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MR DEPUTY SPEAKER took the Chair at 9.00 a.m.

OPENING PRAYER

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

Greetings to all of us this morning.

It's beautiful to see all of us this morning. Special mention to our students from Nukutere College. Kia Orana. Good morning. Welcome to Parliament. Maybe one day some of you will be sitting in this House to lead us in the future. We hope your visit with us this morning is productive to you and your teachers and all your parents. God bless.

Special thanks to the Reverend for delivering a beautiful message this morning and maybe a food of the spirit for all of us today and other days in the Parliament. May the spirit of our Lord be with us throughout our deliberations today.

Honourable Members of Parliament, my warmest greetings to all of you this morning and also to the Clerk and staff of Parliament. Kia Orana to you all today and also to everyone in this Honourable House.

To everyone listening to our Parliament on the radio and the livestreaming on Rarotonga, in the Pa Enuā and overseas – Kia Orana to you all.

To Madam Speaker, Niki Rattle and Papa Colin in New Zealand, special greetings to you both.

Again to our friend from WA, Peter McHugh, a warm Kia Orana to you and your good wife Penny. We hope you both are enjoying your short visit here in Rarotonga. There's a lot of sun out there and do make the most of it because last week and the past many weeks it's been wet and raining.

Honourable Members, our work is being cut out to us today and we need your utmost attention as we go through each Vote Item on the Budget Estimates.

I know finishing late last night but when I look at you all this morning you are looking fresh and alert. That's the spirit we want to get us through the Appropriation Bill.

Thank you Honourable Members. Now we have come to Question Time.

Honourable Members, it is now Question Time and according to Standing Order 66(a), our Question Time today is half an hour.

QUESTION TIME

The Floor is now open for questions.

I see the Honourable Member of Ruauu, the Honourable William Heather.

MR W. HEATHER: My question is to the Minister of Police.

Last weekend when the rain was falling as I passed Nikao I saw a couple of youth riding on their bike without a helmet. I believe they were at high speeds of 70 kilometres an hour. The question here is how are the patrols by the Police? Is this happening or not? Because the idea is to protect our youth from these troubles.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member.

I see the Honourable Minister Mac Mokoroa.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Kia Orana Honourable Deputy Speaker. Greetings to all of us this morning.

Acknowledgment to our students from Nukutere College and your teachers – greetings.

To answer this question, let me pose another question, did the Member from Ruauu look properly whether these are youths from Arorangi? And if the Pastor was here he will say that this is one of the most dangerous roads for speeding by our youth. While you were patrolling through Nikao I was patrolling through Ngatangia. I would like to commend the volunteer Police in Takitumu because they are conducting this type of work until dawn in the morning. This is part of their responsibilities to check these youth riding with no helmet.

Our community Police in Arorangi they just started and then the battery went flat. Nevertheless, our Police are trying their best to prevent these problems on the road and I see them standing on the road doing checkpoints including around Tereora College.

So this is the request to all parents listening on radio. Don't just depend on the Police. We parents should be teaching our children to wear helmets when they are riding on our road.

That's my little answer. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I see the Honourable Member from Ngatangiia, the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera. You have the Floor.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker.

I really didn't have a question this morning but when I look at my children here because there's one of my daughters here. This is the Special Needs Class of Nukutere because my daughter is a special need. May be this question is fitting to be asked to the Minister of Education because these students are fund raising to improve their classrooms. It is sad when we look at them because one day we will all go through this.

My question is, can we also please provide assistance to these children, not only in Nukutere but other schools as well. Thank you.

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

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you, Deputy Speaker and to all of us Members in the House. I convey special greetings to our students in the Public Gallery for visiting these elderly people in the House this morning. To your teachers thank you very much for bringing our students.

This is a very good question raised by the Member for Ngatangiia but I just want to inform us all about the assistance provided by Government to our Nukutere College. This will demonstrate our love for you our students.

When our classrooms burnt down a couple of years ago, we all went through this predicament. Unfortunately, we still have not discovered who have conducted this act.

However, during that time, it was discovered there were issues with the land. The Government met and tried to find ways how to assist our school but make no mistake, right from the beginning, Government wanted to help. The thoughts were along the lines of acquiring the land under the law through Warrant. During that time the school had a 99 year lease and it had expired. Because the value of the land was increasing, it was not appropriate that another lease be entered into because it will become a problem for future generations. So the Government decided to acquire this land and gift it to the school.

We looked for all sorts of ways to make this possible and after many years it became possible. I just want to tell us that Government appropriated half a million dollars for this purpose.

My heart was warm because not so long ago, we were all together at the re-opening of this school. The issues have not been fully addressed because we discovered there was a need to build new classrooms and the idea being is that this should be done right now instead of waiting for completion of Stage 1 when more funds will be required. This will coincide with the comments by this Honourable Member which I will talk about.

Government have deliberated and decided we will assist with Stage 2 of the school. Maybe you were led here this morning by the Spirit so you will see the deliberations as we all work in support of our school. So don't doubt and never fear because help is coming. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. I now see the Minister Vaine Mokoroa.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. To answer the question raised by the Honourable Member from Ngatangia, presently, the National Disability Council is working closely with Internal Affairs and their main focus is to develop their five year plan.

I will read the first paragraph of their Policy Paper that they have developed and it reads – “People with disabilities and their families are still amongst the most marginalised and stigmatized group in the world according to UNESCO. Many myths about people with disabilities still exists which promote fear and misunderstanding. People with disabilities are often isolated and shunned. Their opportunities for education, work and appropriate health care and basic human rights are often a challenge to each and every country”.

The Prime Minister explained earlier on about the support provided for education. I will bring us back to the allocation from the Government towards disability. In the Vote Item for Internal Affairs, this is known as the Social Impact Fund. As explained by the Deputy Prime Minister, the majority of this fund will be given to NGOs. Government has allocated \$800,000 for the next four years and our National Disability Council is one of the recipients of this \$800,000. So the help from the Government will not stop here because some funding comes from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to assist the welfare in the homes and there is an allocation of \$100,000 for this Social Assistance Fund. This fund will go towards funding access way in the house if a child is wheelchair bound. This is some of the assistance provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to assist our children with disability.

Thank you, those are my response to the question raised.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I see the Honourable Member from Oneroa, Wesley Kareroa.

MR W. KAREROA: Greetings Deputy Speaker and all of us here in Parliament and also our students in the Public Gallery and your teachers.

When you look around in this House, you will notice that the House is divided in two teams. One side is Government, and this side to us is the Opposition. However, when you watch a movie, it is always exciting if there are villains in the movie. When you look on our side, you will see Hulk, Wonder Woman, Super Woman and Spider Man. This is the good side and that's the bad side.

Here's my question to the Minister of Health. Because we don't have a doctor or a nurse practitioner, and we don't have a flying doctor, I am not asking for anything but I just want clarification, what is your plan for us in Mangaia.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. I can see the Minister for Health the Honourable Rose Brown.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker. Kia Orana to all of us in this House. I would like to convey special greetings to our students and to your teachers in the House this morning. Good morning to you all this morning.

To answer the question raised by the Honourable Member from Oneroa. I know this is one of the important thing for us in the Ministry of Health and that is the health of our people. This is one of the questions that I have asked myself since entering Parliament regarding doctors for the Outer Islands. The Outer Islands are not forgotten by the Ministry of Health. There are plans in place to cater our Outer Islands with medical doctors. But like I said yesterday we want to employ good doctors to look after the health of our Outer Islands people.

The Ministry of Health have sent many of our local doctors overseas for advance studies and training to better equip them to look after the health of our people. We thank the Government for doing this good thing and most of these local doctors will be coming back home at the end of the year. The flying doctor program to service the Outer Islands is still taking place today. The specialist doctors that we are bringing into our country is part of this flying doctor program.

We are also sending our dental doctors as part of this flying doctors program to the Outer Islands. Danny Areai, a dentist have visited Mangaia to perform dental inspection to our school children and the island as a whole. We had a nurse practitioner on the island but she had to leave for health reasons and we are in the process of appointing a replacement for her.

So, I ask please bear with us as we set this programs for you in Mangaia as we have not forgotten our people in the Outer Islands. Thank you very much.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister and I see the Honourable Member for Teimurimotia, Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: Kia Orana, Deputy Chairman and all the Honourable Members this beautiful morning – greetings to all of us. To our school children and teachers from Nukutere sitting in the Gallery, good morning. Maybe one day we will have someone with a disability in Parliament and today you are visiting us.

I come back to my question and this question is asked every year that we sit in this Parliament. Not only by myself but by most of us in the Opposition. This question is directed to the Minister of Internal Affairs. My question is concerning the increase in mental illness. I looked through our Budget Books and I do not see any allocation for a home or place where these cases can be looked after.

In place two people were assigned to find a section of land and write a report on the ways we can accommodate our mentally ill people. I have experienced an encounter with someone that was mentally ill. You cannot put these people in the hospital or

prison because they are not criminals and they cannot be admitted in the hospital because they do not have a physical health problem.

My question is directed to the Minister of Internal Affairs. What are our plans for a home to cater for our mentally ill people? If it is in this budget, I ask you, Honourable Minister to show us as I am interested to know what we are going to do for these people in our community.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member and I see the Honourable Minister for Internal Affairs.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker and thank you to the Member for Titikaveka for your question.

I am happy that you have directed this question to Internal Affairs because we do not have a plan in place to cater for this area. We have heard the Minister of Health telling us of all the programs the Health is doing for our mentally ill people.

The Deputy Prime Minister have told us that there is an allocation to improve our hospital. In this allocation there is a place to be built to look after the mentally ill. This room according to the Minister of Health will be at the same level as medical services so that they can share the nurse workforce.

However, we have a lot of challenges in our hospital to care for our mentally ill patient. The Ministry of Health is trying to look for a senior medical officer, clinical psychologist and a doctor with a diploma in mental health and two nurses.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister. We have come to the end of our Question Time. Now, it is time for the presentation of Bills.

PRESENTATION OF BILLS

Welfare Amendment Bill, I now call on the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Honourable Vainemakiroa Mokoroa.

DEPUTY CLERK AT THE TABLE: Short Title Reads: Welfare Amendment Bill 2019.

BILL READ A FIRST TIME

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can the Minister please name the date and time for the Second Reading of the Bill?

HON. V. MOKOROA: Thank you, immediately after the Appropriation Bill.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Welfare Amendment Bill is ordered for a Second reading immediately after the Appropriation Bill.

Presentation of Papers, Standing Order 72.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

I call upon the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister and also Minister of Finance to present Paper 17.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to present:

Parliament Paper No. 17, Erratum No. 1 to Cook Islands Government
Budget Estimates 2019/20 Book 1 – Appropriation Bill –
Appropriations and Commentary

I now lay this Paper on the Table.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Deputy Prime Minister.

Orders of the day, Standing Order 17.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Committee of Supply – Appropriation Bill.

Under Standing Order 306 (1), I now resolve Parliament into the Committee of Supply to continue going through the Schedules of the Bill and the Clauses to stand postponed until after the completion of the Schedule.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY – DAY 2

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT:

The Question is:

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

The debate for this Vote Item has a remaining time of 63 minutes. Do we have any speakers?

I see the Honourable Member Vaitoti Tupa.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you Deputy Chairman. I am now going to complete my ten minutes.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You may continue Honourable Member.

MR V. TUPA: We are now talking about the Tauranga Vananga allocation. Yesterday I mentioned in particular with the internet as well as the WIPO Copyright Treaty (WCT). When we have a look in Book 2 page 43. All what I said yesterday is all mentioned and explained in there. We must thank God because we have our students here with us this morning. When we look at the allocations there is a section for Achievements. As we see in this section it says “*To allow print disabled people access to literary work and Beijing Treaty.*” And this is why I want us to really have

a look at it so we can have a good look at what we can do to support it and this is God's way as we have our students here with us as we debate on this. I see that this is very important for our children with disability and this is a great protection for our disabled.

I also want to raise issues or comments on important events coming up at Tauranga Vananga. The first topic that I want to bring up is the Tattoo Festival and I fully support it, Deputy Chairman, because this is one of the talents that we can use to market our destination in Australia where this is going to be held. Because at this Tattoo Festival a lot of overseas countries will be represented and there we will be able to showcase our cultural activities in this festival. This is one of the main reasons why I want to bring this up today so I can ask for all our support to let this happen.

