime Stopper program that was established to assist the police. The purpose of this group is to consult and advice the community. They are to investigate major crime issues and to protect and prevent criminal activities. One of their major tasks is to work together with the community and make plans to prevent criminal activities in the community.

The Member of Titikaveka is correct that the program did not quite work. This question connects with the Member of Rakahanga's question earlier. It is the way where many chose to go to the place where the grass is greener – it was the same with the police case. That is the answer to the Leader of the Opposition's question, many of those police officers left because they were looking for a job with better pay.

I believe today, the Commissioner of Police is working towards strengthening the police force. We see that in our Appropriation there is an increase in the personnel allocation and this issue is being addressed.

Secondly, Madam Speaker there are other programs the Commissioner of Police is doing. Currently, training is in progress for new recruits to replace those police officers that have left the force. In this group of recruits undergoing training, 60 percent of them are all from the island of Pukapuka and therefore, I believe the future of our country is secured because my people are peaceful people. Thank you.

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

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** My question is to the Minister responsible for the Electoral Office. I understand the Statistics Office is under MFEM. During the General Elections, a Minister is responsible for the Electoral Office. I am uncertain whether this continues for 4 years and onwards but I can't find an allocation for the Electoral Office.

My question is, are there plans in place to separate the Electoral Office from Statistics so that it is independent, because during General Elections and By-Elections, we always depend on the Statistics Office staff to fill that void. My question is, are there any plans for this?

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

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

Although I'm not the Minister responsible for the Electoral Office, I am the Minister responsible for the Statistics Office. But yes, a very good question because I can confirm that this is something that I have discussed with the Head of the Ministry of Finance about making the Electoral Office a full-time entity and the Chief Electoral Officer a full-time appointment.

Members will recall that prior to the Reforms of the mid '90s, there was a separate Electoral Office. However, in the interests at that time of cost cutting and reducing expenditure, the intent was to only activate the Electoral Office at the time of a General Election or a By-election. But like all things, 25 years later, times have changed and it is now time to seriously consider re-establishing the full-time Electoral Office with a full-time Chief Electoral Officer.

It is not in this Budget being proposed now but I anticipate that in the following year's Budget certainly we will start to see something.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

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

**MRS S. NAPA:** Thank you very much Madam Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Health.

This is a question asking for clarification. In the past couple of days we went through a flu vaccination programme provided by the Ministry of Health. The question here is, if any member of the community wants to go up the hospital to receive the flu

vaccine, does he have to go through the doctor or can he receive the vaccine without going through a doctor?

My concern is, sometimes when you go to the hospital, there is already a long queue up there and the waiting time takes a long time, and yet, all you want is a flu vaccination.

Can you also confirm whether the fee for the flu vaccine is combined in the hospital visit fee or is there a separate fee, if any?

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

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Greetings to all of us this afternoon. Greetings to all the staff of Parliament and to both sides of the House. To our people listening in to our broadcast today, Kia Orana.

The question raised by the Member of Parliament for Titikaveka is almost the same question that was raised by the Member of Parliament for Tamarua yesterday. To answer this question, I was told there are 500 vaccines received and this is an arrangement between the Ministry of Health here and Health Services in New Zealand. They have given this to help our staff at the hospital. This is a program they have done in New Zealand and through our Secretary of Health, these vaccines were acquired to protect our staff looking after our people at the hospital.

I would like to thank the Secretary of Health because she gave us the opportunity to be given these vaccines and by seeking the Speaker's permission. We all know we are working and serving our people and we are required to be protected so we won't get ill. We know we worked hard during our Parliament Sitting since last week as well as working hard in our constituencies. On top of that, this is a start and also the first year to receive this assistance. We are looking at seeking more assistance because apart from this 500 vaccines, those who are seriously ill and have been sick for a long time are included in this program.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Minister.

I see the Member, Honourable Tina Browne.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** My question is to the Minister of Health.

We didn't thank you on that day we had our vaccine. It was forgotten but when I touch my arm it is still sore.

My question is to the Minister of Internal Affairs.

During the past few days or maybe a month ago, we read in the newspaper about the problem with the Cook Islands Workers Association when a meeting was held with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. To my understanding, it was a Board meeting. The problem that day was that, the Representative of the Cook Islands Workers Association walked out. I believe we have a tripartite agreement with the EU.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, may I just interrupt you.

It seems that we are off the air.

Parliament will suspend until such time that we are back on the air.

**Sitting suspended at 1.57 p.m.**

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Please be seated Honourable Members.

Parliament is resumed on the interrupted Question Time. Before we begin, we apologise for the interruption due to a problem with our broadcasting but that is not something within our control. We will begin our business and before we suspended the Honourable Tina Browne had the Floor and you may continue.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Thank you Madam Speaker.

Before we adjourned, I was talking about the Cook Islands Workers Association and its relationship with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. I made reference to the report in the Cook Islands News about the meeting which basically said that there was a problem and the Representatives of the Cook Islands Workers Association walked out.

I understand the agreement between Internal Affairs, Chamber of Commerce and also the Workers Association. My question is, has that little problem been fixed?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you I see the Minister of Internal Affairs.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Thank you Madam Speaker and thank you for the question that has been posed. This little *maki maki* deserves an injection similar to what we took from the Ministry of Health.

Honourable Speaker, the Board that the Leader of the Opposition is referring to is the National Labour Advisory Board. It is also called the Tripartite Meeting. The Chairman of the Board is the Secretary of Internal Affairs. All Members on the Board are endorsed and signed by Warrant by the Minister of Internal Affairs. This is a three member Board consisting of the Chamber of Commerce and the CIWA Rep.

Part of the Terms of Reference for this Board meeting is that, for any unwarranted Member, there must be a letter to the Chairman twenty four hours prior to the meeting. Three times, the non warranted member was taken to the Board meeting without the Chairman's prior approval.

This meeting was heard on 3 May 2019. Because there was no prior notice or approval from the Chairman of the Board for the unwarranted member, the Representative of CIWA and the unwarranted member walked out of the meeting. And because there was no quorum on the day, the meeting was postponed.

Today the President of CIWA, the representative of the Chamber of Commerce, and the Chairwoman, who is the Secretary of Internal Affairs, together with a staff from Internal Affairs, are representing the Cook Islands at the ILO meeting in Geneva. So in that sense I suppose that bit of *maki maki* has been resolved for the time being.

Going forward, I believe there will be more that will be done because CIWA consists of between four hundred to five hundred public servants. Most of these are all public servants.

For the past three weeks, I held three meetings with all the Presidents of the different Associations. Part of the agenda is to make sure that we have CIWA sorted out. I hope that answers the question. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. We only have three minutes left, and I see the Honourable Tina Browne.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** A question also for the Minister of Internal Affairs. We were discussing about Welfare payments for old age and other Welfare payments. I want to ask a question with regard to the allowance for caregivers. I understand that the current rate is \$165 a month, and the proposed increase in the budget I understand is \$200 per month.

When I work out the daily allowance of \$200 per month for caregivers, it works out to about \$6.50 a day. My question is, do you think there is scope to further increase the amount for caregivers.

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

**HON. M. BROWN:** Madam Speaker, this sound like a question related to the Budget in asking whether the budget will be increased in some future time. I can say that the caregivers allowance was an allowance established historically to assist family members looking after their elderly in the home. It wasn't paid as a wage payment. But of course, over the time and over the years, the cores of looking after our elderly has increased and many households now, there are no family members to care for elderly family in the homes. So there is an increasing need by households or elderly to actually hire people to come in and work to look after elderly people.

The Government certainly is aware of this, and will be endeavouring to find ways to increase the amount of money that needs to be put aside for caregivers who are looking after elderly people.

For the majority, these elderly people also collect the old age pension. Therefore, if we combine the pension for an elderly over seventy at \$700, with the caregiver allowance of \$200, this is \$900 dollars a month that goes towards the care of an elderly person.

If I look back Madam Speaker, this is almost double the amount that was available to them when we first came in as Government. But certainly, it is the Government's intention to continue to look at our vulnerable and those in need in our community and find ways to get the money to be able to care for them with dignity. Thank you Madam Speaker.

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

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I rise to provide an answer to an earlier question by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Just to demonstrate how efficient and effective some public servants are.

This is the response from the Secretary of Marine Resources on the question whether there are plans to revive the pearl industry in Rakahanga. The response is that the Ministry is willing to undertake a scoping study to help determine whether there is an opportunity to revive the industry there.

To do this, they are planning a visit to Manihiki in August and will fit in a visit to Rakahanga at the same time. That is the response to the question. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Members, which completes our one hour and a little bit of Question Time today.

We will now go to Orders of the Day.

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Committee of Supply, Day 6 and we are on the Outer Islands. Interrupted debate on the Question:

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

As per Standing Order 306 (1), I now resolve Parliament into the Committee of Supply to continue with the debate on the Schedule.

### **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY – DAY 6**

MITIARO:

The Question is:

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

When we suspended, the Honourable Member of Mitiaro had the Floor and I believe you had a little bit of time left. Do you wish to continue?

**MR T. TANGATAPOTO:** Thank you Madam Chair and greetings to all Honourable Members. I believe in the saying, a new day and new thoughts.

Last night, the Deputy Chair stopped me because our time was up and I thought that's the end of it. If I speak today I will ask for more time please.

Last night, I was speaking about the appropriation of Mitiaro. About 3 years ago, it was just over \$500,000 per annum. Today, 3 years later, \$843,759 is given for the people of Mitiaro, which means, there is more to spend for the island and the Government workers on the island. I suggested to the Mayor last year to set up a reserve fund for scholarship students returning to Mitiaro to work. This reserve will be used to pay their salary.

When I was living in Rarotonga, I heard some of my people saying that they don't want to go back to Mitiaro because there is no employment on the island. I dispute that claim because I know there are many jobs in Mitiaro. The only thing lacking is, the money to pay them.

So, to all the Mitiaro people living away from our island, I want to tell you the grass is now green on Mitiaro. It is time to come home. Kia Orana and Kia Manuia.

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

I will now put the Question.

The Question is:

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

**Motion agreed to**

PALMERSTON:

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$432,373 for Palmerston stands part of the Schedule?**

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

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$432,373 for Palmerston stands part of the Schedule?**

**Motion agreed to**

PENRHYN:

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$902,154 for Penrhyn stands part of the Schedule?**

As there are no speakers. There is a speaker and I see the Member of Penrhyn.

**HON. R. TAPAITAU:** Kia Orana to all Honourable Members in the Name of our Lord. Kia Orana to you Madam Chair.

Kia Orana to the people of Tongareva on land and those abroad – greetings in the Name of the Lord.