Secondly, Deputy Chairman, the Festival of Arts that is going to be held next year and this is going to be staged in Hawaii. This is one of the main things that I want to encourage us to support so we can take our cultural customs and traditions to this festival. Maybe the Minister of Culture will accept me to lead the team as I did for Guam or maybe I can ask one of the Interpreters, Sonny, to help us with this and of course Taoro Brown as he is one of the icons in our cultural aspects.

Therefore, this is what I am talking about Minister because the festival that was held in Guam, our name went right up to the top and during that festival the team was led by Papatua Papatua and assisted by myself Vaitoti Tupa. So, Minister this is my plea. We have one whole year to go and let's look at it seriously so that we can be represented again at this festival.

For your information, Prime Minister, Mau didn't turn up for the Golden Oldies Dancer of the Year and that was unfortunate for him because I ended up being the winner of that particular section. My encouragement to all of us here, all the men in here who are in that age gap of 36 years upwards. I encourage you to come on board next year.

One of the things that I want to raise is all the overseas trips that a Minister is attending for Tauranga Vananga as well as Agriculture and others. Because we in the Opposition we always moan when you people are travelling. Maybe to minimise this, for us to all work together, maybe if you travel one of the Opposition Member should travel with you. To travel and if any of the Opposition are chosen to travel we are not there just to travel but to be there to take part and to learn what is happening at such meeting.

One of the topics raised by the Prime Minister is the issue of travelling, which is the long travels and I want to assure you that I have come across this. I have attended meetings, in particular in Switzerland, and these meetings are combined with the growers – agriculture. The travels involve travelling through New Zealand, America, Britain and then other countries before finally arriving in Switzerland. It takes about 26 hours just travelling and around 4 hours sitting in transit before continuing. I wanted to show my support with the Prime Minister because this is important for all of us to know. When I get to the destination, it will take me a day to recover.

To sum up, this is all what I am really after, that is to seek the co-operation and working together between Government and the Opposition for the benefit of our people.

Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, I acknowledge your winning of the Golden Oldies Dancer of the Year but I am saddened to tell you that there's no award for that. It's only for rugby.

(Much laughter)

I see the Honourable Member from Ngatangiia, Tamaiva Tuavera.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Mr Chairman.

I know that my friend has mentioned most of the things that I wanted to speak about but it was more on the travels that he went through. I think the beauty of our nation is within our nation because I have had a good look at all our churches here in the Cook Islands. We should declare all these churches historical sites.

When you look at the church in Rakahanga I have been there and I went in and took images of the church and it's so beautiful. And even the church in Omoka it's just so beautiful and this is the only church when the service starts, the doors are closed. If you haven't seen this please go to Tongareva and see this for yourself. Yes, go. As they say go to Heaven and see it for yourself.

In some of the churches we have visited included Tauhunu, in particular what I am talking about these churches is in their construction and it is made with local timber. When you look at the church in Oiretumu on the island of Mauke, this is a historical church because this church is in two halves, the half of Areora and the half of the village of Ngatiarua and if you have not been to this church, let me tell you in the House today this church has two sides to it. One is a different design on one side and the other is a different design. And the seating in this church, let me tell you that the timber was hand sawn, especially the preservation of these seats because during those days I noticed that some of the seats were pest-ridden.

I would like to request the Minister to look at these churches to be listed on heritage sites. One thing that caught my eye is the colour on the Ngatiarua half. It's like Rastafarian colours, this is beautiful.

When I arrived in Mangaia I saw a potential historic site a place they call Lake Tiriarau. These places have history and stories to be written because when you hear the story of this place, you will get goose bumps because I can tell you it's alive. The problem is it's full of weeds. When I last saw this place in the brochure for Tourism it was beautiful. When I and the Associate Minister here saw this, it was full of weeds.

So I would like to ask our friends from Mangaia, I will give you \$500 to help clean these places. I am sure the Associate Minister will gift \$500 or maybe \$1000 because

he is an Associate Minister. Its places like this that we need to preserve and record its history.

I am sure there are places where people do not know the history of these places. This includes some of the sacred places or marae in Avana and people do not know the names of these marae. The Marae called Vaerota, an issue arose because the land was sold to a foreigner. I know the landowners went and sought Government assistance to return this land into the hands of our own people because this place is famous in history.

I hear that many of us in this House trace our birth to this place. This is the place where our warriors used to come to Rarotonga on their canoes. They were from the islands of Atiu, Mangaia, Aitutaki because this place is where all the beauties reside. So this place deserves to be preserved.

On the little island of Motutapu there is a marae there called “Te Mareva Nui mei Nukuhiva”. This Marae was constructed by Tou Ariki also known as Toutika before he returned to Nukuhiva. This is one thing that many people do not know the reason why it was constructed and this is also the Marae where Tamoko i te Rangi, Kainuku Ariki brought the stones when he welcomed Christianity into Ngatangia. He brought the stones from this marae and laid it before the Minister’s House in Ngatangia.

There is another Marae right at the head of Avana Passage.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member your time is up but thank you very much for your speech. I recognise that you were going to give a donation to Mangaia, why don’t you give the donation to our school kids.

I see the Honourable Minister of Finance on the Floor.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman.

While it is wonderful to hear of these legends and stories let me remind Members that we are in the Committee of Supply to discuss the appropriations to Government Ministries. So please let us keep to the matter at hand which is the Appropriation for the Ministry of Culture even though I’d love to hear more legends and stories from Captain Tama. I think the best for that would be on the lagoon cruise of Captain Tama. Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Minister I see the Member from Tamarua the Honourable Tetangi Matapo.

MRS T. MATAPO: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman.

Greetings to all of us, greetings to our students and your teachers in the public gallery.

I rise to give my support and thoughts to the allocation for the Ministry of Culture. I give my support first so I will enjoy presenting my thoughts.

Before I do that, and in keeping with our culture I would like to express our deepest condolences to the Member from Mitiaro for the passing away of your father, our uncle, our grandfather and may God bless you all.

Before us is money appropriated in the Book of Love as well as the comments made to make this budget sound good. I support all the comments expressed before me, maybe these comments will soften the heart of the Minister when we seek assistance to improve culture in this country.

The island of Mangaia is considered to be one of the oldest islands and certainly one of the wisest. Like some visitors who came to the island of Mangaia said that you cannot find the beauty of Mangaia unless you look for it because it's a hidden treasure.

When I look at the allocation for the Ministry of Culture and just a quick glimpse to the allocation for Mangaia, especially on this subject of heritage and historical sites that's why I am looking at this allocation and giving my full support maybe to encourage the Minister perhaps just to slide some allocation towards Mangaia because in the Mangaia allocation there is nothing.

We had an officer on the island of Mangaia in this area of historical sites but today he has departed because there are no funds in taking care of the sacred sites like the marae and other places where people will enjoy listening to their history. Maybe time will tell that these will be included into the programme for the Ministry of Culture so they do not disappear.

I consider historical orators some of them come to Rarotonga, some remain on the island but the intention here is their traditional knowledge should not be lost. So please I ask for your support Minister of Finance because I can see some areas in this appropriation where we can move around. We also saw some old stories from the island of Mangaia in our newspaper that is being written by Rod Dixon. He has some articles in the newspaper where he records our culture from Mangaia. Culture is very important as part of our schools. I see this is the important source our appropriation under Culture.

This is my encouragement for orators, historians and composers – some have passed away and some are still alive and there are many in the Outer Islands. Now, is the time to find ways to ensure that traditional knowledge of our people with our historians are not lost?

I would like to give the time for other Honourable Members and those are my thoughts. Thank you, very much.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member. May I remind the Honourable Members that we have to direct our discussion on the figures we have in the appropriation. Thank you.

I now see the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Henry Puna.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Kia Orana to you and your staff of Parliament and all the Honourable Members and our people listening in to our broadcast.

I am very happy to see our students from Nukutere joining us this morning to listen to our discussion on this very important subject and allocation in our budget. This allocation is for the preservation of our Culture something that identifies us as Cook Islanders.

Short greetings to my island of Manihiki. I understand our friend Hola Harry is currently in Manihiki to improve the passage for our canoes. This will help our people on Tukao and Tauhunu. Presently during low tides it is difficult for canoes and boats to go from our lagoon to the ocean, especially the barge because it is big and it cannot get to the ocean side until the high tide. Kia Orana to you Hola, I know you are working hard to complete your task with your helpers and the people of Manihiki are looking after you.

I stand to fully support this allocation for Culture and to remind our people that we are celebrating our Constitution Celebration on our own islands. I think this is a very appropriate arrangement. This way our people is given a chance to have a rest. I have seen in the past that the preparation by our people for this event begins at the beginning of the year. We know that the passage to Rarotonga is limited from the Outer Islands.

Some of our elderlies miss out on the count for the team to come to Rarotonga. And they do not get the privilege to come to the big island for the event. However when the celebration takes place on the island everyone can participate and enjoy this special time of the year. I have seen the joy experienced by our people during their own celebrations on their islands. So, that is what is going to happen for this year.

We will wait for our Minister of Finance for the allocation as we prepare for this year's celebration. I like the suggestion from the Honourable Member for Matavera concerning the South Pacific Festival of Arts. He is right we have become very popular in the festival held in Guam. Maybe it is the two leaders that took the team across. Maybe the team comprised of the culturally gifted people and when their talent and gift are combined they stood out.

The plane to Hawaii fly's over Manihiki which means we are closer and it makes sense that we should be representing the Cook Islands at the festival. We need to send the best and if the best means we combine, so be it. In this Honourable House are the '*taunga*' of our Culture. We need to represent our country at this festival as one – united as one.

I am happy that the Minister of Culture has met the sailors on our Vaka, which arrived yesterday and they will be representing us in Hawaii. On arrival at wharf they showcased what they will show in Hawaii. I am sure that they will again give a good representation of the Cook Islands culture.

I want to mention something about our culture that has not been discussed previously. I am happy of our children that live on their island and speak with fluency their local

dialect. When they recite the local chants and pee they speak it with fluency and confidence. I am envious of them because I left my island early to go overseas for education. I did not get the opportunity to learn all these cultural ways and now old I lack the knowledge.

I ask our local composers and singers today. There are good songs composed by our ancestors and when today's young people record these old songs, they add other things into these traditional song which is not the original song. We talk about our song taken by foreigners. We should start within our own country and teach our own that we should not do this to our traditional songs.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I interrupt you Mr Prime Minister as your time is up. We are going to take a break. Parliament is suspended until 11.00 a.m.

Sitting suspended at 10.30 a.m.

Sitting resumed at 11.00 a.m.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please be seated. Parliament is now resumed in the Committee of Supply.

Are there further speakers? I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Deputy Chairman.

Before we went for our break, I was speaking about our Cook Islands people nurturing and preserving our culture. We passed in this House various legislations to protect our songs and customs. We are still waiting for our officials to complete their work and have the legislation passed so that we can register our songs and customs.

I would like to further speak about our very own people in preserving and respecting the compositions by our ancestors. I don't think I've seen anyone who acknowledges the composer of a song that they borrow. Furthermore, they change the wordings of what has been originally composed.

I know of a song from the island of Aitutaki composed by this gentleman named Toa Ramea and I know this song by heart. The song is called, "*Aere otare ua mai nei au*". This song was recorded by some of our Cook Islands singers but without ensuring that the lyrics are correct according to what was composed. We were involved in learning the song composed by this gentleman and he taught the song to us at school. There are very wise lyrics in this song if you follow its meaning. I am not surprised that these people failed to understand the meaning of the words of this song and they ended up creating their own words. This song talks about the life of a person. The wordings of the song go like this;

*"Aere otare ua mai nei au
Na te ara tiroa o Kaina
Kare oku metua e mou mai iaku"*

The line after that is very hard to understand its meaning. It says;

“Niu tere ua au e tarevaka”

This is the meaning of this phrase, our life is like a coconut that falls and floats upon the water.

*“Niu tere ua au e tarevaka ki runga i te enua”
E auvai au no vaivai ake, roa iti kua ngaro*

It means, our life is like smoke, it doesn't take long before it disappears. So, those of us who know this song very well, know that it has a very deep meaning. Then our singers today put words in the song that is not meaningful but to make it sound good. The sad thing then is that our youth today learnt the wrong lyrics of this very meaningful song.

My friend Wahoo (*Paara Pitomaki*), recorded this song. I told him he is not from Aitutaki the reason he doesn't know the original words of the song. But, the point here is this Deputy Chair, Honourable Members, before we worry about outsiders pinching our songs, let us teach ourselves to respect ourselves first and until we do that I can't see us getting anywhere.

Thank you Deputy Chairman.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

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

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Kia Orana Deputy Speaker. Greetings to all of us in this Honourable House this morning. Greetings to those listening to our radio, those in the Northern and the Southern Group islands.

Greetings also to you watching the live streaming of our Parliament Sitting this morning.

Earlier this morning, the Deputy Speaker and the Clerk warned us Members of Parliament, I think including the Minister of Finance. They pre-warned us that when we get in the Committee of Supply, to focus on the appropriation amount and not to tell stories. And straight after that notification, everyone that spoke told stories.

I've been waiting for the Prime Minister to get to the point but he spoke about the song composed by Toa Ramea and I know the song he's talking about and it's actually not like that. I've been to Amuri School and I don't have any singing qualifications.

I would like to speak about our allocation for the Ministry of Culture. Maybe you will ask, what do I know about culture. The short answer is, maybe nothing, but I would like to inform the Member of Parliament for Matavera that I used to be one of the top dancers at Tereora College many many moons ago.

When our Select Committee went to Ngaputoru, I witnessed our true cultural practise on the islands. We started in Mitiaro. While we were eating we were entertained by the *vainetini* of Nukuroa. Greetings to all the *vainetini* listening in on Mitiaro. There

were no men in this group, the men were probably outside having coffee. What I like about these women is that they were not trained or taught to do these things. They just did it impromptu. This is our way and our culture. That's the difference when we do an impromptu dance and when we prepare for the Constitution Celebrations we are taught how to dance even if you know how to dance. And when you are taught to dance, the original way of dancing disappears and you end up dancing other dancing techniques.

We went to Mauke. When we had breakfast in the morning, we were entertained by the *vainetini* in Mauke. They gave us good entertaining but what I observed was an old lady maybe in her 70's or maybe older. I was happy to see her dance while the women entertained us by just using guitar and ukalele. She was dancing away with other women in the group.

We don't see these types of cultural activities happening in Rarotonga today. When we go to similar functions, we are entertained by either the radio or the boom blaster, and when you want to dance, you hesitate to dance because you might be criticised.

The main point here as stated by the Prime Minister is, to look after our own. I'm sure when we go to the Northern Group islands, the standard of our culture is higher when our *vainetini* put on their show.

I am just wondering why this type of activity is only performed by women. Maybe our men don't know how to dance.

Speaking on the heritage, I believe there is a Trust that has been formed and it is called the Heritage Trust and its focus mainly is to preserve our sites. I am looking at the Budget under Cultural Heritage I do not see any appropriation for this Trust. Maybe the Minister Responsible can tell me and maybe its somewhere else.

My confusion about this Budget is when I look at the appropriation for personnel. Now I have only done this exercise for the next four on the Schedule 1 and when I look at the total gross \$1,976,507 and the personnel is 740,850.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Your time is up, we have only two minutes left for the debate on this Vote Item so I will give that time for you to speak.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: The personnel is only 37% of the gross appropriation and when I look at others like the BTIB, Education, Environment their personnel is on 55 percent and 57 percent. My question then is why, because I go to the culture performances and these workers work at night time as well. I ask the Minister to have a good look at some ways to equalise with BTIB, Education with the 55 and 57 percent.

This can be achieved if personnel is increased or maybe the trading revenue to be applied. I think the appropriation for Culture for personnel is probably the lowest but I have not calculated the others. But 37 percent in my opinion is small compared to the others.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member. Our time is up. Honourable Minister can you, thank you.

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

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

Motion agreed

The Question is:

That the sum of \$782,162 for Business, Trade and Investment Board stands part of the Schedule?

The debate for this Vote Item is limited to one hour. Do we have any speakers? I can see the Honourable Minister of Finance Honourable Mark Brown.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman. I would like to invoke the privilege afforded to the Minister of the Appropriation Bill to stand at any time to comment during the Committee of Supply because a question was raised by the Leader of the Opposition regarding the appropriation for the Ministry of Cultural Development and she has admitted that she is not an accountant and not too familiar with figures. Fortunately, I will be able to clarify the misconception that she made public regarding the personnel allocation for the Ministry of Cultural Development.

The gross appropriation that she is referring to of 1.97 million dollars includes 977,000 dollars in administered payments and these administered payments, Mr Chair are related to events such as Te Maeva Nui, the transportation of people from the islands, the grants that are given to each island for preparation of Te Maeva Nui and other administered events.

So if we deduct that administered payment from the total we will see that the Ministry's actual operating appropriation is just under one million dollars and if we look at the appropriation for personnel of \$740,000 out of that operating, it represents 74 percent of the operating budget for the Ministry of Culture. So therefore the personnel remunerations as part of the overall budget of the Ministry of Culture is very high compared to some of the other departments and that Mr Chair is why I am standing just to clarify that because we don't want people to be misinformed. Thank you, Mr Chair.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Minister of Finance and we are with the Business, Trade and Investment Board, Honourable George Angene you have the Floor.

HON. G. ANGENE: Greetings to the Chair. We have reached the BTIB Vote Item and that is why I am standing up. Greetings to all our people listening on the radio and on live streaming. To all our leaders and everyone else, greetings. A special greetings to my friend Teina Bishop whom I forgot to greet yesterday. I also give

greetings to my wife, my children, the people of Tupapa/Maraerenga and the people of the Cook Islands.

I stand before this House because I am not happy, I rose twice this morning and I have sat down twice and I have every right in this House. However, I wish to extend my apology, Mr Deputy Chairman for I went out of the House and I have a reason. If you are angry there is no reason why but there is a reason why. If you cry, you laugh and you are sad there is a reason. However, the Deputy Prime Minister Mark Brown comforted me because I have promised to this Government I will stay and carry on my duties. When we say something we have to make sure we stick to what we mean. I want the Members to understand that is my position today.

We come back to the appropriation of BTIB. I do believe there was a request from this agency into Cabinet and it was accepted. However, there was another request that was deferred by Cabinet where we have to review everything. After it was approved by Cabinet it was referred to the Ministry of Finance and then it was sanctioned.

My request to the Opposition side to please support this request for funding and the future will tell where we go. I believe these requests for funds is sufficient as discussed with the CEO for this agency as well as my own CEO who is a former CEO of BTIB. Maybe you have other ideas but in the end the decision will come back to the Minister responsible George Maggie. You will put your thoughts forward, you will speak and the people will hear and listen but however in the end it will come back to the Minister to make the final decision. That is why I am asking to please let the appropriation for my agency to pass through to create peace.

I come back Mr Chair to the allocation for the Culture I have some concerns to present to the House. When you Mr Chair asked for the vote of the House in support of this Vote Item. Everybody agreed except for one, the Leader of the Opposition. Maybe she sees some weakness but I want to assure this House that when we looked at this and reviewed it in Cabinet and the discussions with the Head of the Ministry, Mr Anthony Turua – everything was good and agreed upon.

Last night I spoke of the two staff from Culture that is working for Parliament during this sitting. I am asking that Parliament pay them. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Minister. I offer our sincere apologies for the mishap earlier today in parliament. I think you and you caucus should go back and decide who is going to speak at such time.

I now call upon the Honourable Member for Matavera, Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman. We have the request for the allocation from the Minister of BTIB for the personnel in BTIB. I just want to assure the Minister that I stand to fully support of this request.

I see an increment in the allocation for the personnel in BTIB with a total of \$102,203. Therefore I stand in support of this request from the Minister as well as the agency BTIB.

I would like to come back to the outputs under this Government agency. In Book 2 page 19 on this page are the outputs that must be conducted by BTIB in this appropriation. Under output 1 there have been some achievements in this agency. There are 90 people that the agency have given assistance in the form of a soft loans. Also under Output 1 is the provision for training that people can request to the agency.

Therefore, I stand in support of the request for the appropriation under the outputs. Under Output 3 we see the work that was conducted in the year 2018, regarding the BTIB website. I believe this is a very important avenue for our people in seeking soft loans from BTIB.

Under Output 4 the area of Investigation and Compliance. In this area, it illustrates the people they have assisted and reviewed and those that have worked closely with BTIB for the assistance that they have provided.

Deputy Chair, the reason I highlight these Outputs under this agency so our people are aware of these. I refer to a lot of our growers who have difficulties in establishing Business Plans to seek assistance from BTIB. My request to this agency and to Government is to make it easy for our people to attain this assistance. I found out this myself, when a lot of our people approach me directly seeking my assistance to secure this soft loans, fortunately with my small knowledge of this process I was able to assist them.

I would like to tell this honourable House that I was able to assist 5 people in Matavera with their Business Plans when they sort for my assistance. When I looked at the format of this Business Plan I see this is where our people are having difficulties. The Business Plan requires you to write a preamble on the proposed Business Plan in English however I have asked them if this can be written in Maori.

Therefore, let us look carefully at how we can provide good assistance to our people through this way. When I look at Agriculture through their assistance to our growers providing loans, the interest is 5 percent and the same with the BTIB soft loans. When seriously considered, I see the pros and the cons and maybe that is the reason they raised it to 5 percent. Maybe those who are benefitting are those who are following the Business Plan they provide at BTIB. And they are able to pay their loans under this scheme.

Those who are having difficulties maybe for them BTIB is looking at ways to secure their loans so that they do not run away and leave their loans behind. Maybe this is the reason BTIB has placed the 5 percent interest. Maybe if we reduce it to 3 percent it will be easier for our people to pay.

In essence this is what we are trying to do, as to what should we be doing to strengthen the agency and how does the agency assist our people. There is a possibility for people to ask for loans to purchase machines. However there is a limit placed on loans for machinery. We all know that the cost of machinery like tractors are more than \$30 thousand. If BTIB provides \$15 thousand how are we to get another \$15 thousand to purchase our tractor?

That is why I am saying Deputy Chairman these are avenues that we can provide assistance for our people.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member. I now see the Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Kia Orana. I just stand to make some clarifications but I note that the Minister for Cultural Development is not in the House. Maybe he's listening outside. Maybe he did not know why I objected to the Vote Item for the Ministry of Culture.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, can we come to Business Trade and Investment Board and you two can solve that later.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Although the appropriation for BTIB is small. However, I believe it is still a very important agency for us. An important responsibility of BTIB is to encourage foreign investment, to entice foreign interests to invest in our country. However, we have to be aware and to put in place policies to protect us in terms of foreign investment.

When I look into Output 2 for BTIB, they have six locals in Trade and Development and there's two overseas. We do realise that the more we market overseas then the more potential for increased investment into our country. I do understand that through technology today maybe marketing is also conducted on the internet.

But when you speak with people who actually travel marketing our country it is much better when it's face to face marketing with people overseas. I know there was a situation last year with BTIB when foreign investment applications were closed. We were quite troubled as lawyers. When these foreign investors go onto our website and look at the criteria's that they need to meet. They organise their lives in accordance with the criteria's listed on the website and towards the time when they expect the application will be approved, all of a sudden it is closed. Our reputation overseas is then damaged because of that.

But I was pleased that the authorities stepped in and they quickly opened the opportunities again for foreign applicants to submit applications for approval at BTIB. The message I would like to draw across is we must be aware when reorganising our policies at BTIB because people that apply to invest in our country are selling their businesses so that they can then come and settle in our country. And we know why we encourage foreign investment because not only is it money coming into the country but it is providing employment to our people. But we also know now that there are other problems and there is not enough labour, especially Cook Islanders, to fill these positions. So that is part of the reason despite the fact this is one of the smallest agencies in terms of budget. It is to me quite an important agency although you can't quantify the revenue that comes from decisions that are made by this agency.

So I don't have any problem or anything against the amount allocated. I would like to say to the Minister of Finance responsible for the Appropriation Bill, I think my

workout is right – 57 per cent of the ratio and that's around about the average ratio between the amount for personnel and the gross amount for the appropriation.

And I want to commend the Minister of Culture on the local marketing. I am not sure where the Punanga Nui is currently under – Infrastructure or BTIB at one time it was. But our Punanga Nui Market is looking better and better by the year. It is also now becoming a tourist attraction. I say this not because I have looked at the tourism figures but I know when I have visitors the first thing I say to them is you should go to the Punanga Nui on Saturday.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

I can recognise the Member of Parliament for Teimurimotia, Selina Napa.

You have the Floor.

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you very much Mr Deputy Chairman. I would like to talk about the allocation for BTIB on a clause as previously mentioned by the Member of Matavera. I would like to point out the number that is listed here of 90 people that benefited from the soft loans. So I request the Minister to please identify and inform us out of all these 90 people, are they repaying the soft loans and are they honouring the repayments. We know this soft loan is a revolving loan and if you don't make repayments others will miss out on the benefits.