You can hear the allocation for our island is \$900,000. As I always said to you, we must work hard this year. Let us not go against all the good things that are coming to our island.

We have received our 5 tonne truck for mixing cements and the vehicle for the hospital. This is only the start. Our cyclone shelter and the hospital in Tetautua are project planned. There are still workers to be employed in the near future. You have heard the Prime Minister talking about the airport upgrades for the Northern Group islands. This is a planned project that we must see through because it will make the airfare cheaper and not \$1,800 one way.

When our airport is sealed the airfare will be about \$600. This airport project will include Pukapuka and Rakahanga. Therefore my people, this is the outcome of the meeting we had and this is going happening. I want you to do your part and I ask that we work together. We are also looking at the maintenance and upgrade work on our wharf. In the year 2022, we will get our new patrol boat to replace Te Kupapa and I will have a good talk with the Minister of Police to perch the patrol boat at our wharf.

It will not be too long before we meet again. When I arrive, we will meet and talk about our future plans.

I want to thank the Minister of Finance because he has been to Tongareva and he has seen the things that are happening on our island. I would like to convey much appreciation to the Minister of Finance and all his hard working staff. I also acknowledge all the hard working people of Tongareva, the people working on our water tanks. I saw on Facebook that the water house in Tetautua is completed.

Therefore, my people of Tongareva, the benefit is not over yet, and the Minister of Finance is saying there's a lot more for the other islands like Rakahanga to help them.

Therefore, my people of Tongareva residing overseas, this is a request please do not make comments on the Facebook. If you want to write something on Facebook just come and see me and if you don't know what you are talking about, don't talk about it. Leave it to those that reside on Tongareva.

Therefore, my people, let's all work together and have patience so that we are able to complete all what we are dreaming to benefit our island.

To all our families that have gone through bereavements, may God guide you throughout the days. Therefore my people, greetings and God bless you all.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Minister.

I put the Question:

**That the sum of \$902,154 for Penrhyn stands part of the Schedule?**  
**Motion agreed to**

PUKAPUKA-NASSAU:

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$1,262,104 for Pukapuka and Nassau stands part of the Schedule?**

I see the Member of Pukapuka and Nassau, you have the Floor.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Greetings to you Madam Chair and to all of us here in this House, greetings.

I bring to you the greetings from the Ariki and all the people of Pukapuka. Please, Madam Chair, may I extend words of greetings to my people.

*(Delivers chant in Pukauka)*

First of all, greetings to you the Paramount Chief of Pukapuka, Pakitonga Ariki. Traditional leaders and title holders on the island, Kia Orana in the Name of the Almighty. To the Ministers of the different denominations on the island, Kia Orana. Kia Orana to the Island Government, Mayor and Councillors and all those on Pukapuka and Nassau.

Here before us is the Appropriation for the island of Pukapuka. I stand here and I am very happy with this allocation for Pukapuka and my body is shaking. This is the first time this has happened. So how are we going to utilise these funds. Let us not be too proud about it, although it is not quite sufficient, we're grateful for what we have been given.

When we look at the allocation of funds for this financial year, the amount is \$1,262,104 for both of our two islands of Pukapuka and Nassau.

When I look at the Appropriation allocated for paying of the workers on Pukapuka, in the last financial year, it was above \$756,000 and this financial year is \$906,017 and when you look at Personnel, the difference is \$149,241. This is amazing.

So my many thanks and appreciation to Government for this allocation, to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and on top of that, for you Nassau for your boats which cost \$350,000 to enable you to sail between Pukapuka and Nassau and \$150,000 allocated for your harbour on Nassau. Our Minister from Tongareva for ICI will be with you to have a look at this issue. Maybe we'll look and see Tapi's boat on our reef in Nassau. The plan here is for Papa Tapi to remove his boats from the reef before November this year.

When we look at the assistance from all the agencies of Government on the island, when we look at Police, I would like to give my thanks to the Commissioner of Police because today we have two policemen, one on Pukapuka and one on Nassau. These are Honorary Constables. These days I have met with him to try and get our two policemen for Pukapuka and Nassau.

And when we look at Environment. We have two officers for Environment based on Pukapuka and Nassau and they will be trained in this area of Environment and for you Nassau, on 1<sup>st</sup> July we will have our own Government Representative on the island starting on 1<sup>st</sup> July.

When we consider the Pearl Project that we talked about on Monday, for all our growers on Pukapuka, please remain there because we are bringing the assistance to our island.

So I'll just finish here to give time for the rest of the House. As my friend from Tongareva said, it's a pleasure to speak to all of us and many thanks to everyone in the House this afternoon.

*(MP Elikana spoke Pukapuka throughout his speech)*

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

I will put the Question. The Question is:

**That the sum of \$1,262,104 for Pukapuka and Nassau stands part of the Schedule?**

**Motion agreed to**

**RAKAHANGA:**

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$556,949 for Rakahanga stands part of the Schedule?**

No speakers?

I see the Honourable Tina Browne.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Greetings to all our people listening in from Rakahanga. To you the Mayor and your good wife and to all your Island Council workers, Kia Orana. To the EO and your good wife, to our Government Representative, Papa Tere, to all the workers, the three Pastors, the different organisations, all the elderly parents, the youth and all the children, greetings in the name of the Lord. To all of us listening to the radio in Rarotonga and the Outer Islands and those watching the live stream, greetings in the name of our Lord.

When I look at our Budget it is right that I should be jealous of Manihiki, Penrhyn and Pukapuka. We are second to last to Palmerston but anyway thank you for the increase in the Budget for Rakahanga from last year.

When I look at the Appropriation I want to ask the Minister to look at some of the areas in the Budget that can be helped. Yesterday and the previous day the Member from Mitiaro spoke about an increase in payment to the Mayor and the Council and the Member for Matavera suggested for an increase in the constituency funds of Members. The suggested figure for the Mayor I think it's about \$30 to \$50 thousand. My request will not go that far but I think the pay for the Mayor should be the same as the Council, to be the same as the Members of Parliament so the Mayor from eight thousand to twelve thousand and the Council from four thousand to six thousand.

For all the workers in Rakahanga, what I understand their pay have not increased for years. What I understand is their increase is the recent minimum wage increase. I want to request that the wages of the workers be looked at to suit the type of job they do.

We all understand when you live in the Northern Group islands you have to be multi skilled. You are a plumber, an electrician, a fisherman, a planter and everything in one. So it is right that we should pay them according to their skill. So please look at this.

I would like to thank the Minister of Infrastructure for providing an Environment Compliance Officer for Rakahanga. I also thank you to the Minister of Marine for including an employee under the Pearl Division. Even though the vacancy is not yet filled but I trust that will happen. We all know there are no other options except to work for Government.

I am happy with what the Prime Minister said about reviving the pearl farming in Rakahanga. Yes, it is true in the past there were a lot of pearl shells growing in the lagoon in Rakahanga but I understand this was over populated that is why the lagoon could not feed these shells and they died. If we can revive the pearl industry in Rakahanga, that will provide a different income for our people who live on the island.

Regarding solar charges, we understand the reasons for the solar farms was taken to the Outer Islands was so the power bills for the homes will be reduced. I think the real reason is so that we shift into renewable energy but the idea is to reduce the power bill for our people. We can see that the solar farms have been in operation for some years now but the power bills have not come down yet. So if possible please look at this. If I am wrong please excuse me. I am sure our charges in Manihiki have not come down. So please look into this to improve the living conditions of our people in the Northern group. Thank you.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much Honourable Member, did you quite finish your sentence, yes.

I put the Question and the Question is:

**That the sum of \$556,949 for Rakahanga stands part of the Schedule?**

**Motion agreed**

The Question is:

**That the total Outer Islands sum of \$12,604,488 stands part of the Schedule?**

**Motion agreed to**

I put the Question:

**That the Gross Total of \$133,443,249 stands part of the Schedule 1?**

**Motion agreed to**

SCHEDULE 2:

The Question is:

**That Schedule 2 stands part of the Bill?**

**Motion agreed to**

The Question is:

**That the total Capital Spending of \$40,710,336 for the Cook Islands Capital Spending stands part of the Schedule 3?**

I see the Honourable Minister of Finance.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you Madam Chair. Pursuant to my notice to Parliament, we will be moving to increase the Appropriation for Capital.

I propose:

**That we increase the Cook Islands Capital Appropriation by \$300,000 to bring the Budget Estimate to \$40,710,336?**

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you, I call for a Seconder?

**Seconded by the Honourable Minister Vaine Mokoroa**

I put the Question:

**That the amendment be adopted?**

**Motion agreed to**

I will put the Question on Schedule 3.

The Question is:

**That the Total Capital Spending of \$40,710,336 for the Cook Islands Capital Spending stands part of the Schedule 3?**

**Motion agreed to**

SCHEDULE 4:

The Question is:

**That Schedule 4 stands part of the Bill?**

**Motion agreed to**

SCHEDULE 5 (a):

The Question is:

**That Schedule 5 (a) stands part of the Bill?**

**Motion agreed to**

SCHEDULE 5 (b):

The Question is:

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

**Motion agreed to**

SUMMARY:

The Question is:

**That the Summary of \$276,240,536 as amended in Schedule 3 stands part of the Total Appropriation?**

**Motion agreed to**

Honourable Members we will return to the Clauses. I will put the Question.

The Question is:

**That Clause 1: Title stands part of the Bill?**

**That Clause 2: Application stands part of the Bill?**

**That Clause 3: Grants and Appropriation out of the Cook Islands Government Account 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 have resolved to grant your Majesty the sum specified in this Act and humbly ask your Majesty to ascend to the sum. And be it enacted by the Parliament of the Cook Islands in session assembled and by the authority.*

The Question is:

**That the Address stands part of the Bill?**

**Motion agreed to**

Long Title: An Act to appropriate certain sums of money out of the Cook Islands Government Account to the services of the year ending on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of June 2020 and to appropriate the supplies granted in this period.

The Question is:

**That the Long Title stands part of the Bill?**

**Motion agreed to**

I call on the Minister to move for the Bill to be reported to Parliament.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Madam Chair I move:

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

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** I will put the Question.

The Question is:

**That the Bill be reported to Parliament?**

**Motion agreed to**

Parliament is resumed.

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

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

**That the Bill has gone through the Committee of Supply with amendment to Schedule 3**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I put the Question:

**That the Report be adopted?**

**Motion agreed to**

We will now go to the Third reading of the Appropriation Bill.

I call on the Minister of Finance to move for the Third reading of the Bill.

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

**That the Appropriation Bill for 2019 be now read a Third time**

I call for a Seconder.

**Seconded by the Minister, Vaine Mokoroa**

I put the Question:

**That the Appropriation Bill be now read a Third time?**

**Motion agreed to**

**DEPUTY CLERK AT THE TABLE:** A Bill Intituled: An Act to appropriate certain sums of money out of the Cook Islands Government Account to the services of the year ending on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of June 2020 and to appropriate the supplies granted in this period.

**BILL READ A THIRD TIME**

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

Thank you very much for all your hard work for the long hours. It is good to get the Appropriation Bill done.

We will now go back to Orders of the Day.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

Orders of the Day now is the Consideration of Papers.

**CONSIDERATION OF PAPERS**

The Papers for Consideration you will find on the second page of your Order Paper.

Now, Standing Order 74 guides us on the Consideration of Papers and the way we will do this is, I will go through the Papers by their numbers and if there is a Member who wishes that Paper to be considered, you will stand and you will say what you want to do – to receive it, to adopt it and or to refer it somewhere. If there's nothing to be considered on the Paper, we just skip to the next one. That Paper falls off and so on and so forth until we have completed the Consideration of Papers. We have one hour to do Consideration of Papers.

And of course, if we do not use the hour, we will finish it if you do not want to consider the Papers. We will begin.

Paper 01: Employment Relations (Minimum rate of pay) Regulations 2018, Serial No.2018/03.

As there are no speakers we will go to Paper 05

Paper 05: International Labour Organisations (ILO) submissions to Parliament.

Paper 06: International Labour Organisations (ILO) Ratification of Conventions 182 and 144.

Paper 02: Customs Tariff Amendment Order 2018, Serial No. 2018/04.

Paper 03: Excise Order 2018, Serial No. 2018/05.

Paper 08: The Annual Report by the Parliament of the Cook Islands for the period 2017-18.

Paper 10: The Annual Report by the Public Service Commissioner for the year ended 30 June 2018.

Paper 11: Annual Report by the Financial Supervisory Commission of the Cook Islands.

Paper 09: Report on the Ministerial Support Office and Leader of the Opposition for the period 2015 to 2018.

Paper 17: Erratum No. 1 to Cook Islands Government Budget Estimates 2019/20 Book 1 Appropriation Bill.

And Paper 15: Report on the Infrastructure Bill 21019 Select Committee.

Paper 15 will be dealt in the course of the Report from the Select Committee of the Infrastructure Bill. So it will not fall off the Paper, it will remain as Business when we go through the Select Committee Report.

That completes our time for Consideration of Papers Honourable Members.

We will now go to Orders of the Day: Private Member's Business

### **PRIVATE MEMBER'S BUSINESS**

On your Notice Paper, you have Business on Notice. On Thursdays as you would have realised that Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday is Government Business. Today being Thursday, is Private Member's Day.

We have Business on Notice and the Floor is open for Private Member's Day.  
I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

**MRS S. NAPA:** I would like to move:

**That this House reaffirms its commitment to the principles underscoring the conduct expected of Ministers and Members of Parliament**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, may I just stop you for a minute please.

We will begin with No.1. Just declare to the House what you want to do about your Motion 1 that's on the Paper.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Madam Speaker, for the first Motion, I would like to put a Motion to the Table to have that adjourned.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You would like to –

**MRS S. NAPA:** To defer, to have it adjourned. To defer the Motion.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I beg your pardon. Let us do this correctly.

Honourable Member, Selina Napa, were you making a Motion to defer this? Yes.

Would you go through it again and move a Motion to defer that please?

**MRS S. NAPA:** But I've said it.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**Seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Tina Browne**

I see the Minister Mark Brown.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I would like to speak to this proposed Motion.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You may.

**HON. M. BROWN:** I would like to propose an amendment to this Motion:

**That this Motion not be adjourned but this Motion be totally  
withdrawn from the Order Paper**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister, my advice is only the person responsible for that Motion can move the Motion to defer it and no amendment.

So we need to put it to the Vote.

I see the Honourable Minister.

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

I note that the person who moved the Motion is not present in the House to withdraw her Motion.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Any other Member in that group who is putting the Motion forward can speak on behalf of the Member who is not here.

Do you want to speak to the Motion?

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Yes Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes. You have the Floor.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Because the Motion was made for no confidence we, in Government, I would like to make our Motion:

**That the confidence be brought to the Prime Minister**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, we need to go back to the original – Can I have silence please? We need to go back to the original Motion and we need to put the Question on the original Motion that’s put by the Member please.

I will put the Question on the Motion.

The Motion is:

**To defer this Motion on Notice that this House has no confidence in Cabinet**

Honourable Minister. I have put the Question.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Yes Madam Speaker.

Before the vote on this Item, may I just say that this Motion is a totally ridiculous Motion because the Opposition just five minutes ago have approved the National Budget of Supply and then five minutes later.....

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister that has nothing to do with that. This is a Motion that’s been on Notice for quite a while now.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Exactly.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** And this being Thursday, Private Member’s Day, we need to deal with it and the Motion is they would like to defer this and it is still yet to go to the vote as to what the outcome is going to be.

**HON. M. BROWN:** My recommendation Madam Speaker to the Opposition is if they do the right thing and withdraw it altogether rather than defer it. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I prefer to put the Question and go to vote on this.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Just a point of clarification please Madam Speaker.

By accepting the Motion on this Item, I take it that this matter is alive before the House now.

**MR T. TUAVERA:** We have not moved the Motion.

**HON. H. PUNA:** That being the case then Madam Speaker, we have every right to propose an amendment to this Motion and to even move a Motion that is different from the Motion moved by the Opposition.

I just want to seek that clarification before we vote on the Motion.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Prime Minister.

Now I am going to put the Question on this again because we have been going backwards and forwards. Let's deal with the Motion on the Floor.

And the Motion on the Floor is:

**To defer the Motion that has been on Notice**

Right, and whatever the outcome is, then we will go to the next step if there is to be one.

I put the Question:

**That the Motion on Notice which is that this House has no confidence in Cabinet is deferred?**

**Motion defeated**

Honourable Prime Minister, may I just say now that the Motion has lost being deferred. The Motion stays.

So is there somebody who wants to move a Motion on behalf of the Member as to what now happens. I see the Prime Minister.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Yes, Madam Speaker when you answered yes to my question as to whether this Motion was alive even though the mover is not in the House, I now want to move:

**That this Motion be put to the vote now**

It has been on the Order Paper for too long, has unnecessarily cluttered out Order Paper and as a matter of history we dealt with this matter at a previous sitting where this House did express confidence in the Cabinet. So I move that this matter be dealt with now while it is alive in the House.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Just give us time. I see the Honourable Member.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** I am just slightly confused. The Motion was moved by Honourable William Heather, he is not here, and he is absent. As I can see under the Standing Orders no provision here for anyone else other than him to make the amendment unless it's by Notice.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Member that was not actually moved by the Honourable Member, it was actually put on Notice so the position we are in now is because the Motion by the Member Selina Napa to defer was defeated you now either put another Motion or this is going to fall off the Paper. Now that, that Motion has fallen off the paper we will go to your next Motion No.2.

**MRS S. NAPA:** I now move:

**That this House reaffirms its commitment to the principles underscoring the conduct expected of Ministers and Members of Parliament as spelt out in Part 45 of the Standing Orders and the Code of Conduct and denounces any behaviour which potentially could bring embarrassment, disrepute, ridicule and shame both upon the name of the Cook Islands and the integrity of this House**

Madam Speaker, if I may be allowed to speak to the Motion.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Not right now, I will need to get a Secunder. Could we have a Secunder for the Motion?

**Secunded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Tina Pupuke Browne**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You may now speak to the Motion.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Members of Parliament in this Honourable House, this Motion is really to confirm and reaffirm our commitment as Members of Parliament to the principles underscoring the conducted expected of us Members of Parliament as spelt out in the Standing Orders 394. And as the PM always says to all of us and always is reminding us in this House for all of us to behave and to denounce any behavior which potentially could bring embarrassment, ridicule and shame upon the name of the Cook Islands and integrity of this House. And for us becoming a Member of Parliament you have to forfeit some of your behaviours and habits for the better. You became a public figure and as an Honourable Member serve your people and you not to be served.

I ask that we the Honourable Members of this Honourable House support this Motion to back and to support the fact that we are Honourable Members paid for by the taxpayers of this nation and that we do not do anything to put this House into disrepute and the Oath of Allegiance that we all took not to be put into disrepute. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, are there any further speakers on the Motion? I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this Motion. I have a fairly good idea of what prompted this Motion into this House and I agree with the principles as out generally by the Honourable Member and in the Motion. I think we are all aware as Members of Parliament what the expectations are of our people of us and I am sure that we all try to live up to those expectations. But we are all human and none of us is perfect.

My concern with this Motion is that it is venturing into territory that is not provided for in the current Code of Conduct principles because there is a clear intervention into private personal matters.

If we look carefully at the Code of Conduct provisions of the Standing Orders we will see quite clearly that those principles relates specifically to the discharge of our responsibilities as public figures.

It does not deal with personal moral issues. In fact I would go so far to say that the conduct principles required of Members under the Standing Orders relate particularly to the performance of our responsibilities as public figures. With particular requirement on us to ensure in the discharge of our responsibilities we avoid conflicts of interest as much as possible. And also in terms of how we expend public monies.

So, my submission Madam Speaker is that this Motion is pre-emptive and premature but we will support the formation of the Privileges Committee in order to review our Standing Orders and ensure that the conducts that we require of Members are in fact set out quite clearly and included in our Standing Orders.

At the moment, my view is that the Motion is not supported by the language of the code of conduct provisions in our Standing Orders. However, this is an issue that can be referred to the Privileges Committee which can be set up by this Honourable House. That would be the opportune and the correct time for such a Motion to be brought before the House.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister and I see the Honourable Tina Browne.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Madam Speaker, I am wondering whether the Prime Minister has misinterpreted the Motion.

All the Motion is asking is, for us Members of this House to reaffirm Standing Order 394, which deals with the principles and conduct of the Members. That is all it says. It says nothing more than that and you might ask why we have put this Motion through. It is to remind us that there is Standing Order 394, which governs our behaviour in this House.

We accept that we are all humans and we make some snide remarks here and there. But if we remind ourselves constantly of Standing Orders 394, maybe we will be reluctant to make those comments. This Motion does nothing more but remind us Members of Parliament that this is what our Standing Orders is.

You will vote and support the Motion if you agree with Standing Order 394 and if you disagree with Standing Order 394, you will vote against the Motion.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Point of Order

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

**HON. M. BROWN:** The Honourable Member sounds like a lawyer trying to lead a witness, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** If I do need a witness, I will call the Deputy Prime Minister Mark Brown.