I can also see on the Output there is \$100,000 allocated for Business Development. So that means there's an extra \$100,000 available for soft loans. I don't think that \$200,000 allocated is enough I think it should be \$500,000 and this what I'd like to see maybe the money that is going to be allocated to the office of the seventh Minister should be poured into this instead, because we are aware that the growers are benefitting from this where they can use this money to purchase machinery, seeds and also fertilizer. So the more the Government puts into this the more the people will benefit.

I'd like to also make mention of the allocation for Trading Revenue there is only 28 thousand dollars allocated. I think that the Trading Revenue should have a higher figure there. May be the weakness here is the Trade and Marketing for failing to source more funding into BTIB or the Monitoring and Compliance side even the output of the Foreign Investment. May be the received is not going directly to them but rather into the main pocket with the Minister of Finance at the MFEM. I see it fitting Minister of Finance, to consider how from this pool of money received to keep it in BTIB to be revolved.

An issue I would like to point out is the monitoring and compliance of foreigners entering and investing in our nation. It had been found that they are not abiding to the business they have registered to do but they are involved in doing businesses our locals have an interest in. So the allocation of 30 thousand for personnel in Monitoring and Compliance brings into mind that there is only one person working in that section.

When we look at how many foreign investment applications are submitted, does this one person has the capability to monitor these applicants business, or maybe other staff in BTIB are helping out in the monitoring process.

Looking at Trade and Marketing maybe there are only one or two staff members working in this area and the total staff member at BTIB are ten people and the remuneration for personnel is 400 thousand dollars.

As spoken before by the Leader of Opposition, BTIB is a small agency but the work they do is important and I do believe they are one of the agencies that are attracting finance into the country through foreign investment.

I'd like to mention business development in the vanilla industry that I forgot to mention earlier. I haven't seen any appropriation, maybe it is under the Agriculture, but this funding is through BTIB set aside for vanilla growers. I don't see any appropriation in here for vanilla growers. May be they have to apply for a soft loan for assistance in vanilla growing.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member. I see there's no other speakers I recognise the Minister of Finance, you have the Floor.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman. I rise just again to correct a couple of misconceptions about this particular department the BTIB. Firstly the reference by the Leader of the Opposition that this is a department that is here to encourage foreign direct investment. This is quite incorrect. The purpose of the BTIB in terms of Foreign Investment is to monitor and regulate foreign investment, not to encourage it.

And this maybe because when BTIB was first formed back in 1996 there was a role then when the country's economy was failing to try and attract foreign direct investment. However, nearly thirty years later and with the growing concerns of our people about foreign businesses establishing in our country, that policy has changed from one of open door policy to one of a more closed door policy.

Therefore that point of clarification, Mr Deputy Chairman is important for our people to know that the BTIB's role and other function is to encourage and help local business and I have to say Mr Deputy Chairman that the investment policy of the country is captured in what is called the Investment Code managed by the BTIB.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Point of Order.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: What is your point of order, Honourable Member?

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I did not say that the only role of the BTIB was to encourage foreign investment. I also wanted to clarify that if you go to page 19 of the Budget Book 2 and you go to 3.1 under Introduction, it's either the Minister of Finance is correct and this is wrong or this is correct.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Minister of Finance you may continue.

HON. M. BROWN: Secondly, Mr Deputy Chairman the Honourable Member from Titikaveka was quite critical of the fact that BTIB's trading revenue was not up to scratch. The role of the BTIB, Mr Deputy Chairman is not to make money, it is to help our people make money. The small trading revenue that is reflected in the Appropriation Bill would be funding from fees and from any other small revenues that they have from charges and because it is reflected in the appropriation amount it is the total amount that in the gross appropriation goes to BTIB, it does not come into the consolidated Crown accounts.

But the good news is that the fund that was established as a revolving fund for small business loans is going very, very well. To date since that fund started back in 2009 to 2018 a total of 1.7 million dollars has revolved through this fund to assist a whole range of people in different sorts of business and this loan facility is managed by the Bank of the Cook Islands which make sure that the management is done under proper banking protocols so that we do not lose this revolving fund that has been working so well for us. A total of 170 different borrowers have made use of this facility over the years and there is a very, very low level of defaulters on this particular borrowing facility. And as a result the request from the BTIB board and the Minister for additional funding has been supported and in this year there was an extra one hundred thousand dollars injected into the revolving fund to meet the demand of the low level and low interest borrowing from our people.

Like in any loan, funding and borrowing there is risks that you need to make sure you can cover. It is this fund that takes on quite a bit of risk because the borrowing of this fund is unsecured. However despite that those who have been borrowing from this fund whether it is for a small amounts of only two thousand dollars for small planting or whether it is up to \$15thousand for large scale farming. They have been very responsible in paying back their loan.

Their ability to repay gives a good credit rating for them to be able to even borrow more if they decide to go to the commercial banks for a much more business related loan. The reality today, Mr Chairman for our people is that as you develop and grow your business and you become more prosperous. You will start to need more support in terms of financial management.

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

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman. Kia Orana to all Honourable Members. I will make it short because I only have nine minutes left.

I wish to speak on this good agency the BTIB which is established to help our people. As mentioned yesterday in regard to our agriculture. All of our growers we need to work together with this Government agency.

Yesterday I was in a meeting run by two of the agriculture staff. We know about our depopulation problem, our people leaving our country to travel overseas. The BTIB revolving fund was established just after the recession. Today we want to assist our people by making available soft loans. The two agricultural staff shared with us some of the problems that our people are facing in Aitutaki. In the meeting are people who

were involved in agriculture. The purpose of the meeting was for the upcoming growers.

This allocation is targeted for the young growers. Unfortunately the young people did not attend the meeting. We may ask as to why the young people did not attend. I think it is because our people are not sure as to how they are going to benefit from this. The problem is that we are not clearly showing the people as to how they are to implement this privilege. The Member for Matavera has mentioned the requirement of a Business Plan this requirement by BTIB is really hard for our people to prepare.

In Rarotonga there are people which can help others with their Business Plan preparation but this is not available to our people in the Outer Islands. The interest rate may be right for Rarotonga but I do not think this is good for the Outer Island. Purchasing machinery for the Outer Islands is not the same as in Rarotonga there are added cost for the Outer Islands. This area should be reconsidered especially for our people in the Outer Islands.

Our young people on Nga-Pu-Toru are wanting to plant but there is no market. I hear some growers on Mauke are sending their produce to the Prime Food Store here on Rarotonga. These growers have to consider the airfreight cost to get their produce to Rarotonga. I wish to ask the Government to consider all these cost to the Outer Islands and factor these into your funding assistance for us in the Outer Islands.

Therefore I would like to make a proposal to Government to please consider reducing the interest on these loans for us in the Outer Islands to 3 percent.

One of the reason why the young people did not attend this workshop is because they are not sure if this fund will be available to them. These young people want to join but they are still hesitating because they are not sure about the scheme.

I want to ask the Minister to send officials from the BTIB to Aitutaki to explain the privileges of the scheme. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member. We will take our lunch break.

Parliament is suspended until 1.30 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 12.30 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.30 p.m.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You may be seated. Parliament is now resumed.

Honourable Members, I now put the Question.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$782,162 for Business Trade & Investment Board stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

EDUCATION:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$19,895,611 for Education stands part of the Schedule?

The debate for this Vote Item is limited to two hours. Do we have any speakers?

I see the Honourable Member Vaitoti Tupa. You have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you very much Deputy Chair.

Before I give my support to this allocation for Education, I see in the House with us this afternoon the Secretary for the Ministry of Education. Greetings to you this afternoon.

Deputy Chair, regarding the appropriation for Education, I focus my thoughts on Administered Payments. I recognised an increase in this from over \$527,325. I believe this appropriation is to improve the work conducted within the Ministry of Education because I bring to mind the Takitumu Primary School.

I know some Ministers have looked at this school especially with the wireless mast that is hindering the work of the school. I know that the Minister of ICI has been there, the Honourable Minister Robert Tapaitau to see how this mast can be disassembled and this came to me in March earlier this year. So I sought to find out who is the actual Government agency responsible for this issue. I rang the Head of Bluesky and they said apologies but this is not our responsibility and I heard later on this responsibility will be shifted to CIIC.

So I contacted the Head of CIIC to see what is happening here because the Principal and the Deputy Principal of the School has met with me. They sought my assistance as I am the Secretary for the Cook Islands Christian Church of Matavera. They asked that if part of the school can be shifted into the Sunday School of Matavera Cook Islands Christian Church. I agreed to this request from them to shift some of the classrooms from Takitumu Primary into the Sunday School, and also to look at how long they will be stationed there. I advised them that we, the Church, will give them five weeks to utilise this facility. Through this we are now looking at avenues to assist in addressing this problem with the school.

This is what the Head of CIIC advised me then. They will try their best to dismantle this mast within that time period of five weeks. However, I inquired with the Principal and the Deputy as well as some of the parents whose children go to this school, even though they are now stationed within the Sunday School as well as within the Revival Church, they are experiencing issues with this arrangement because at the Sunday School there are three classrooms there. Grades 4, 5 and 6 have one room utilised for their classroom, which is the top floor of the Sunday School. As they explained they are used to staying in their own separate classrooms. What they say is it is very hard to learn in this environment.

So it is my belief that very soon the dismantling of this mast will take place. I know that their problem with this mast disrupting the work of the school was highlighted by the school or the parents, the families living around the school. This is true because what they explained was, all these cables leading from the mast into the concrete foundations there were electrical sparks coming out of these. This is their concern which is why they approached me for assistance for the school. One mother approached me because her home is right next to this concrete structure. She explained that at night they can hear the sparks and the crackles and the noise from these structures.

That is why I stand to give my full support to the appropriation for the Ministry of Education. So therefore later on I will be discussing with the Secretary for Education maybe not too much but some assisting funds to help with the relocation of the classes in the Sunday School. This is what I have to say and also thank you to the Secretary of Education who approved in principle our proposal for assistance.

Therefore Deputy Chair, I see my time is up. I will sit down so another will arise.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

I see the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Deputy Chair and thank you Honourable Member for your support of the Education Budget.

I actually welcomed the support and understanding of the community of Matavera and the churches in the community for their support with the relocation of the school. There was never any question that the school had to be relocated because of the extreme danger posed by the mast. I am pleased that the Secretary of Education is in the Gallery listening to our debate because she was quick to resume responsibility for doing the right thing in these circumstances. But I want to thank the School Committee of Takitumu School because their concerns came through very clearly and very loudly and I appreciate the offer of assistance from the two Churches for the Sunday School hall from the CICC as well as the Church closest to the school the Revival Church.

It is never an ideal situation when school work is interrupted by events like this but I am sure that we will all agree that the safety of our school children must be paramount and we must do whatever we need to do to ensure their safety.

I want to advise Members of this Honourable House that CIIC is on top of this issue. At my last briefing with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of CIIC we were advised that staff was going through the homes within the vicinity of the mast to advise them of the danger and the risk from the mast and to advise them of the options available to them and of course at the same time accepting that there is a liability attached to any option in the circumstances. So we are not concerned only for the school children's safety, we are also concerned for the safety of those homes within the range of the mast. But I want to assure the House that every available option is being explored immediately and thoroughly.

The Ministry of Education is happy with its budget. The ceiling that was set for the next four years is accepted by the Ministry. At least the Ministry is aware of the certainty of the actions that it must pursue in order to stay within its allocation. That certainty also brings with it flexibility and so there is increased confidence within the Ministry of Education that it can manage all its activities within the funds that are being proposed to be appropriated.

There was one increase sought by the Ministry during the budget discussions and that was for a whole of agency increase in salaries and remuneration for staff. However, the Ministry is aware and accepts that it needs to go through this process thoroughly within the next twelve months and that with the assurances of the Ministry of Finance those increases will be taken care of in the next budget.

As Minister responsible for Education I am very pleased with the progress that is being made by our Ministry. The Cook Islands is sought to be on regional committees to do with Education particularly USP related and I have had to have a serious discussion with the Secretary of Education to see if it was possible to cut back on her commitments with the regional education agencies. But this is the reality for the Cook Islands that we are sought after by the region to be on every agency dealing with regional matters.

You yourself Deputy Chair was involved in the recent USP Council meeting in Vanuatu and you are aware of the very serious matters that come up for discussion and consideration in those meetings.

The Secretary of Education is on the Budget Committee of USP and I know that her views are sought after very keenly.

I am pleased that we have been able to introduce Cook Islands Maori into the USP syllabus. This is one development that I pushed very hard when I was Chancellor of USP two years ago and I was very happy when the USP Council accepted our submission for Cook Islands Maori language to be part of the USP syllabus and this is now available at USP local campus and it's doing very well.