I was just trying to clarify for the benefit of all of us what the Motion is. If you have a read the Motion carefully, that is all it does, it does not go beyond our behaviour in this House.

So, please Honourable Members like I said, if we support our Standing Orders it must be a unanimous vote. Thank you.

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

**HON. H. PUNA:** Madam Speaker, I rise to correct some of the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition. With respect, I have not misunderstood the Motion. In fact, my comments were directed at supporting my position that this is an improper Motion at this point in time, because the language on the Motion goes far beyond the clear language and provisions of Standing Order 394.

In any event, the correct process for dealing with issues of this nature is to refer it to the Privileges Committee. That is why I made it clear in my earlier statement Madam Speaker that I support the establishment and setting up of a Privileges Committee, and this Motion can be referred to the Privileges Committee when set up.

So, there is support for the Motion but it has to be dealt with in the proper manner. I will be quite happy to move the appropriate Motion for the establishment of the Privileges Committee because the Standing Orders give me that authority.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, Prime Minister. Actually, you are only allowed to speak once to a Motion.

A Motion has been put and we should vote on it. I will give you the Floor but we are going to suspend Parliament, while you have a discussion as to what you want to bring back. Then we will carry on until 6.00 p.m.

Parliament will suspend until 5.00 p.m. Parliament will break for 5 minutes and we will return at 5.00 p.m.

**Parliament suspended at 4.56 p.m.**

**Sitting resumed at 5.10 p.m.**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Please be seated Honourable Members.

Parliament is resumed on the Orders of the Day item on Private Member's Business.

May I call the Member, Selina Napa to continue with the business that is on the Floor?

**MRS S. NAPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker.

It is so good to see everyone being chirpy again. I would like to amend my original Motion.

I would like to move a Motion:

**To refer the matter to the Privileges Committee**

Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I beg your pardon.

**Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tina Browne**

I put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

Honourable Members, I now put the Question on the amendment to the Motion.

I beg your pardon. The Motion as amended.

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

I see the Leader of the House.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Madam Speaker, I rise to move a Motion:

**That as much of the Standing Orders be suspended to enable the establishment of a Privileges Committee**

The establishment of the Privileges Committee Motion will be moved by the Prime Minister in accordance with the Standing Order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I ask for a Seconder for the Motion by the Leader of the House.

**Seconded by the Honourable Prime Minister, Henry Puna**

I put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

I call on the Prime Minister. You have the Floor.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you. Madam Speaker, I rise to move:

**That this House establish the Privileges Committee to serve for the remainder of the current Parliamentary term with the following Members:**

**Mr Tingika Elikana – Chairperson**

**Honourable Tina Browne – Deputy Chairperson**

**Mr Tai Tura – Member**

**Mr Patrick Arioka – Member**

**Mr Tamaiva Tuavera – Member**

**Mr Nooroa Baker – Member**

Just speaking briefly to the Motion, Madam Speaker the amendment of the previous Motion was in light of the establishment of the Privileges Committee and a solution that it was agreed to by all Members of the House but if I can add maybe I have been a bit pre-emptive in naming the Members particularly from the Opposition side. Sorry there is one Member from the Government side that's missing, the Honourable Member Tereapii Maki.

Perhaps if the Opposition side is happy with those Members then the Motion can remain as is. So that is the Motion, Madam Speaker and I see heads nodding from the Opposition side but this is a constructive way forward to dealing with matters before the House now. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister may I just remind do you have a Terms of Reference for the Committee?

**HON. H. PUNA:** I think the Honourable Member for Pukapuka needs a new laptop because the Terms of Reference is on his laptop and it has a habit of going off when required. The Terms of Reference are as follows Madam Speaker:

1. To review relevant legislations, Standing Orders 393 to 396 and the proposed new draft Code of Conduct for Members and report back to Parliament with a draft Code of Conduct for consideration by this House.
2. To conduct any other business as requested in relation to the powers, privileges and immunities of Parliament and its Members.

That should be enough to keep the Committee busy. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, and I call for a Secunder to the Motion?

**Secinded by the Honourable Member, Tingika Elikana**

I put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

We now go back to the third Motion. That will fall off the Paper I will inform you then. Thank you.

We will now go to Orders of the Day.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

Our Orders of the Day is the Welfare Amendment Bill. I call on the Minister responsible for the Bill to move for the Second reading.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Thank you Madam Speaker.

I move:

**That the Welfare Amendment Bill be read a Second time**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Is there a Secunder to the Motion?

**Secinded by the Honourable Member, Selina Napa**

Honourable Minister you may continue with your presentation on the Bill.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. The Amendment before us has been spoken too widely. The Amendment is simply to increase the Child Benefit from the newly born to the age of 16. I am sure that many mothers who are collecting this benefit will be very happy with this extra funding towards the household which will help to purchase small things like lunch, school uniform and bus tickets. With those short words of encouragement, I ask the Members in this House to please support this Bill. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. I see the Honourable Tina Browne.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Madam Speaker, I rise only to indicate that the Opposition supports this Bill.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** As there are no further speakers, I will ask the Minister if you have any conclusions of the Bill, further comments. I will now put the Question.

The Question is:

**That the Welfare Amendment Bill be read a Second time?**

**Motion agreed to**

**DEPUTY CLERK AT THE TABLE:** Long Title: An Act to amend the Welfare Act 1989.

**BILL READ A SECOND TIME**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. As per Standing Order 306, we will now resolve Parliament into the Committee of the Whole. We will now go through the Clauses of the Bill Clause by Clause.

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** As there were not many speakers on the principles and merits, and maybe the case there may be no further speakers of the Committee of the House, so I will then go through the Clauses starting with:

Clause 1: Title stands part of the Bill.

Clause 2: Commencement stands part of the Bill

Clause 3: Application.

Clause 4: Principal Act amended.

Clause 5: Section 4 amended (Child Benefit).

Clause 6: Section 7 amended (Period for which Child Benefit payable).

Clause 7: Section 19 amended (Interpretation).

Clause 8: Section 27 amended (Amount of advances).

Clause 9: Validation.

I put the Question:

**That all these Clauses that have been named stands part of the Bill?**

**Motion agreed to**

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

The Question is:

**That the Long Title stands part of the Bill?**

**Motion agreed to**

The Question is:

**That the Bill be reported to Parliament without amendments?**

**Motion agreed to**

Parliament is resumed.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Now, I call the Minister to report the progress of the Bill to Parliament.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Madam Speaker I wish to report:

**That the Welfare Amendment Bill has passed through the Committee of the Whole without amendments**

Thank you to those that supported this Bill.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I put the Question:

**That the Report be adopted?**

**Motion agreed to**

Now, Orders of the Day is for the Third reading of the Bill. I call on the Minister to move for the Third reading of the Welfare Amendment Bill.

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

**That the Welfare Amendment Bill be read a Third time**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I will put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

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

**BILL READ A THIRD TIME**

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

Thank you very much, I think we deserve to suspend Parliament until 6.00 p.m. and we will organise ourselves for the next phase of the sitting.

Parliament is suspended until 6.00 p.m.

**Sitting suspended at 5.35 p.m.**

**Sitting resumed at 6.05 p.m.**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Please be seated Honourable Members.

Parliament is resumed on the Orders of the Day.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

Orders of the Day for this evening is the Seabed Minerals Bill.

I call the Minister responsible to move for the Second reading of the Bill. I see the Honourable Mark Brown.

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

I move:

**That the Seabed Minerals Bill be read a Second time**

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

**Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tingika Elikana**

You may continue Minister Brown.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Before I speak, I would like to give my acknowledgment to our people listening in by radio this evening, as well as our people watching us livestream on the internet.

Madam Speaker, as the Minister for Seabed Minerals and Natural Resources, it is my privilege and humble duty to present to this House the Seabed Minerals Bill 2019.

Our ocean is the lifeblood of our country. It sustains us and it provides us with a source of food and income and it links our islands and provides many benefits. Our Prime Minister has said many times we are a people of the ocean. We care for the ocean and we take its management seriously.

Madam Speaker, we are living in changing times and face multiple challenges as a country from climate change through to meeting our nutritional needs and not just the challenges of today, but also for our future generations.

Nevertheless, we are fortunate to be a large ocean state with an exclusive economic zone of some two million square kilometres and so it is inevitable that we will turn to the ocean, our *moana nui o kiva* for solutions and for our survival. For in our ocean lies many of the solutions to our challenges. From job creation to energy, health and nutrition, the potential of our ocean is tremendous.

Now in order to continue enjoying the support of our ocean, we must protect it from harm and this is when ocean governance becomes important but also challenging when you aspire to both protect and sustainably use the ocean.

We will not be able to unleash the potential of our ocean if we fail to protect it.

Our Marae Moana Act is a world-leading piece of legislation that provides a system of ocean governance aimed at protecting our ocean and if we can strike the right balance, we can show that there need not be a contradiction between protection and exploitation. It does not have to be one or the other. It can certainly be both. Our future prosperity depends on the sustainable use of the ocean for the current and future generations. Currently tourism is our main economic driver but the ocean provides us with an opportunity to further diversify our economy and to develop a sustainable new economic sector for our nation and our people based on our own resources and featuring the best in legal, financial, technical and environmental practice.

Madam Speaker, this Government's vision for the Seabed Minerals has been consistent across all its ocean sectors and is currently reflected in our landmark Marae

Moana and that is the conservation and sustainable management of our ocean, our *moana nui o kiva*. And so we are building a seabed minerals sector based on best principles and practices with an effective robust legal framework to benefit the Cook Islands in harmony with our high environmental, cultural and social values.

As we enter the exploration phase the Government will continue to proceed with caution taking actions based on science to manage our seabed mineral resources while ensuring that the marine environment is protected from any harmful effects of mining related activities.

We will control all aspects of activities in our EEZ including the data and samples from exploration in our waters and we will have our own people on board all vessels.

It is the intention of Government to continue to engage with our community and stakeholders which I believe will lead to a sustainable long-term and beneficial National Seabed Minerals Sector.

Madam Speaker, this new Bill will repeal and replace our 2009 Act of the same name passed by this House some ten years ago under Sir Terepai Maoate and while it will continue some important procedural aspects, this Bill can be viewed as an improvement on the 2009 Act and an update to reflect current best practice in this sector.

It is worth noting that the 2009 Seabed Minerals Act was the world's first dedicated national legislation dealing with the sustainable development of seabed minerals resources in a nation's EEZ. Other nations have since followed this action that we took back in 2009.

Again this year in 2019 we can say that should this new Bill be passed by this Honourable House that the Cook Islands will have the world's most up to date and modern national legislation in this sector.

Madam Speaker, before I talk about key aspects of the new Bill I will briefly cover the background of seabed minerals in the Cook Islands and then the development process of this Bill.