We have also some research facilities at USP and I am pleased to advise that our NCEA pass rates are excellent. The availability of Adult Education for our people who have gone past school age is still available and I am pleased that our people are taking advantage of this.

It has just been confirmed to me that I will be required in Aitutaki next Friday evening at 5 pm for the opening of the new Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute Campus in Aitutaki at the old Amuri School. Initial offerings will be confined to the hospitality industry but the good thing Aitutaki is that this will be expanded as time goes on. So you may not need to travel to Rarotonga to attend the training institute in Arorangi.

While still on Aitutaki, the Ministry of Education has been allocated a sum of 26,325 dollars for a bus service for our school children in Aitutaki. This was originally supposed to come out of the Island Administration budget but the person providing the service was always hassling the Minister of Finance because he was unpaid. So

we have come up with an option, it's a temporary option perhaps just a one year option for this budget that it will sit with the Ministry of Education.

The Honourable Member for Tamarua talking about their school bus all the time will not ask me about this again. I am pleased that you came to the office and we had a chat. I am even more pleased today to tell you that the bus is now on order through the Cook Islands Motor Centre so that the maintenance of the two buses, the one that is already in Mangaia together with this one arriving can be better coordinated. The first bus was purchased from Motor Centre.

Deputy Chair, this is enough to introduce the matters in the budget for the Ministry of Education. I want to say thank you to the Secretary of Education because she is our very own daughter, she is a Cook Islander and she is encouraging us to look after ourselves and I am pleased to tell this Honourable House that she is doing a fantastic job.

Finally, heartfelt thanks and congratulations to all the teachers of our country. They are doing what I consider to be the most important job in this country helping our young ones develop along the right path and I am so pleased that next year they will get a salary review and adjustment upwards. Thank you very much.

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

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Deputy Chairman, Firstly, Kia Orana to the Secretary of Education.

I am happy with the increase for the Education Appropriation. This increase may mean that our school children will not be selling raffles again. I find it quite distressing when a small boy or girl comes to me and ask, Uncle can you buy my raffle ticket – please. Therefore Minister of Education, I am happy with this allocation for our Ministry of Education.

We saw earlier today the visit to Parliament by the special needs class from Nukutere College. I mentioned the need of one of their classroom is leaking and needs a new roof. We the parents of the children are doing our part to fix the structural requirements of the school. That is the reason I asked earlier for the Governments assistance. The special needs children have their own building at the school. Thank you Mr Prime Minister and I know you will come through on this request.

Mr Prime Minister you mentioned about Takitumu School and I agree that there is no cyclone shelter in Matavera. Maybe this is the opportunity to submit the request for a cyclone shelter to be built for all the villages on Rarotonga. Currently we are using the schools for this purpose during the cyclone season. Tereora College was used as a cyclone shelter for the Rarotongan Hotel and the Edgewater Resort guests. This is just a thought that I propose to you Honourable Prime Minister.

I know that our schools are doing very well and I attribute that to the quality of teachers both locally and those we are bring from overseas. Looking at Titikaveka College some parents have voiced their concerns that the standard of education at

Titikaveka College is not the same as Tereora College. Maybe that is one of the reason for the drop of enrolment at the College.

For me if we bring a teacher expatriate, the same appointment should be considered for Titikaveka College, so the level of education is the same. Those are my consideration for the Ministry of Education and I fully support this Appropriation. I will be surprised when this appropriation is passed and a child comes to my door and ask me to buy their school raffle.

Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Member for Tamarua you have the Floor.

MRS T. MATAPO: Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Kia Orana again to all Honourable Members. I beg your pardon Deputy Chairman on the explanation earlier about this allocation but when I look at the Ministry of Education budget it seems that all money has been grouped together as one.

The Minister of Education was saying that there is an increase in this year's budget but when I compare the budget 2018/2019 the allocation then was \$20 million however for this budget 2019/2020 it is down to \$19 million. Maybe the Minister is aware of other allocation for the Education.

I want to talk about the training of teachers as I cannot see this in the budget document it may be under the personnel allocation. This is an important area to keep training and upskilling our pool of teachers. And our young teachers taking extra studies through USP. But there are times when the USP cannot provided the right subject area for our teachers to further their training. Another problem at USP is that they need a certain number of entries before the class can do the semester class. Teacher aide program needs to be improved.

I want to thank the Nukutere College for visiting Parliament this morning and from their visit I saw the arrangement for special needs student on the one to one program. The special needs students on Rarotonga are very lucky. That is not the case in Mangaia. In the Ministry of Education there is a policy for the ration or number of students to a teacher. I do not know of the arrangement for this policy, I cannot therefore ask for more teacher aides.

Today children with autism are found in our schools. The problem is the time of identifying that the child has autism. It is better that this situation is identified early so the remedy can be applied right away. This is one area that I want to ask the Government to consider to employ someone with this speciality to diagnose our children who has this issue. Maybe all that I am presenting to the House is already in the Appropriation but I cannot see this is the Budget Book

I am happy to see the allocation of \$523,000 for the Outer Islands scholarship program this is for our college students that is brought from the Outer Islands to attend senior classes over in Rarotonga. I am also happy for the allocation of \$298,000 for Ongoing Operational Expenditure. This is where the stationery for our

school children is procured. There should be no more excuse when the school starts again that there are no materials for our school children. This allocation should provide for the material needs of our school.

Also the allocation of \$360,000 for the improvement of the schools and hopefully through this there may be some assistance for the special needs children. I believe this appropriation will appear in the CIIC allocations.

These are the areas I want to comment on and I am giving my full support. If these figures that I have spoken about are not in there we need to look at it again.

I've got one more and this is the most important one, this is about the resources. There are different resources for schools but no matter how clever a particular teacher is, without resources she or he will not go forward.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I will interrupt you Honourable Member. Your time is up. Seeing that there is...Oh, sorry.

Now I can see the Leader of the Opposition.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Greetings again. It was so pleasing to hear the introduction from the Prime Minister on this section of the Bill. When we look at page 10 of Book 1 it is showing a Summary of the Budget and my concern here is why is Education not listed there? To my understanding Education is not listed there because Education's budget had not been increased from last year but the difference is not that much. We all believe that Education is really important. When we look at the amounts in Schedule 1 in Book 1, that will tell us that Education is considered as a priority as well. The allocation for Education is second only to MFEM.

It would be good if it was the same or more or a little bit more because I think Education is the most important thing in our society. Those of us who are parents we do encourage our children to go to school. We encourage them not only to eat their lunch but also to learn and many of us, even in this House, have been educated not because our parents have got money but because some of us won some Government Scholarships at the time. So if we look at the examples that we set, it makes a lot of sense that we continue to encourage our children to be good learners at school.

I was also comforted by the fact that the Prime Minister in the presence of the Secretary of Education has indicated that the Ministry is happy with the Budget and if the Ministry is happy with the Budget who am I to oppose it and I understand that the only problem – and it's a problem that the Minister of Finance has made a commitment to assist – is the wages. And if you have any problem with the Minister of Finance you call me.

I do believe and I have for a long time felt that our teachers are underpaid and from here on you will hear me sing this same song many more times when we come to other agencies. But definitely Education, teachers in my view have been underpaid, not only during this Government's term but prior to that and we want to make that different going into the future.

So I am also happy when the Prime Minister said that the teachers have the most important job and it should therefore follow that they should be properly rewarded for their most important job.

The only thing I was going to comment on with regard to the Budget is that I wasn't quite sure whether there were sufficient funds in there for the very basic things like stationery. And the reason why I mention this is because not too long ago, maybe two or three months ago, Tereora College was out in full force at the Punanga Nui raising funds for stationery. And I know because we bought some. They had different types of food that they were selling, a whole umu basket of food, etc. etc. and when I was told that it was to help with purchasing of stationery that bothered me. If I am wrong on that I do apologise but that's what I understood.

The supply of stationery is a very basic service that Government should provide but because you are satisfied with this Budget, if I hear that the children are raising funds for stationery I won't go to the Minister of Education. I'll come and see you.

On that note I am happy to support the Budget and let me also congratulate you for being the Secretary of Education.

Thank you Mr Deputy Chairman.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

I recognise the Minister from Tupapa, the Honourable George Angene.

HON. G. ANGENE: Thank you very much Mr Deputy Chairman.

I rise to give my full support to this allocation for the Ministry of Education. Before that let me take some time to tell you a short story during my time at school. A short story, not a long one.

I want our people listening in and those of us in this House to understand how I came to this position because this is not an easy achievement but through teachings and learning you are able to achieve. I wanted to stand before because of the students that were here because I have been part of that school.

My sympathies to the Honourable Member from Ngatangia so I stand to pay my respects to him as my uncle as well to support the issue concerning the students from Nukutere because I myself and the Honourable Member from Akaoa, Nooroa Baker were in this school. In our situation there was no writing, there was no reading or speaking English and there was not enough knowledge. And all of my life Deputy Chair with minimal means and with no means sometimes. I took my life back to God and between 1992 and 2000 I placed myself in learning the Word of God. According to Jacob chapter 5:16 where it says "*The prayer of the righteous shall be made possible.*" In another verse Phillip chapter 3:12 it says "*I don't say I have achieved all but I am still trying.*"

Also, in 1 Corinthians chapter 13:11 there it says "*When I was a child. My behaviour was childish but when I got matured then the childish behaviour was left behind*". We

are saying that we have matured but no we have not. We have aged. The basis of maturity is wisdom and knowledge. This is just a small part of my life that I have been given by my God. I am not boasting here but it says in the word of God that the words of my mouth are true and I shall not be bent.

Maybe some of you out there are thinking that maybe he is acting like a preacher. This is what I have achieved throughout my life with the guidance from my God and people of Tupapa/Maraerenga and uniting with peace and love I have achieved these.

When I was at Avarua School myself and my friend as mentioned before I think our category was D and it means from A, B, C to D means Dumb. But God says those who are humble shall be raised. As before I am not boasting but I am telling my life story to encourage our people listening in. This is enough.

On this allocation for Education I give my full support for this Appropriation. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister. I see the Honourable Member from Teimurimotia Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: Greetings to all of us again and those listening in and before I speak, firstly I would like to give my full support to this allocation. I shall not dwell too long on this appropriation however, I would like to bring our attention to a particular area under Education and Community. When we talk about Community we are referring also to informal education at the community level.

As we give our thoughts and thanks to the teachers who are being paid to teach our children as well as teacher aides however, there is one area I think needs mentioning and this is the area of providing our children spiritual guidance and teaching. I would like to offer my special thanks especially those teachers in the Sunday Schools throughout our Churches. I believe this is a very important component of their education and the raising of our children whereby they teach the spiritual side to go with the formal education teaching as well.

I believe all of us within this House have attended Sunday school when we were young. I can see the Deputy Chairman putting his hand as he himself also attended Sunday school. I see one of the constraints in this area is their resources for teaching especially materials like Bibles. I know that we believe this should be the responsibility of the churches to assist with. May be this is part of the assistance on the Education and Community that can be provided if these Sunday schools require assistance for resources.

I would now like to come back to the schools in my village and there are three schools and they are Titikaveka College, Papaaroa and also the Pre School and I thank the Ministry of Education for leaving the Pre School to the under the administration of the Ministry.

In previous years we have seen a number of parents from outside of the area bring in their children to study here however, I can report to you Madam Secretary that today many parents from Matavera, Ngatangia are bringing their children to the Pre School maybe because of the new teacher.

Here is a request it's not to look down but rather to please request to consider when you are placing teachers in our schools they have to be proficient in the Maori language as well. Because I can tell you that today parents want their pre-school children to be brought up also in Maori language and if there is no avenue there then they move out of the school.

To you Prime Minister, I know Papaaroa College and School is close to your heart and for myself although I am not Seventh Day Adventist but I grew up in the village of Titikaveka and I see today the School is going through issues as faced by Nukutere College in regards to land issues. Today landowners as well as the school are looking at ways to address these issues. Maybe in the future when there is a need for assistance to ensure this school is still located on this land. Maybe we will see an appropriation in this book and today one of my strongest Prayers is that this school remain on this land and pray for goodwill and spirit in our landowners to allocate part of this land for the school in the future.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I have to interrupt you Honourable Member your time is up, I see the Minister Mac Mokoroa.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Greetings Chair and greeting to those who spoke before and your useful comments of support and overall goodwill. I had to stand since the Ministry of Education is located in Nikao as well as Tereora College, Nikao School for ways to beautify these schools.