As many of the Honourable Members will know and are aware, we have known about our vast and valuable seabed minerals resource since the 1970s some forty years go. It was first reported in the 1970s to our first Cook Islands Premier Sir Albert Henry following a Russian Scientific Marine survey. Then between 1985 and 2006 a SOPAC and Japanese deep sea minerals scientific study took place in our national waters and this report confirmed in some detail that we have been uniquely blessed that in the waters of our wide and deep ocean there are over 12 billion tonnes of manganese nodules.

Our nodules, not noodles they sit like potatoes on the surface of our deep sea bed at five thousand metres mostly between Aitutaki in the South and Tongareva in the North. These nodules are rich in valuable minerals like cobalt, copper, nickel and rare earth elements. And as I mentioned last night of all the countries in the world the Cook Islands have been blessed with these abundant nodules.

Our sea bed minerals resource has the potential to transform our nation just as the Middle East did with their oil, just as Norway did with its oil and gas resources. Today the people of Norway are the beneficiaries of the world's largest Sovereign Wealth Fund and we could see great positive improvements in the lives of our people in the Outer Islands and in Rarotonga from our own resources. At the same time we must be careful to learn the lessons from other countries like Nauru.

In 2013 under the leadership of the then responsible Minister, His Excellency Sir Tom Marsters our current Queen's Representative, the Seabed Minerals Authority was established and the role of developing the Cook Islands Seabed Minerals sector. In 2015 based on best international and regional expert advice the licencing regime was set up and a competitive tender of exploration blocks in our EEZ was run.

However, despite international interest no applications for exploration were received. And to date no seabed minerals licences have been granted in the Cook Islands. However, in 2016 two international entities have, with Government approval reserved limited seabed minerals areas in our EEZ. These arrangements have derived hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue to the Cook Islands without any licence being issued yet.

More recently in 2018, there was a noted up-surge of interest in exploring the manganese nodules in our EEZ due to the steep rise in the price of the mineral known as cobalt which is contained in our nodules. Of note, Madam Speaker global politics at the moment are going through interesting times. The world powers the USA and China are in the middle of trade tensions and this has led China to signal that it may restrict its supply of Rare Earth Elements or REEs as it is known

The ever increasing demands of the world's new technologies such as electric vehicles depend on minerals which are diminishing from land resources with increasing negative social and environmental impacts whereas Cook Islands minerals could be harvested in the future in a much more sustainable and environmentally acceptable manner.

With the interest of both cobalt and rare earth elements at the moment, this presents the Cook Islands with a window of opportunity to take advantage of the state of affairs and establish itself as a sustainable, environmentally more acceptable source of minerals.

With this strong interest to undertake exploration in the Cook Islands the Government decided in May last year that it would be prudent to put a temporary hold on all seabed minerals applications. We are on the cusp of what is potentially a game changer for the Cook Islands so the Government needs to be satisfied that our frame works and systems were robust enough and a key part of that was the review of the Seabed Legislative frame work.

Madam Speaker, on that note I will now move on to discussing the process that went into the review and development of the Seabed Minerals Bill. There are three key pieces that I want to highlight. Firstly the Deep Sea Minerals Working Group, secondly the Regional and International Expertise utilised in developing this Bill and thirdly the Extensive Consultation Process undertaken for the Bill.

The Deep Sea Minerals Working Group is a cross sectoral team of Government officials that I assembled in early 2018 it included the following agencies, the Seabed Minerals Authority, National Environment Service, Cook Islands Investment Corporation, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, the Revenue Management Division, Crown Law Office, Foreign Affairs Ministry and the Marae Moana.

The Seabed Mineral sector touches on a wide range of issues including ocean governance and regulation, revenue management, social and environmental impact considerations. Therefore, it was important to have all the relevant agencies working together in a cohesive manner and towards a common goal.

Therefore Madam Speaker, we now have the key Government players at the same table working through relevant issues. The working group has been instrumental in recent developments such as this Bill. As well as upcoming developments including the proposed tender, and I will talk more about that later.

At this point Madam Speaker, I would like to thank all the members of the Deep Sea Minerals Working Group for their hard work and efforts to continue driving the Seabed Minerals sector forward.

Madam Speaker, the review of the 2009 Seabed Minerals Act has been ongoing for years since the establishment of the Seabed Minerals Authority in 2013. The Authority sought external assistance from experts from around the world to advice the Government on best international practices and standards that were fit for purpose here in the Cook Islands.

Through those efforts an initial draft of the new Bill was developed and this was done through the assistance of the EU, SPC Deep Sea Mineral Project with one of the world's leading deep sea minerals lawyers, Hannah Lily as well as Australian lawyer Paul Hibbitt with a strong experience in procurement and compliance processes.

In 2018, the Bill was further reviewed to prepare for the second tender round by Government through this process, we received advice from more experts including the New Zealand Parliamentary Counsel Office who provided the main legislative drafting.

Also advice from the Commonwealth Secretariat, the New Zealand Petroleum and Minerals agency and another leading international deep sea mineral lawyer, Chris Brown, no relation, as well as leading deep sea minerals, environmental and financial experts from the University of Hawaii and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology respectively.

This does not include the range of experts within the industry who provided submissions on the Bill and which I will get to very soon. And of course, Madam Speaker this Bill has also have the benefit of contributions by our own local lawyers in the private sector and they bring with them a wealth of knowledge on Cook Islands law and what is best suited for the Cook Islands.

Let me move on now to the consultation process. Starting in October last year we began consultations in the three Vaka on Rarotonga speaking on the Seabed Minerals sector in general and including the proposed new legislation. Then from December we took the consultations to the Pa Enuā from the southernmost island of Mangaia all the way to the northernmost island of Tongareva.

In the consultations, there was overwhelming support and positive views from our community to continue to advance the sector with the proposed Tender of Exploration Licenses in limited areas of our EEZ bearing in mind our commitments to protecting our ocean, our Marae Moana.

In addition to consulting and meeting with our people, we met with key stakeholders including the Opposition Office, Te Aronga Mana, the Religious Advisory Council, the Marae Moana Council, NGO groups and also industry groups – all of whom gave their support to the exploration phase.

We also released the Bill publicly at the end of last year and invited written submissions and ultimately we received submissions from all our key stakeholder groups. In total hundreds of individuals and groups were involved in the consultation process with a good number giving feedback orally and in writing.

Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank our people for attending these meetings and for sharing with Government their opinions and support. And I also wish to acknowledge the support of those Members who accompanied me and my consultation team to the Pa Enuā.

The feedback received on the Bill was consolidated and reviewed by the members of the DSM working group. And key proposed policy changes were developed further with recommendations brought to me and finally approved by Cabinet. This phase of public consultation took a total of 8 months.

Madam Speaker, it is my view that the consultation process undertaken for the Seabed Minerals Bill is truly the gold standard for consultations. The Bill tabled before the House today is the result of all those months of consultations and feedback. It is much improved and I am proud of all the efforts that have been taken to ensure that this Bill is robust and fit for purpose.

Madam Speaker, some may say or some may attempt to criticise these efforts and say that we have not taken enough time for consultations or that it has been rushed. In response I want to unequivocally say, that it is not the case. This is not a sudden rush but rather it is the end of one long process and the beginning of a new exciting chapter for the Cook Islands.

Madam Speaker, I now move on to discussing some of the key aspects of the Seabed Minerals Bill.

Firstly, Environmental Management and as I said in the outset the ocean is important to us. It holds the key to our ongoing and future prosperity and so it is imperative that we protect it in our efforts to utilise the resources within it. On that note this Bill represents a major improvement in that it incorporates key environmental principles

and duties that were missing in the current Act. And this includes the precautionary approach and best environmental practice.

Secondly, the Marae Moana in connection to that the Bill also refers to and is consistent with the Marae Moana Act and it also goes a step further and provides pathways for better integration between the Seabed and Marae Moana processes. This will allow for better ocean governance.

Thirdly, the strengthen co-ordination between Government agencies and partners. Continuing along the theme of better ocean governance, the Bill also strengthens the co-ordination between Government agencies. In particular the National Environment Service and the Seabed Minerals Authority are required to consult with each other on environmental conditions to be imposed. Again, reflecting the importance of responsible environmental management.

Madam Speaker, I now turn to the licensing process. As a result of the consultations, one of the key changes was the introduction of an expert independent licensing panel. The licensing panel will be made up of experts in fields relevant to seabed minerals as well as a Government representative selected from one of our central Government agencies.

The panel will have a publicly available evaluation criteria as set out in the Regulations and it will be on these evaluation criteria that they will independently assess applications and make recommendations.

This Madam Speaker, provides a greater level of transparency and accountability to the licensing process and should provide more confidence to stakeholders.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I want to share that the Bill has beefed up the penalties for breaches of duties including environmental obligations and gives the Authority the teeth that it needs to regulate contractors and enable it to take action against those who don't comply with their obligations.

Under the Bill, penalties go up to \$2 million and imprisonment terms go up to ten years depending on the breach involved. The Authority has a full suite of enforcement powers including search powers, the ability to give directions and impose pecuniary penalties,

In terms of the next step Madam Speaker, it is anticipated that should this Bill meet with the approval of this House and be passed, that the re-opening of licensing and a second tender could be announced after September this year and then the licensing process will commence and carry on into next year.

On the tender, Madam Speaker, we will undertake a transparent competitive process. The way the Bill is structured, only those who have the financial and technical capacity will get through our qualification process and then only the best application will be offered a license to explore in our waters.

We have put in place systems to ensure that Contractors this Government allows into the Cook Islands waters are the best and are reputable.

Madam Speaker, as we prepare for the upcoming tender, this Government is aware that we will need to ensure its Government Agencies are adequately resourced and trained for the work to come.

To that end, in this Appropriation that we have just passed, Government has already approved additional funding for the National Environment Service to give it the necessary resources for fulfilling its functions.

The Deep Sea Minerals Working Group is also continuing to build relationships with New Zealand agencies and other stakeholders with a view to partner with them so that we can have agency to agency capacity-building and training.

As I mentioned last night Madam Speaker, right now we already have a Cook Islander, Miss Rima Brown who is at sea participating in a NIWA scientific survey off New Zealand. I hope this boat has a gym on board because Miss Brown is also a national team member of the Cook Islands Touch Squad going to Samoa for the Pacific Games. But this, Madam Speaker, is the type of cutting edge capacity-building, education and employment conditions that we will be putting in place in any licensing under this new Bill.

Madam Speaker, in summary, this Seabed Minerals Bill is the next step towards setting up a transformational future for the Cook Islands and will secure the economic future and the prosperity of this and future generations of Cook Islanders.

And just as we have made a commitment to protect our ocean, this Government has made a commitment to protect our wealth and our revenue.

Our country will develop and legislate for a sovereign wealth fund that protects future earnings from our minerals to ensure they are not squandered but used properly.

The climate change challenges alone will cost our country in the hundreds of millions of dollars in order to build resilience of key infrastructure and protect our vulnerable communities. We cannot rely on those countries that are causing the carbon emissions and the global warming to provide us with the money that we need. We need to learn to look after ourselves. Our ocean minerals provides us with this ability but not just for climate resilience but the potential for improving our health and education services.

The potential earnings from the minerals industry will allow us to fund our own needs such as a Dialysis Centre instead of sending our people to New Zealand. We can provide free University education for our students so they do not have the burden of student loans. We can assist with housing subsidies to allow our young people in particular to build their houses on their own lands.

We can fund travel to our Pa Enea to help re-populate our beautiful Pa Enea islands and we can provide dignified care for our elderly.

Madam Speaker, these are just some of the things that we will be able to do if we unlock the potential of our minerals and turn this wealth into income for our country.

As I said at the beginning, it is crucial that we get the balance right in terms of utilising the resources of our *moana nui o kiva* while also protecting it and I believe this Bill has done that and is a testament to our ongoing commitment towards the conservation and sustainable use of our ocean.

To my fellow Members in Parliament, in 2009 the then Seabed Minerals Bill received bipartisan support from Parliament. At the time the Democratic Party were in Government.

Ten years later, we have come full circle and again we have a Seabed Minerals Bill before us except this time we are standing before a window of opportunity and so today I invite my fellow MPs across the Floor and all of us in the House – my fellow Cook Islanders – to once again show your support for this Seabed Minerals legislation which is the next step in our journey towards realising a decade's long aspiration.

Madam Speaker, it must be part of God's plan that this national treasure has been locked deep in our ocean for so long only to be unlocked at a time of our greatest need. Well, that time is now before us with the threat of global warming, sea level rise and the threat to our very existence. And the good Lord has now seen fit to provide us with the key today to unlock this treasure.

Finally, Madam Speaker I wish to acknowledge the hard work, as I said before, of our Deep Sea Minerals Working Group but in particular in the Public gallery tonight our Seabed Minerals Commissioner, Paul Lynch, and also from the Crown Law Office, our leading legal expert on Ocean Law, Alex Herman, and the Office of the Crown Law and the Solicitor General, Stuart Baker. I commend this Bill before the House, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Minister.

I propose the Question:

**That the Seabed Minerals Bill be now read a Second time?**

As the Seconder of the Motion, I offer the Floor to the Honourable Member Tingika Elikana, if not, I will open it to the Members.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** I would like to reserve my right to speak on this later on if there are any other person who want to speak.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, the Floor is now open. I see the Honourable Tina Browne.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Before I make my comments on the Bill, I just want some clarification in respect to Standing Order 221.

I have two questions. I have not seen the Long Title being Gazetted and I am assuming that a Certificate under 223 has been issued, and if it has, if we can get confirmation of either of those two matters.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I will seek the answer to your query. The advice that has been given to me is that it has been Gazetted.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Are we able to see a copy of the Gazette? While we are getting that I want to make sure at the outset that the Opposition's position is not to oppose the exploration of nodules in our EEZ. We are opposing two matters. The first one is the process.

I have heard the Minister's narration on how long the consultation process took place and the meetings that were held with the stakeholders. But let me give you an example of the correct process in my view.

The next or last Bill will be the Infrastructure Bill. You will see no objection to that Bill because in my view, the consultation process was fair and reasonable to both sides. The consultation with the public showed both views, the views of Government and the views of the other Members on the Select Committee. There were frank discussions among the Committee Members with the lawyers present and as a result the instructions went to the drafters in Wellington as I understand it and the Bill that we are about to pass tonight is the result of that.

I can only give an example on the consultation with regard to the Seabed it was simply in my view, the view of one Party. Other views were not presented at any of the consultations. I am aware of that when the presentation was done. I am happy the Commissioner of the Seabed Authority is here because he was there. It was not a pleasant consultation and the view of the Marae Moana was that certain matters were to be taken into consideration and brought back to the Marae Moana.

I am aware that the Marae Moana also made submissions based on those consultations at the Marae Moana meeting. I am not aware whether there had been a second meeting with the Marae Moana. If there was, then I was not part of it.

There was also a meeting with the Opposition and I am not quite sure whether I heard it correctly, but the suggestion was that the Opposition was in support of the Bill, of the exploration. I say that because like the Marae Moana, the discussion was not a pleasant discussion, it was not sort of yes, we all support and I am aware that the Opposition had also filed written submissions.

A second meeting did happen and I think that was the week before and the concerns of the Opposition I think of the Marae Moana in my view was not dealt with adequately. We were told that this legislation was based on the New Zealand legislation and a question asked in New Zealand was, is Government one of the applicants or the licensees and the answer was no.

Let me just indicate the Opposition's main concern, and I will also discuss how it is addressed in the Bill that is before the House. Our main concern is that, you have the power given to the Minister to issue licences and yet, Government is also a joint partnership in another as an applicant. There is a common phrase that you are the Judge and Jury, you are the judge and you are also the person that you are judging.

The question arises is that a fair playing ground as far as other applicants are concerned. But more seriously, our concern is to try and protect people in official

positions from being tempted to do wrong because of the position they hold. It is my understanding that that was expressed in the Opposition's submissions and also in the Marae Moana submissions. The reason why we did that was because we have had experience of that.

We are not saying that any Minister is going to be doing that, but I think it is a good protection for anyone in that position. The way it has been dealt with in the Bill is to still leave the decision making to the Minister. But include a panel and the panel of experts is to make recommendations and the Minister may accept or reject the recommendations. You then have to wonder if the Minister is going to check the recommendation of experts on the panel – why bother having a panel at all.

So you then have a situation where there was an attempt to accommodate the concerns but in our view it did not go all the way to addressing those concerns. If the consultation was done in the same way, for example, as the Infrastructure Bill, then it can be properly referred to as being a fair consultation.

We were told that well, if the Minister rejects it you can go to Court, you can appeal or you can go for a judicial review. The question is, why do you want to make it so expensive for applicants? I want to emphasise that we do not oppose a Bill being presented to Parliament but it should be a Bill that is properly considered and we do not believe that this Bill is reflective of that.

Madam Speaker, I will be moving a Motion under 234 when the time comes and that Motion, I have already indicated to the Prime Minister. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Member, I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Kia Orana to all Honourable Members this evening. As we are required to quickly go through other Bills on our agenda this evening, I therefore apologise to the people in my constituency as I will go straight on the Bill.

In regards to the Seabed Mineral Bill and what I have read and understood, I agree with most of the amendments that is related to what we have submitted. The people during the public consultation asked for the final draft to be brought back to the people when it ready.

This amended Seabed Minerals Bill came to the Parliament Special Select Committee in January of this year together with the Crimes Bill. A Select Committee for the Crimes Bill was appointed at our last Sitting but none was appointed for the Seabed Minerals Bill. I am surprised, no Parliament Select Committee for the Seabed Minerals Bill but one is appointed for the Crimes Bill.

During that time when we had the meeting, the Head of the Seabed Minerals office attended that meeting in Parliament. He presented to the Committee the previous draft of the Seabed Mineral Bill and we submitted our questions on this draft Bill. The recommendation at the time was for this Bill to be committed to a Parliamentary Select Committee.

As a Member on the Special Select Committee, I personally was not aware as to the type of Bills this Committee was to review. It is just now that I was wondering why the Crimes Bill came to this Committee and the Seabed Minerals Bill was not committed, yet they were compiled at the same time. Besides, a Parliamentary Select Committee was appointed for the Crimes Bill but none for the Seabed Minerals Bill.

I am sure the people are also wondering why there is no Select Committee appointed for this Bill, as this Bill is very important to our country. During the consultation time I am sure the people want to know whether their submissions will be reflected in the final Seabed Minerals Bill.

I hear the Deputy Prime Minister mention that this Bill was taken to the Outer Islands for public consultation. My concern here is that, no Member from the Opposition was included in this team that went to the Outer Islands for the public consultations. Maybe this is the right time to inform the Government that in future, please always include an Opposition Member of Parliament in the public consultation process.

You complain when we stand in Parliament to oppose the passage of Bills. However, be reminded that when we are part of the public consultation of a Bill, we will not oppose the passage of the Bill in the House.

For example, we fully supported the passage of the Cook Islands Infrastructure Bill because we were certain that the Bill reflected the views of the people. Those are my thoughts on this Bill.

What the Opposition Members presented to our Special Select Committee is reflected in this Bill today. I support the thoughts presented to the House by our Leader that this Bill be committed to a Parliamentary Select Committee. This will give us the opportunity to look through this Bill properly so that it does not become a problem like the Helmet Act we have today.

As we experienced with the helmet law, we are now encountering problems because it was pushed through Parliament quickly. This Bill should have been given to a Select Committee to scrutinise.

As our Leader has mentioned before, I would like to say thank you to the Commissioner for the Seabed Minerals Authority and your staff. I cannot recall but probably on two occasions, they came to our office to explain the Bill to us and to hear the concerns that our people raised with us. We do not want to response to our people's concerns, it is only fair they do that.

So thank you very much to Paul and all your staff members for getting us to this stage of the Seabed Minerals Bill.

Thank you.

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

I see the Leader of the House.

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

Madam Speaker, I stand to put a Motion before the House in terms of Standing Order No. 4 and that Motion is:

**To suspend the debate on the current Bill that we are debating to enable another Motion to be put**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** There is a Motion on the Floor. I call for a Secunder?

**Seconded by the Honourable Minister of Internal Affairs, Vaine Mokoroa**

I give the Floor to the Honourable Member, Tina Browne.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Madam Speaker, I am referring to Standing Order 4(2): “Any Motion such as that proposed shall not interrupt a debate.”

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sorry Honourable Member.

The Motion that was put by the Leader of the House is to adjourn this debate right now to another time to enable him to move another Motion.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** The Leader of the House actually....