Kia Orana to the Secretary of Education, Danielle, this is a woman from my area of Nikao. I stand up to confirm and clarify to the Leader of the Opposition that apart from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and MFEM, Education and Health is the priority of this Government. I would like to share with this House that the list of priorities and the list of needs and the list of projects are so many that the Budget Support Group had difficulties in prioritising them. In other words all the Ministries have their own list, wanted it to be approved but was not approved.

Even we in Cabinet had difficulty in prioritising but through the process of agreeing, this is what we have in the Budget Book for this financial year. It is not to say that we are discouraging all these brilliant ideas that has been forwarded by Ministries. We have asked some to be put on hold and some has been carried forward for this new financial year to be implemented. Some of the proposals have been referred back to the Ministries to be reviewed.

In coming back to the allocations to the Ministry of Education I would like to support many of the speakers that have spoken before me in thanking all the teachers all over the Cook Islands for looking after and educating our children. I would like to pay special mention and acknowledgement to the Government of New Zealand and the Government of China for their assistance in building two beautiful structures within our country. We understand Tereora College has another stage 2 to be implemented but nevertheless it is good that we in this House acknowledge both Governments for their ongoing support.

In terms of the issue with resources for Education, it is never enough and if you as a parent or a resident living within your village or on your island and you receive a

raffle book buy it. The needs of our education is no different to the needs of our sports people. So, if the sports people bring a raffle to you buy it because one day you might win a good prize.

I do not want to continue Mr Chairman but to thank all the teachers and to support the budget allocated for Education. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister.

Now I can see the Member of Parliament for Pukapuka.

MR T. ELIKANA: Kia Orana. I will speak in Rarotongan so the Interpreters can understand what I am talking about but I am happy for the support by the Members for me to speak in Pukapuka language. This is the job of the people we are talking about right now, the Ministry of Education.

I think it is unfair that the only language being taught in our schools is the Rarotonga language and my Pukapuka language is not being taught in the secondary schools. So, to the Secretary of the Ministry of Education there is support by the Members of Parliament for the Pukapuka language to be taught at Tereora College starting this year. It is a bit hard when I speak Pukapukan and then I come in here and no-one understands what I am talking about. I think not just myself, for all the other Members that have their own languages, the desire not to lose their language. As you have stipulated or shown on your Output 1, our education is one of the most important aspects of our life and it is part of our life. It becomes our future and we will move on from there.

I stand here to fully support the allocation of money for the Ministry of Education and also for the services and resources they are giving to the people of Nassau and Pukapuka. They have allocated a large amount of money to pay for our staff members that are teaching on our islands. They also help support all the children that are coming to Tereora College. I have looked through the budget and haven't noticed that there is an allocation for Pukapuka itself but maybe it's in place for all the islands.

If we look through the budget we will see there is an allocation for Scholarships for Further Education and the request here is for this allocation to be separated into two allocations. One for scholarship for overseas and another one for our Pa Enea coming to Rarotonga to further their education.

For us, the Members of Parliament from the Pa Enea, living on Rarotonga we have become parents or caregivers for the student scholars that are coming from the Outer Islands to Rarotonga. This is becoming a burden, since the Secretary of the Ministry of Education is here, I would like to make a request for the Ministry to look into this and review this area.

My last thought is about the school in Pukapuka. This request is not just for Pukapuka but all the Outer Islands for education and health. This is employing people from elsewhere to come and work on our Outer Islands and we have read in the newspaper about the request for a teacher to teach English in the Pukapuka School and I have seen the same vacancy again in the newspaper. Which means they have

not found anyone to fill the position. I encourage the Secretary of Education and also the Minister of Finance to look into this issue.

Maybe it's not the remuneration of these employees. Maybe one reason is the distance of the island from the main island and the transportation for easy access in case you want to come to the main island for personal needs. So, my request to the Secretary of Education is not to recruit from a faraway land or go all the way to the British Isles. Maybe the right thing to do is to get someone that can speak and teach the English subject.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

We have come to the time for a break and I would like to suspend Parliament. Our meeting is suspended until 3.30 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 3.00 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 3.30 p.m.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please be seated. Thank you. I have an announcement.

I am happy to announce that Parliament will adjourn at 6.00 p.m. I am just trying to clear some confusion I heard during tea time. We will continue with our Sitting.

When we suspended for break, the Member for Pukapuka was on the Floor and you've got 58 seconds left. You can choose to speak or not to speak.

MR T. ELIKANA: Thank you very much Deputy Chairman. I won't reach 58 seconds. If you remember during a rugby match it only takes 5 seconds to get to the try line.

I stand here Mr Chairman to offer my full support to the Vote Item for the Ministry of Education.

Thank you very much.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much Honourable Member.

I now see the Minister of Health. You have the Floor.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you very much Mr Chair and to all of us, greetings again.

Firstly, I would like to convey my condolences to a family member in New Zealand, Mama Vero, for the passing away of your beloved husband. The body was returned to Atiu for burial. I would also like to convey my most sincere apologies to you Mama for not being able to attend your bereavement as I was not on the island. I hope you understand my absence due to my travel overseas to represent our people in

the Cook Islands. Therefore, I would like to extend my words of condolences and greetings to you Mama, to Aunty Paula, and to all the family members on Atiu. To Papa Puna of Ngati Toki and all the family members, I convey my condolences to you all and may the Lord comfort you all during this time of sorrow.

I would like to extend special greetings to the Secretary of the Ministry of Education. To the Minister of Education and also to our teachers who are a big part of teaching our children, Kia Orana. I do understand the responsibility of looking after our children in our homes. I take my hat off to each and every one of you for your dedication and especially to our special needs teachers. So rightly, you should be known as women and men warriors of our country. It is appropriate to recognise this as our priority area and for Government to allocate money to pay our teachers well.

As previously mentioned by the Minister of Finance, this is one area that has been earmarked for increase in the next budget.

I would also like to extend special greetings to our Enuamanu School. To your Principal, Mrs. Tairi and all the teachers and also all our students and pupils of the school – greetings to you all in the name of our Lord. To all those who are part of the CITI school, the trade section, the electrical and the building construction trade and as mentioned by the Prime Minister that he will be travelling to Aitutaki soon to open this, I fully support this as one to be part of our education and this is one of the biggest aspects that is happening at Atiu College today.

I also would like to acknowledge all the teachers that are part of our Health programme and our Agriculture programme in our schools and that is why I took my time to speak as I the Minister will make some comments about this. So I stand here to acknowledge all the teachers involved in this as they have set out some policies concerning the lunches and the water that our students take to school including our tuck shops in our schools.

The policies still exist but it is quite difficult for us to follow and the most important aspect here is that the teachers are teaching our kids about good health. The Ministry of Education is also working together with the Ministry of Health particularly in the areas of health protection in the schools and also dental care. There is however areas of concern that needs to be strengthened. The Secretary of Education and the Secretary of Health are aware of these concerns and looking into these issues to improve them. Agriculture is also an area that needs to be strengthened in our schools. There have been some discussions to find ways to reintroduce these two areas in the schools.

It was discovered in the past that most of the children were not interested in these areas. However, the Expos that have been ongoing have helped to encourage our students to take up these topics. It also reminded them that this is not a dirty job but an important area as well that will provide good income.

The Pearl project managed by the Ministry of Agriculture has also been introduced in the Outer Islands and we need to encourage that for all our Pa Enuua.

I will now come back to the trip that we went together with the Honourable Speaker, Niki Rattle, and I recall her mentioning in our Parliament House last year....

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I will interrupt you Minister. I see the Member of Parliament for Amuri/Ureia on the Floor.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you Chairman. Greetings to everyone in the House this afternoon and also to our people listening in.

We are now debating the Vote Item for the Ministry of Education. I want to refer to Output 1, "*Taku Ipukarea Kia Rangatira*". The Prime Minister earlier on mentioned about our traditional customs. We should be proud Cook Islanders and therefore should embrace and keep our language and our Cook Islands customs.

In the past, if you speak Maori you will be punished. I am pretty sure that all of us here in this House have had an experience of this practise. We have all been to D and E and F. Today, I know with my own family today it is hard when you speak to them in Aitutaki language they answer back in a way that I do not even understand and you want to use the kikau broom in that instance.

Our parents have tried to teach us English and this has helped us grow into what we are today.

Yesterday, I was happy with the speaker on the Marumaru Atua for trying to speak in our language in front of a big crowd. And we know at that age of the youth it is difficult for them to embrace our language. We need to encourage our youth and our own children.

I now come back to the Secretary of the Ministry. I can see that there is a programme for teaching the Maori language in the schools. We need to put more effort into this. In my home when I speak in Maori, the mother will answer in English so the children do not know how to answer if we the parents are not speaking the language. Maybe through the schools we will get some help.

I want to thank the Ministry and the Prime Minister for completing the Aitutaki CITI School because it has been our dream for a long time and in particular with tourism. There are some problems with the workers as it is difficult for them to leave the island. Sometimes they do not want to come to Rarotonga. I am happy that there is thought of the trade area to be included also.

As mentioned by our Leader earlier the Secretary has supported this budget and I also support this appropriation. However, as mentioned by the Leader there has been some fund raising during school hours and mothers has complained to me that why are the children raising funds on a school day.

I like the fund raising that they do in Rarotonga because they learn to cook. In Aitutaki they take the bucket and beat it on the road. I don't know what kind of teaching this is or are they trying to teach our children to be beggars. It is not right that we teach our children not to work and today we see all the sporting codes running on the road.

I want to sponsor some groups when they fund raise but I don't want to sponsor if they just come and stand around but if they come and clean the yard or the business area that is what I want. We want to teach them what is proper so they will learn a lesson for the future. So I ask you Secretary to do something about this and if they come running on the road to fund raise, I will phone you. This is to encourage you and the teachers and also to strengthen our teachers and for them to become good teachers for our children in the future. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member for Amuri. I see the Member for Nikaupara.

MR T. KAVANA: Greetings to the people of the Cook Islands listening in. My paradise Araura Enea listening in and my electorate Nikaupara. I rise to extend my acknowledgement to the Government of the day and to speak on the new school that will be opened on Aitutaki even though it has taken so long to come to fruition. This is the spirit of our Government today sharing the blessing to all the islands.

I want to thank the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister about the problem of the bus contract for the school children on Aitutaki. I think this person is happy now and as we have been told in the past, the local Government helps with the running of the school bus on the island.

But because what was going on was not right I sought help from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance and help was available. I did not come into this House and complain. The door to the Minister's office is open to us. Since I became a Member of Parliament the Ministers in Government have opened their doors to us and we should not throw stones in this House.

I have already supported this appropriation yesterday and today I stand to give my thanks to our Government and also God. On the allocation for the Ministry of Education, I thank this Ministry because on my island there is no more European principal. I believe our teachers have obtained high degrees and that is why our own people are able to take the job of Principal. I am always happy when I see the school Principals on my island are my own people.

Earlier we were talking about the Ministry of Cultural Development and I am talking about the culture and traditions within our schools. On Rarotonga I see that culture is being revived within our schools and I am pleased to announce that on Aitutaki maybe because the Principals are local people, there is revival of culture within our schools.

I remember in former years, colleges from the outer islands used to come to Rarotonga to compete and to exhibit our culture and yet today I do not see this happening any more. Because of this living culture back in the old days we could see our own young people utilising their cultural heritage.

When I see the revenue the economic development in our country I believe this is one area that should be revived and encouraged again. I hope that may be in the future the Ministry of Education will give consideration to reviving culture again and maybe island like Atiu, Mangaia, and Rarotonga will come to Aitutaki or to Rarotonga to

showcase our culture heritage. That is all I have to say, Honourable Members of the House because it won't be long when I have to depart and leave you all and we will meet again on Monday. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much to the Honourable Member from Nikaupara, I see the Honourable Prime Minister of the Cook Islands.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you, Chair. I stand to thank all the Members who have spoken to this allocation. I greet you and show you my gratitude in your support of our allocation for schools.

I would just like to elaborate on a few points and questions raised by our speakers. Firstly the operation allocation for schools are being shared out and I do know that the Ministry of Education on Rarotonga is assisting the schools in the outer islands to manage the funds they receive.

I chuckle at the comments by the Leader of the Opposition because she believed the comments by the students from Tereora as to the reason for their fund raising. To me these students were very resourceful and smart in promoting their fund raising. They did not speak the truth to those who believed but that's okay, thank you for believing. The real reason for that fund raising is to construct some seating around the new housing at Tereora but thank you for your support.

I would like to show my gratitude and thanks to the teachers particularly on Manihiki. Our two Principals from Rarotonga Apii Napa on Tukao and Miss Ana Rauru from Tauhunu.