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Actually, this Motion you cannot debate to it.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Madam Speaker, with respect, I understand the Leader of the House to be referring to Standing Order 4.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** And that Standing Order as I understand says that, you can suspend any other Standing Order with or without notice. We are in debate and sub-section (2) says “That Motion shall not interrupt any debate.” I seek clarification of that please.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes. The Leader of the House’s Motion is to adjourn the debate to another time. Continuation of the debate will be done at another time today, the same evening, but he is moving this Motion so he is able to move another Motion.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Can I ask which Standing Order is he moving this particular Motion? If it is not 4, which one?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** 184.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** 184.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** The first Motion is put forward under Standing Order 4. It is to enable suspension so I can move another Motion. This is more or less to suspend the other Standing Orders to enable the Bill to go through its stages because unfortunately, there are some small hiccups.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Madam Speaker, this may be a situation that might be best to go off air, so that we can have a discussion with the Leader of the House and perhaps the Minister in Charge.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Madam Speaker, I concur with the request from the Leader of the Opposition. Maybe we suspend Parliament say for five minutes so discussions can be made on this issue.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** We will suspend for five minutes. Should you finish and resolve this before that, we will return.

Parliament is suspended for five minutes.

**Sitting suspended at 7.39 p.m.**

**Sitting resumed at 7.53 p.m.**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Parliament is resumed on the Second reading of the Seabed Minerals Bill. I see the Leader of the House.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Thank you Madam Speaker I just want to make some clarification on the Motion that I moved. The Motion is on the adjourned debate on the Seabed Minerals Bill to a later time in the sitting which will enable me then to move another Motion.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Is there a Secunder for the Motion?

**Secundered by Minister, Vaine Mokoroa**

The Question is:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

I see the Leader of the House.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Madam Speaker, I stand to move a Motion:

**To suspend so much of the Standing Orders as is necessary to enable the Seabed Minerals Bill to proceed through all of its stages**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Is there a Secunder?

**Secundered by the Minister, Vaine Mokoroa**

I put the Question and the Question is:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Orders of the day on the Second reading of the Seabed Mineral Bill. Are there any further speakers? If there are no further speakers I see the Honourable Tina Browne.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** I was just pointing out to the mover of that Motion about Standing Order 185, but if he wants to waive that right, then that's fine with me.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes, he is giving you the opportunity Honourable Member.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** I just want to explain why we want to be accommodating tonight. The Opposition's position is that we do not want to be obstructive, and if things are not done properly, then we should work together to make sure it is done properly. If it means by suspending the necessary Standing Orders to achieve that, then we are supportive of it. Thank you.

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

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to address some of the concerns that have been raised in the debate.

Firstly, in terms of the consultation process, I am happy that the process we undertook was extensive and provided the opportunity for many people and all Members of Parliament including the Opposition to be part of that process.

As the Member for Titikaveka pointed out, Members of Parliament are not the experts in this particular sector therefore the Deep Sea Minerals Working Group who were the experts were the best people to take in the consultation process around the Vakas and also around our Pa Enuu. All Members of Parliament had the opportunity to attend any of these meetings that we held both here in Rarotonga and the Outer Islands.

The feedback from these consultations, Madam Speaker, also was one of the main features that led to some key amendments in the draft Bill. Key among them was the establishment of an expert licensing panel to make recommendations on approvals of any applicants for licenses.

This was as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out to do, in ensuring applicants have confidence in the process and that the approvals process cannot be distorted by one person. And it is a three step process to ensure there are checks and balances in this application process. It comes from the expert panel who will pass on their recommendation to either approve or decline an application and the Minister must take this recommendation to Cabinet and seek Cabinet approval first. Before the Minister can give a final approval.

In terms of rejecting an application, there is also an appeal process. A Minister cannot just decline an application that has been approved by the licensing panel without giving a reason. He must publish his reason for declining and this is what we have encapsulated in this Bill. But more importantly Madam Speaker the way that we

crafted this Bill and the licensing process is to look at it from the interest of the people of this country.

Our priority concern was that the people of this country who are the owners of this asset do have a say through their duly elected Representatives in the process. Certainly there are two sides and the Leader of the Opposition pointed out the client side and the importance for them of having an assurance that their applications will be treated fairly. And we believe that the Bill provides that assurance to applicants.

The Government also looked at the side of the people so that the people's voice and decisions can be made through their elected officials. So, removing the Minister from any of the decision making is essentially removing the people from having any say in the decision making, hence the reason why we have this three step process, Madam Speaker, to ensure there is a correct balance and correct checks to make sure our process is acceptable to the people side and to the client side.

In terms of the Government being an applicant and also the Government approving licenses; being both the applicant and the regulator or the licensor. It is this Governments view that the long term future of this particular industry should belong to the people of our country. We cannot start this industry by ourselves which is why we have expressed and we will send out a tender process to invite applicants to come through to the exploration process.

But in terms of the Government applying, Members will be well aware that we join in to a Joint Venture with a Belgium based company to look at the possibility of applying for a license as a joint venture in our own waters. And over the years Madam Speaker we have managed to secure a reserved area in our own EEZ that will be for our Joint Venture Company that will not be part of the tender process that we will compete with other applicants.

With this proposed tender that will come up Madam Speaker, there are areas that the Government will reserve for the Cook Islands peoples interest and there a certain areas that we will open for tender for applicants to put in their applications.

So, while we may start this industry with foreign companies coming in to start the emerging work. Eventually, Madam Speaker they will be there to help us build our capacity as a country and as a people so that eventually this industry becomes a Cook Islands industry.

I hope this clarifies for Members these particular issues that have been raised by our speakers. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, Honourable Minister. I now put the Question:

**That the Seabed Minerals Bill be read a Second time?**

**Motion agreed to**

I see the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Tina Browne.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** I may have stood up too early, so I will sit down.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**DEPUTY CLERK AT THE TABLE:** A Bill Intituled: An Act to establish an effective and responsible regulatory scheme for the management of the Seabed Minerals of the Cook Islands.

**BILL READ A SECOND TIME**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, I see the Honourable Member Tina Browne.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** I move:

**Under Standing Order 234, that the Bill be committed  
to a Select Committee**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Is there a Seconder to the Motion?

**Secinded by the Honourable Selina Napa**

Is there any speaker to the Motion? I see the Honourable Tina Browne.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Madam Speaker, this is in line with the message that I gave earlier. It is the Opposition's view that the Bill be committed to a Select Committee.

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

The Question is:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion defeated**

We will return to the Orders of the Day. The Second reading of the Seabed Minerals Bill. Under Standing Orders 306, I now resolve Parliament into the Committee of the Whole House.

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Honourable Members I seek your approval to go through the Bill in Parts.

As leave is granted I will begin.

**Part I and Part II and Part III and Part IV and Part V stands part of the Bill?**

**Motion agree to**

I put the Question

**Part VI, Part VII, Part VIII, Part IX and Part X stands part of the Bill?****Motion agreed to**

Schedule:

I put the Question:

**That Schedule 1, Schedule 2, Schedule 3 stands part of the Bill?****Motion agreed to**

Long Title: An Act to establish an effective and responsible regulatory scheme for the management of the Seabed Minerals of the Cook Islands.

I put the Question:

**That the Long Title stands part of the Bill?**

*(Opposition opposed)*

**Motion agreed to**

I put the Question:

**That the Bill be reported to Parliament without amendments?**

*(Opposition opposed)*

**Motion agreed to**

Parliament is resumed.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I now call upon the Minister to report the progress of the Bill to Parliament.

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

**That the Bill went through the Committee Stage with no amendments**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Question is:

**That the Report be adopted?**

*(Opposition opposed)*

**Motion agreed to**

Orders of the Day is on the Third reading of the Bill. I call on the Minister to move for the Third reading of the Bill.

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

**That the Seabed Minerals Bill be now read a Third time**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I call for a Seconder?

**Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tingika Elikana**

I put the Question:

**That the Bill be read a Third time?**

*(Opposition opposed)*

**Motion agreed to**

**DEPUTY CLERK AT THE TABLE:** A Bill Intituled: An Act to establish an effective and responsible regulatory scheme for the management of the seabed minerals of the Cook Islands.

**BILL READ A THIRD TIME**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, that completes the First, Second and Third reading of the Seabed Minerals Bill 2019.

*(Applause)*

Orders of the Day is on the Justices of the Peace Amendment Bill.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

I call on the Minister to put the Motion for the Second reading of the Bill.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Madam Speaker, I stand to move:

**That the Justices of the Peace Amendment Bill be read a Second time**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Is there a Seconder?

**Seconded by the Honourable Minister of Internal Affairs, Vaine Mokoroa**

Minister, you may continue.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Madam Speaker and all of us present in this House, greetings to you all in the name of the Lord. To our people listening to our deliberations and to all the staff working very hard in this Honourable House, greetings to you all.

Madam Speaker, the Amendment Bill we are going to speak about is a very short amendment and I don't believe we will spend a lot of time talking about it, but even if

it's a short one, I do believe it is an important piece of legislation on the rule of law in the Cook Islands.

This Bill actually allows certain Crown Servants to have judicial functions and authority to preside as a Justice of Peace. Madam Speaker, the Justices of the Peace Act 2017 which is the principal Act, prevents any Government employee from practicing the functions and duties of a Justice of the Peace. This Bill therefore amends the principal Act to enable certain Crown servants to be appointed as a Justice of Peace and to carry out the functions, powers and duties of that office.

Firstly, (A) amending section 12 (1) (d) of the principal Act to enable a Crown Servant to become a Justice of the Peace and to carry out and perform the functions of that office, and in accordance to the provisions of section 12A.

(B) Inserting a new section 12A to enable the Chief Justice to authorise certain Crown Servants to perform the duties of a Justice of the Peace.

(C) Enables the Registrar to ensure that a JP authorised under this section is not summoned under section 15 to attend a Sitting of a court if there could be any actual or perceived conflict of interest between the person's role in court as a JP and his or her position as a Crown servant.

Thank you very much.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Minister.

I give the Floor to the Seconder if you want to use that.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Madam Speaker,

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Seconder was the Honourable Vaine Mokoroa.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** I am standing as Leader of the House in terms of this Bill under section – also I need to move a Motion for the suspension – to adjourn the debate to enable for the moving of another Motion to suspend certain Standing Orders.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, can you repeat your Motion please.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** The Motion is:

**To suspend so much of the Standing Orders as is necessary to enable the Justices of the Peace Amendment Bill to be passed in all its stages**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Is there a Seconder to the Motion?

**Seconded by the Honourable Minister of Internal Affairs, Vaine Mokoroa**

I put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

We will go back to Orders of the Day on the Justices of the Peace Amendment Bill 2018. Are there any speakers?

I see the Honourable Tina Browne.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Thank you Madam Chair. I rise to indicate the Opposition's support to this Bill. What the Bill does is, it extends the scope of eligibility of people to be Justices of the Peace to include public servants especially recognising that there may be situations where there are conflicts.

On that note the Opposition supports the Bill.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** As there are no further speakers, I put the Question:

**That the Justices of the Peace Amendment Bill 2018  
be read a Second time?****Motion agreed to**

**DEPUTY CLERK AT THE TABLE:** Long Title: An Act to amend the Justices of the Peace Act 2017.

**BILL READ A SECOND TIME**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. Under Standing Order 306, I now resolve Parliament into the Committee of the Whole.