I acknowledge the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition of all the female workers within Crown Law and they are also the same in her legal firm. This is the truth because these two Principals on Manihiki are women and they are doing a fantastic job.

I chuckle at Miss Rauru in Tauhunu who does not want to return to Rarotonga and we have breached the Policy of the Ministry of Education because her term have expired many times. However the Manihikians won't allow her to return. The only problem is she has not met a gentleman but my gratitude to the two of them for developing our young people on Manihiki.

On the new school on Aitutaki, yes it has taken so long. However, the time has come Friday next week it will start. The first part is to teach Aitutakians even though they are scientists and know everything just to improve their side of hospitality in the tourism industry. The only problem is they might end up teaching the teachers. But this is good news and this dream is coming to pass.

I want to highlight to us that the opportunities for scholarships for our students from the outer islands remain and it is up to us to encourage our students. However, I would not want us to just rely solely on the Ministry of Education to take care of our students when they come to Rarotonga. That is the biggest challenge. This is one of the reasons why our students from the outer islands land in difficulty when they come to Rarotonga. If the parents and guardians here on Rarotonga do a good job then they will do fine.

There is the encouragement from Government to improve the situation for our students with an increase of grants to one hundred dollars. To me this is significant assistance to encourage them to stay in school. During my time at school when we receive one shilling for lunch a day we live like a King. That is why we are looking at avenues to assist our children today. So my thanks once again to all the Members for supporting our allocation for Education. God Bless you all.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister.

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

That the sum of \$19,895,611 for Education stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

ENVIRONMENT:

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,686,417 for Environment stands part of the Schedule?

The debate for this vote item is limited to one and a half hours. Do we have any speakers? I see the Honourable Member for Matavera the most energetic Member Vaitoti Tupa.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you very much, Deputy Chair as well as to the Minister responsible for Environment. I would like to thank him at this point for the new funding allocated for this agency. Because in previous years when I consider the allocation for Environment it just remained at a certain level. However with the arrival of our new Minister for Environment the Honourable Robert Tapaitau everything has increased. I make my point on the payment increase to the personnel because this has increased by around \$116,067. This is a significant increase in the payment for personnel.

And when you look at the allocation for the Outputs there is an increase of \$180,226. I do believe Deputy Chair this is one of the increases that will certainly strengthen this agency. I know this because as a former head of the Environment Service for 15 years. I'd like to assure you, Deputy Chair because during my time this level of funding was never achieved. Therefore through you to extend my gratitude to the new Minister for this increase for Environment.

I will also like to thank him not only for Environment but for the other agencies that will work closely with Environment. Here is one example Agriculture has a connection to Environment. Infrastructure also have a connection to the Environment. As well as a connection for Marine Resources. Not only that when we look at Foreign Affairs they also have a connection to Environment and the reason being because of our relationship with global bodies under Foreign Affairs.

The connection between Agriculture and Environment can be under the chemicals that are being imported into our country. I want to advise this House that we have connections within this to certain global agreements. One, the Stockholm Convention. Second, the Rotterdam Convention and third, the Basil Convention and two other agencies that have a connection to Environment include Education and Health. Therefore I am aware that the Government knows about the connections for all these agencies with Environment.

There is also a connection to Tourism. Hence my thanks to the Minister for this increase in appropriation towards the operations, as well as the personnel for the workers of Environment. This will also have a connection to the Office of the Prime Minister and when we consider climate change today, this cannot be separated from Environment. However, it is still working closely under the auspices of the Office of the Prime Minister and Environment so I do say this is one of the strong agencies today. This is one agency that will look at our waste. We will look at all the chemicals, medicine, pharmaceuticals that is imported into our hospitals. That is why it is connected under the Stockholm Convention. On the Rotterdam Convention Agriculture is linked to Environment and Basil Convention connects us to the electrical waste.

These are the important things I can see within this Department itself. So therefore we have to look into how to improve this by looking at its legislations and policies.

And this will also touch upon the ICI and also the Seabed Minerals Authority, including Marae Moana and I would like to say thank you very much to the Minister for establishing programs that's looking into what the work of the Environment is doing. We cannot withdraw this Department away from other departments. They closely work alongside the Ministry of Culture as well with the work of World Heritage involved as one of the works they do together. I do believe that through this Ministry that they have been able to access funds from overseas to help our country and this is called Official Development Assistance Funds (ODA). These are all the departments that work closely together with the Ministry of Environment to include Agriculture and Health and so forth and Culture and furthermore the request I asked for, all the Ministers that's attending all these Conventions to give us the Opposition or for people that haven't attended any of these Conventions to enable them to see the work that is done within these Conventions.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, your time is up.

I can see the Honourable Member of Ngatangiia. The Floor is yours.

MR T. TUAVERA: Like what the Member of Matavera was talking about I just want to finish what he was talking about, because I know what he was going to talk about.

I would like to support that one of the Members from the Opposition to travel and I am sure he was going to nominate me. So I would like to say that when the Government travel overseas to please take one of us, to give us the opportunity to travel and attend these Conventions as we are on the Board of Environment. When we attend Board meetings in Tupapa we are the only ones that attend these meetings,

including the Member Patrick Arioka. The meeting we attended also by the field officers where they report on the work they do. We have asked whether there's enough officers attending field work.

As mentioned by the Member for Matavera their salary has been increased. Maybe the remuneration will enable them to employ another field officer. This is not easy work. During the time of flooding and where land has been filled by rocks and sand by people that's planning to build their house, it becomes very hard for us to sign off an Agreement to allow these people to build. So I am happy to see that there is an increase in the allocation for them because we rely on these field officers to report back to us.

When there is a report that work has been stopped then together with the members we go out and have a look for ourselves. For example, where the quarry site is in Arorangi where they are crushing all the rocks, this is a new area and owned by Triad.

There is a lot of work carried out by the Ministry of Environment and so it should be right that their allocation should be increased and the work they do involves other Ministries as well.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member.

You have repeated what the previous Member mentioned. If you have nothing more to say.

MR T. TUAVERA: So here are my own thoughts Mr Chairman. I would like to fully support the allocation for Environment.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much the Honourable Member from Ngatangiaa.

MR V. TUPA: I stand here to complete my next ten minutes. If we look at Book 2 page 67 you will see the structure of Environment. As mentioned by the Member of Ngatangiaa, employing new field officers and I am very happy to see that they have established officers and office for the Outer Islands and I can see they are going to employ an officer for Mangaia, an officer for Pukapuka, for Nassau, Rakahanga, Palmerston and also one for Penrhyn.

Coming back to Rarotonga in the newspaper there are new positions created. Policy makers included and I support this as we go into the amendments of the Act and I do believe Crown Law will help this person that's going to take over this position. I also believe there is a new Deputy Director for Environment and also other jobs in the Environment. I feel comforted because the three main areas I established in the past whilst working for the Ministry has been continued on by the Minister.

We can say that are three outputs under their appropriation and all the outputs are still in place for example: Output 1 Advisory and Compliance, Output 2 Manager for Islands Futures. Under them are people that actually go out into the field where work is done. So Mr Chair I would like to assure you I am in full support of this because

this strengthens our laws and the work we do in the Pa Enuu. The main thing I am looking at is that these new employees are trained to do the environmental duties. This is what I wanted to share with us all in supporting the appropriation and the work they will do this year and the years to come. They have also established an allocation for the up-coming years to complete work that has already been planned.

Mr Deputy Chairman that is all I have to say even though my time is not up and I will give the chance to other Members to speak. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member. I now.... Honourable Minister you may have the Floor.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Chairman. I stand to humbly ask the Honourable Member for Matavera to not surprise his Opposition side for this immense estimate increase. We have heard during his time at Environment he has never reached this allocation of budget and yet he worked in this Ministry for fifteen years. So I ask for him not alarm his side but to support this Bill with all his heart.

I stand to support this appropriation and to criticise the members from Rarotonga on the Authority. I have been to four meetings and none of the Members from Rarotonga has been to these meetings. I think they were upset because they didn't get paid. So when the Vote Item for increase in payment for our Members comes to Parliament I will speak on that and for them not to talk on it.

In regard to the meetings of this Authority, I'd like to acknowledge the attendance of Members who attends to it. As to the projects and site visits that we have looked at, when I am in attendance it actually takes off and is completed. For example; the work carried out on the beach front across from Sheraton. But all the projects when Vaitoti Tupa attends it's never done or there is always complaints.

We know the problem area is around Ngatangiaa. During heavy rain this is one of the most flooded areas on Rarotonga and a lot of money from the Government is spent on improving these flooded areas. What is the reason for that all the developments in Ngatangiaa is becoming a problem for Ngatangiaa. What's the reason for that? It is because Tama does not come to the Authority meetings. The Members on Rarotonga are required to attend the meetings because on these developments if the decision made is not right, it will come back to bite us.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Minister. I see the Honourable Member for Pukapuka.

MR T. ELIKANA: Greetings Deputy Chairman. I stand here and I won't speak for long because we know the allocation for this Ministry and there is an increase as previously mentioned. I stand here to correct what the member for Matavera mentioned because the people of Pukapuka are listening in. He is saying one for Pukapuka and one for Nassau. I want to correct him, two for Pukapuka and one for Nassau and the allocation is \$54,758 and there will be three people to be employed.

The area that I am so happy about this allocation for Pukapuka, this is the Pukapuka language, this is the first time this has happened, because 15 years a Pukapuka person was employed in this department and they were never given an allocation like this so I thank the Minister.

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

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Greetings to everybody in the name of our Lord. I heard the Member for Matavera, very sweet and very likely he wanted me to somewhere. Maybe you are just the right person because you are from Matavera and we both are from Matavera.

Thank you everyone for the contributions to the Environment appropriation and for the support. As mentioned earlier by the Member of Parliament for Matavera, it took fifteen years and this is the first time this has happened.

I want to give thanks, because the thanks are just coming to me. I want to give thanks to the Minister of Finance because I can see his accounting abilities overwhelm me at the moment.

Our vision for Environment “*A clean, green and sustainable environment for all*”.

Genesis Chapter 1, verse 27 – 30, “*So God created man in his own image and God blessed them and said unto them be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground. I give you every seed bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it*”.

Environment is a three gift from God. You have to be bestowed all to the powers to be stewards of the earth, to look after, to replenish and to manage. Please bear with my language.

Mother Nature is amazing. Our life support system and its health is maintained by nature itself. It is very amazing but sadly, not at the rate of current development.

Environment is one of those things that always get lip service and no real action until something bad happens. As the new Minister of Environment I want to make a difference and match lip service with action.

Thank you to my colleagues in Government for your support. Without your support this would not be happening and to my Opposition friends, I need your support on this. Not a support to support Government, it is your support for our people. In this new Budget I have been given over \$500,000 above my sealing to deliver some key things. As you know, I am the Member of Parliament for Tongareva so I always feel grateful for the Pa Enea. All islands in the Pa Enea will have an Environmental Officer and an Island Authority set up. Currently on Aitutaki and Nga-Pu-Toru have both, and in Manihiki an officer but no authority. Penrhyn is in recruitment to hiring stages for officers. I will not speak on Pukapuka and Nassau, that is already been done by the Member of Parliament from Wale.

This is to give importance to all the Cook Islands and not just some. We want to ensure that we also manage what we still have in the Pa Enea and not wait until it is all gone. For example, Aitutaki, the *paua* is all gone. Now we are starting to look at conserving it. As you all know the Pa Enea is important to me. That is why I made sure they are not forgotten.

I want to touch on Suvarrow because I think Suvarrow is one of the places that we always forget because we always send an officer there. They are given Administered Payments for everything needed to look after one of our national parks.

The Environmental Impact Assessment process – the EIA. This compliance base has been boosted as well as to keep up with the developments. With so many current challenges facing our country we have identified the need to get this base sorted. We fellow Parliamentarians, we all need to educate ourselves more with our role in environment space. Knowledge is power. Doing right things at the right time in the right way produces the right results. Knowing our time as well, knowing our goals as well, knowing our strengths and weakness as well and shaping them. In the right direction we can achieve what we aspire to achieve.

I would like to give thanks to the Lord for giving us the understanding and wisdom. It was God that has given me this task to look after the Ministries of Environment, Transport and ICI because these Ministries go hand in hand. We have a lot of problems with Environment and I think it is basically the responsibility of ICI. The ICI, NES and the Ministry of Transport they align together. Therefore all the times that I go out for inspection, I am not only the Minister of ICI but I am also the Minister of Environment. Although I do not have a Compliance Officer and I do not get paid as a Compliance Officer, because I love our people hence the reason I do this.