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** We will now go through the Clauses of the Bill.

Clause 1: Title

Clause 2: Commencement

Clause 3: Principal Act amended

Clause 4: Section 12 amended

Clause 5: New Section 12A inserted

I put the Question:

**That Clauses 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 all stands part of the Bill?****Motion agreed to**

Long Title: An Act to amend the Justices of the Peace Act 2017.

**Motion agreed to?**

I now call the Minister to move a Motion to report to Parliament.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** I move:

**That the Bill be reported to Parliament**

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** I put the Question:

**That progress of the Bill be reported to Parliament?****Motion agreed to**

Parliament is resumed.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Question is:

**That the Report be adopted?****Motion agreed to**

We will now go to the Third reading of the Justices of the Peace Amendment Bill 2017.

I now call on the Minister to move for the Third reading of the Bill.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Madam Speaker, I move:

**That this Bill be read a Third time**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, is there a Seconder?

**Seconded by the Honourable Vaine Mokoroa**

I put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?****Motion agreed to**

**DEPUTY CLERK AT THE TABLE:** Long Title: An Act to amend the Justices of the Peace Act 2017.

**BILL READ A THIRD TIME**

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

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

We will now go to the Infrastructure Bill 2019, I beg your pardon, I call the Minister in Charge of the Law Practitioners Bill that is on the Order Paper.

**HON. R. TOKI BROWN:** Madam Speaker, I move:

**That the Law Practitioners Bill No.2-1 be withdrawn from the House and discharged from the Parliament Order Paper**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Is there a Secunder to the Motion?

**Secinded by the Honourable Member, Tingika Elikana**

I put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

We will go to Orders of the Day and that is on the Infrastructure Bill 2019 and I call on the Minister for the Second reading of the Bill. No, no, just give me a minute.

Honourable Members, this Infrastructure Bill has been read a first time and has been referred to the Select Committee which has reported back and this report has been tabled in the House.

Normally, a Bill would be referred to the Select Committee after the Second reading but in this case, we still have to go through the Second reading. After the Second reading and in accordance with Standing Order 266, Parliament will consider the Bill as reported from the Select Committee. Once that Motion has been Secinded and agreed to, then the Third reading may be moved forthwith by the Minister.

So now, I call the Minister to move that the Bill be now read a Second time.

**HON. R. TAPAITAU:** Madam Speaker, I move:

**That the Infrastructure Bill be read a Second time**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Is there a Secunder to the Motion?

**Secinded by the Honourable Member, Tamaiva Tuavera**

Minister, if you do not wish to speak, you can give your time away but the Floor is yours.

You want him to speak. All right.

I give the Floor to the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera.

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

A special Kia Orana to all my people in Ngatangiaa and to all our people listening in.

Madam Speaker, I stand before this Honourable House on behalf of the Members of the Infrastructure Select Committee, firstly to receive the House support.

The consultations in the Outer Islands went very well. I must make special mention of the three islands, Pukapuka, Mitiaro and Mangaia who are not administered by the Land Court Division of the High Court. They support the Bill because of the integrity of their customary practices are not being affected.

Madam Speaker, we have taken on Board all of the contributions from Penrhyn, Manihiki, Rakahanga, Aitutaki, Mauke and Atiu and they support the Bill. As for Rarotonga, many oral submissions were made during the Vaka consultations and has been taken on Board.

I want to thank the Committee on the Infrastructure Bill or should I say Select Committee, our Chairman, the Honourable Minister, Robert Tapaitau; Honourable Tina Browne; Honourable Patrick Arioka; Honourable Tingika Elikana; Honourable Agnes Armstrong; as well as the Clerk of Parliament, Tangata Vainerere; the Secretary of ICI, Mrs Diana Charlie Puna; Felix Matapuku, Othaniel Tangianau; Anika Lane and Tim Arnold.

On that note Madam Speaker, the Members of Her Majesty's Opposition supports this Bill.

*(Much laughter)*

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

I give the Floor to the Minister.

**HON. R. TAPAITAU:** Kia Orana Madam Speaker.

This is a beautiful speech by the Member for Ngatangiaa. Thank you very much for that. Greetings and Kia Orana to everyone.

Today we are faced with many challenges such as increased development of our islands, technology advancement had influenced our lives, climate change impact on our islands, population growth and materialistic appetite of our people, an increase in tourism numbers amongst many others.

These are factors imposing extreme pressure on our current public infrastructure and these are being tested. In some cases it has reached the tipping point of failed infrastructure to keep up with these challenges.

Recent flooding around Rarotonga clearly exposed some of these areas. Obviously we need a robust infrastructure management mandate that would guide us into the right direction in addressing these issues now and in the future.

We strongly believe this Infrastructure Bill is the platform we all need to stand together and embrace in order to future-proof island communities and our people in the future and for the next generation to come.

The main theme of this Infrastructure Bill is to work together to protect our own people, to protect our infrastructure managers' task to build and maintain our infrastructure and to respect the rights of our people, our landowners and our island communities.

It is also humbling for me to mention that our *akaonoanga maori*, our customary laws in the Pa Enea – Mangaia, Mitiaro, Pukapuka and Palmerston are recognised and respected within this Bill. We are not imposing on those customary processes on your islands when dealing with land access and land rights. We are embracing them wholeheartedly.

Furthermore, recognising our Island Government has infrastructure managers on our islands portrays the importance of taking ownership of our own development in the Pa Enea.

The Infrastructure Bill recognises the importance of keeping strong working relationships between those who manage the infrastructure and the private and public interest of our people. Talking to each other is the key to the success and implementation of this Bill.

My plea to all Honourable Members of this House is to put the interests of our people first and to support the enactment of this Bill to allow our infrastructure managers to effectively build and manage our infrastructure in the Cook Islands – roads, ports, airports, our water network, drainage, bridges, telecommunications and power and the disposal of all solid waste. Waste water and storm water are all essential public infrastructures and services for our people which our health, safety and enjoyment of life depend on.

We therefore need this Infrastructure Bill to future-proof our island communities and to pave the way forward for a better Cook Islands.

Before I finish I want to give my thanks to all the people on Rarotonga, in the Southern Group and the Northern Group for taking care of us but I think Penrhyn was the best island because there was so much good food on our island.

I do not forget the Southern Group Islands. I want to give another thanks and those people named by the Member of Parliament for Ngatangia on the Select Committee – thank you for the good work we have done. Peace and goodwill.

To all of us in this Honourable House, God bless all of us for allowing this Bill. Without our God this will not happen.

So thank you very, very much to all of us. God bless everyone.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Minister.

I will now put the Question:

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

Now I call on the Minister in Charge to move that the Report of the Select Committee be approved.

**HON. R. TAPAITAU:** Madam Speaker, I move:

**That the Report of the Select Committee be approved**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. Is there a Seconder?

**Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tingika Elikana**

I put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?****Motion agreed to**

I call on the Minister to move for the Third reading of the Bill.

**HON. R. TAPAITAU:** Madam Speaker, I move:

**That the Bill be read a Third time**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Is there a Seconder?

**Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tamaiva Tuavera**

I put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?****Motion agreed to**

**DEPUTY CLERK AT THE TABLE:** A Bill Intituled: An Act to

- (a) provide for the planning, delivery and management of infrastructure; and
- (b) provide for the construction, installation and maintenance of infrastructure; and
- (c) set out the rights and obligations of infrastructure managers and occupiers and owners of land when installing, operating and maintaining infrastructure.

**BILL READ A THIRD TIME**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, that completes the First, Second and Third reading of the Infrastructure Bill 2019.

*(Applause)*

Thank you.

I have one announcement to make before we can go home and that announcement is the Volumes that you have been given, 1 and 2, you leave the ones without the amendment. You take the ones with the amendments. Does that make sense?

You have Volume 1 and 2 with amendments? You only have the original copy, is that right?

Okay. So the ones that first came you keep them here. Apparently, there are some that have been sent with the amendments, those are the ones you take home.

All right. You can leave those copies here. The new copies will be distributed to you.

The next thing I want to say is this, it is actually the first Sitting we have had that everything on our Order Paper is complete except for the Speeches of the Address to the Queen's Representative.

The last thing I want to say if you would join me in applauding our friend, Peter who will be leaving tomorrow night.

*(Applause)*

Thank you very much. It has been a very hard couple of weeks for you but I think you will all agree that it was worth it. You have done some very good work and again I want to thank the Deputy Speaker for your hard work.

*(Applause)*

I also want to thank our new Members of Parliament who have also worked very hard at their first Sitting also. To the Clerk and all the staff, including our casual volunteers that we bring on to do I think the hardest job in the House, thank you.

*(Applause)*

I call on the Leader of the House.

Oh, one more person.

I did not have the opportunity, but we actually had a new person in the Chamber for the first time at this Sitting. Thank you very much for your assistance as the Chamber Attendant, Eddie Brown. We also seconded Janette Browne at the last minute, so you can see that people do the work of Parliament when their assistance is needed.

So thank you. I see the Leader of the House.

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

Before I put the Motion before the House, I think it is probably remiss of all of us not to thank our camera crew who have been working very hard throughout this Session.

(Applause)

On that note Madam Speaker, I rise to move:

**That this House adjourn *Sine Die***

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. I seek a Secunder.

**Seconded by the Honourable Prime Minister, Henry Puna**

**HON. H. PUNA:** Madam Speaker, can I briefly speak to the Motion?

In seconding the Motion, I want to say thank you to all the Members of Parliament for a really constructive and positive Session. The spirit has been excellent throughout which shows what we can achieve if we consult with each other and work together. This is indeed a new spirit that we should embrace moving forward.

My condolences go to the Members who have fallen ill, maybe because of the long hours we have put in since we started. But I hope that we have convinced our people that when the need arises for us to come together as Members of Parliament and work, we are more than happy to do that. But I am hopeful for more regular Sittings in the future Madam Speaker once we are able to tweak our Standing Orders to allow us to do that and carry on with our business as usual.

On that note, I wish everybody a good evening and all the best.

Thank you very much.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Prime Minister.

Before we close down, I want to apologise for the hiccups we have had but we have done new things at this Sitting so we have all learned a lot on some new things and remember them for the next time.

The Motion was Seconded by the Prime Minister for *Sine Die*.

**Seconded by the Honourable Prime Minister, Henry Puna**

The Question is:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

Can I ask somebody to please close us with a Prayer?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

May I invite everybody to go and have dinner please before you go home? Dinner is ready.

Parliament is adjourned *Sine Die*.

**Parliament adjourned at 9.13 p.m.**