As mentioned by the Member of Matavera and Ngatangia, there is an allocation for the Compliance Officer. At the moment we have started reviewing all policies in our own NES Act 2003. This was kicked off when we employed the new Director. We will have the Environment Policy by September with drafting instructions ready for our revised NES Act 2020 and ready for Parliament to pass. As with a lot of my portfolios, I like to drive and push them because this is a saying from me. It is the results I want. It is not only for ICI. It is for all my portfolios. It is the results that we want.

So, I want to give the Minister of Finance again some more gratitude for allowing us to have this \$500,000 because Environment is a big issue and just to let him know while we are all here, we will be asking for more in the next financial budget.

I have one more point before I sit down. I want to extend my thank you to the new Director of Environment, Nga Puna and the staff at Environment. Now, we know we have a new direction and a direction that will benefit our people. So, to Nga and your team, thank you very much and may God bless you. Kia Orana.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister. Honourable Member, Selina Napa you may have the Floor.

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you very much Deputy Chair for giving me the opportunity to talk on Environment. I have two issues to raise under the EIA process, namely the \$150,000 allocation. When I look at this allocation it is set to assist the Outer Islands outside of Rarotonga.

I do believe this is one area that needs to be strengthened across the islands outside of Rarotonga. What I have seen with my own eyes for the waste in each island, this is a significant problem for each island but I would like to return to the issue of EIA on Rarotonga. On many occasions when applications were submitted to the EIA Authority here on Rarotonga, there were always problems because when there are issues, we, the Members of Parliament on this Authority are always blamed.

In past audits into this area, what has been identified sometimes is that we the Members on the Board do not carry out our responsibilities under the Environment Act 2003. We recognise our loopholes in the process for EIA where people can make submissions for their EIA applications.

These are areas that need to be strengthened under the EIA including raising awareness and regulations and conservation here on Rarotonga. One area that we would like to highlight is the areas where sand mining is being conducted where white sand is being dug out and replaced by soil. Also we would like to highlight the area of wetlands. Maybe this is one area where Environment can work closely with Education in raising the awareness regarding the EIA process in these areas.

My two colleagues on this side are talking about the need for monitors in Environment. However, I would like to suggest the requirement and the need for a civil engineer within the Service. I would highly recommend an independent engineer because some of these EIA applications have been put together by their own engineers and they do turn up to speak to authority on these proposals.

So, where can you receive the technical expertise in reviewing and critiquing these EIA applications to inform you to make the right and appropriate decisions? So, our natural environment does not get impacted. It is true as the Minister says Environment is a free gift from our God. This is certainly a beautiful thought but we mankind today are affecting our environment as we see today.

In the allocation when I consider the item on National Heritage Trust I am not quite certain who the people on this Trust are. I am encouraged when I look there is an allocation for the preserving of important historical sites for us, for example, our maraes and the Marae Vaerota in Avana and I would like to consider in the same line our passages including our Avaavaroa Passage in Titikaveka to be preserved.

So, to the Minister for Environment this is a beautiful appropriation for our Environment. I do realise it is no simple matter to address and fix all the problems in our environment but we all have to work together. We have to unite in working on the Board to ensure that these applications that we receive do not result in damaging our environment. I do realise that the staff of Environment are working hard. However, there are times they do not see what is happening until complaints are received and we the members are often the first ones to receive these complaints.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. Now I see the Honourable Member from Murienua, Patrick Arioka.

MR P. ARIOKA: Thank you Deputy Chair. I rise to give my support to our deliberations on this appropriation today.

However, firstly I would like to greet our people viewing us on livestream as well as our people listening in on radio today.

Greetings to my own people in Murienua in Puaikura, the three pillars of the community – greetings to you all. This is your son you have elected to be your voice in this House today.

Deputy Chairman, I would like to point to two issues within the appropriation for Environment Services. This is a support view to this appropriation. The first item is on new budget measures on the management of Suwarrow Park. I can see there is some strength in the allocation of work on this island today. It is true what the Member from Matavera says of the connection between Environment and Agriculture, especially in the area of biosecurity on this island.

We are working closely together on this for the purpose of preventing diseases coming into our country from east and west. We do realise this is one of the avenues of importing problems into our waters. And this is possible by the hard work of two gentlemen, John Mose and Harry Papai residing on Suwarrow today. This is not an easy task because both of you have sacrificed your family life to work for this island and for the protection of our country.

However, due to the increase in number of ships and boats visiting this island we see the need for an increase of the work required to protect it. I do know that some of the other agencies of Government are now involved in reviewing this area because there are other problems within Agriculture that we see today.

Let this not become a major problem for our country in the future and this could be one of those possible trafficking of other things aside from agricultural products. I do believe that the hardworking Minister is aware of this issue and works very hard to prevent these problems.

I would like now to talk about the program under the ODA – Overseas Development Assistance entitled Ridge to Reef Program. I am heartened to see that this year \$1.284 million has been allocated for this purpose and in the next fiscal year this will be increased to \$1.7 million. It does not mean all this is only for Agriculture but there is other areas including marine and others. For the majority of the industry of Agriculture in this country, the Ridge to Reef Program has fronted, it is true the intention as elaborated by the Member from Matavera is the prevention of poisons into our country today.

In previous years the intention was to completely do without the introduction of pesticides and other medicine. We did not agree to this because in my mind there was a requirement for a long transitional period to ensure our people are able to change

over to what was termed as organic based chemical and fertilisers. I am very happy to announce today Honourable Members that we are right now on this path today.

And I am heartened today that there is less and less farmers and growers utilising chemicals called Round-up and Paraquat. We are very happy to announce that today there is an increase in the use of organic base chemicals like paraquat. Therefore we base our trust on this programme called Ridge to Reef. Therefore to all our members and growers on the island of Mauke, Mitiaro, Atiu and Aitutaki these programmes have become a reality through the Ridge to Reef programme.

Lastly, I would like to say that for this 1.7 million dollars for the next fiscal year that we are required to talk and discuss to utilise this fund for the future.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Now I see the Honourable Member Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Greetings to all of us. I could not just sit and not talk about this Budget as the Minister said this is for the Northern Group. All of us from the Northern Group we support this budget strongly.

I am very happy as I can see there is one job opportunity for the island of Rakahanga. We know in the north, Rakahanga, Manihiki, Tongareva but maybe not in Pukapuka there are no jobs except for Government jobs. To try and retain our young people on the island then we must create jobs for them. So I thank you for establishing this and for fighting for the extra 500 thousand dollars for the Northern Group. So I support this Budget.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I see the Member for Amuri Terepai Maoate.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you, Deputy Chairman. I was born in the north so I support this Budget.

One thought on the EIA. We have a problem in the Outer Islands when we want to build and this law applies to our islands and this EIA has become a burden on the people. It's not that I don't support this but I compare this to the surveying of our land and when you have to bring a lawyer to help with your land court cases. Because there is no one skilled to do this work we have to ask for help from Rarotonga. You don't only have to pay for the EIA report but you also have to pay for the airfares, accommodation and other costs as well on top of the fees. I have asked for help from the survey and the lawyers to help the people when it comes to land sittings and I am looking for help in this as well. I ask the Minister if there will be any help for this.

Another problem that we have encountered is building next to the sea and for us in Aitutaki when you make a suggestion they will say to you that you are a scientist. So those are my thoughts not just for Aitutaki but for all the other islands on the help that we are asking for.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member, I see the Honourable Member of Matavera you have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you, Deputy Chairman. To support what the Member from Amuri/Ureia just said to help the outer islands to prepare EIA Report. You require an engineer to prepare an EIA Report and when you have paid for the EIA Report then you have to pay the engineer something like two to four hundred dollars for preparing the Report.

When the new legislation is passed and EIA is included maybe an avenue to simplify this is for a template to be prepared for the work that is required to be done in the outer islands. On this template you will be able to tick the works that will be done especially for work to be done in the Northern Group and you just tick the appropriate sections and then people don't have to spend money to take engineers to the outer islands.

There are many avenues but if the Minister requests for my help to establish the new legislation, I will be able to help. The main focus is for the work of our people to be completed. Thank you.

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

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Deputy Chairman, greetings to us all and to those listening in. I stand here to fully support the allocation for this Ministry and I stand here to encourage us and to remind us that we are leaders in environment services and looking after our environment. Although our nation is small and there are changes in our weather with climate change affecting us we are not sitting back but we are doing things to help our own country.

Compared to the rest of the countries of the world there is nothing compared to them that we do that they do that hurts the environment. But there are a lot of accomplishments with the work we do to ensure that our environment is preserved.

Our solar power, the rest of the world is talking about green, green economy but the Cook Islands are leading the way. All our Northern Islands are using solar power today. I am waiting for the Members who went on the Select Committee meeting to report back to show that the people in those islands are very happy with their solar power because this has been absolutely transformational in the Northern Group. We don't ration our diesel to reach daylight or wait for shipment of diesel. Nowadays we rely on the work of God just turn on the switch and the light comes on.

The Southern Group islands outside Rarotonga those are complete as well. Aitutaki has completed Stage One and we are waiting on the completion and to let us know then we will go and do the opening. The last one left is Rarotonga and we are not just sitting back for you Rarotonga. There is one problem and it's the storage of the extra power during daytime as the solar panels work and that's the obstacle we have to overcome. We are waiting for Aponga Uira to come back and tell us the plans they have in place for this. All the other countries today are still relying on diesel. Other friends are still mining coal that causes pollution.

Secondly, our Marae Moana. To set an example to the rest of the world how much we treasure our ocean that's why we passed the law for the Marae Moana. This has

become our pride to other countries of the world but we don't just talk about it for we have already in place ways on how to manage our fisheries. I want to confirm to all of us in this House is that how we manage fisheries in our EEZ is the highest in the Pacific because we are following sound advice of fisheries experts who lets us know this is quota you can fish and to not overfish. But today we are not achieving or getting the 15 percent recommended and I am happy that our fishing economy is doing very well under this small percentage. Our country is getting a lot of money from this small portion of the fish from our ocean.

I am looking at the report from the Marine Resources and it shows we will get 17 million dollars. That is why people from outside of the Cook Islands is happy with our country and that is why they support us. Like I mentioned on the wharf yesterday, \$135,000 has been given by this Organisation NIATERO towards Marumarua Atua for the work they do.

Two weeks ago, some of us met at the Muri Beach Club Hotel to set out new ways to establish how we should be fishing in our ocean. Big companies like Walmart and Subway Sandwich from America wants to work closely with us and offer support because of the way we manage our fisheries. So anything we can do to support this Ministry we should support it.

One last request to our Minister we are talking about our EIA Report. Sometimes this becomes a hindrance to the work moving forward. The intention is right but the people behind it that's hindering the work so I ask the Minister to look at this carefully. Don't let the EIA stop the work that will bring benefit to our country.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister. I see the Minister responsible for the Vote Item.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Greetings to you all. There is only four more minutes but by two minutes I will be finished. I have seen some troubled hearts like the Member from Titikaveka, Member from Matavera, the Prime Minister, please do not be troubled. I have said we need to talk, ask questions. That is why I did not speak earlier on and the team from NES with their HOM leading the way they are one step ahead of us in here because in the Review Process they have already reviewed these concerns. So I stand here to assure you so when we go home don't be troubled.

Regarding the EIA it is true what you are saying, and the Prime Minister is right. When you follow the truth, the EIA Report will be very easy to come by but the EIA should not stop the work but we will work alongside the Environment. That is why I said earlier on to keep talking. God Bless you all.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Honourable Members I am waiting for this time to put the Question.

The Question is:

That the sum of \$1,686,417 for Environment stands part of the Schedule?

Motion agreed to

MFEM:

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$21,223,417 for Finance and Economic Management
stands part of the Schedule?**

The debate for this Vote Item is limited to two hours. Do we have any speakers? I can see the Honourable Member for Matavera you have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman. I'd like to tell us that I have looked in depth on the report and allocation for MFEM and I have shown my team here my Book 1 and Book 2 and all the important tags of Book 1 is coloured yellow and my Book 2 all the tags are coloured pink.

The job I have done in the last two nights, Mr Chairman is to look through this Budget very carefully. I am not saying I am a very intelligent person but in 2015 when the Secretary was Richard Neeves, I was one of the Committee members on the task force to set out ways to support how we are going to improve our set-up of the Budget. In those days there was only one Book but this one Book was very thick and when the Members of Parliament look at this Book it puts them off from reading it.

So, during our discussion we actually said there should be three books and we suggested that Book 3 should be on CAPEX and POBOCs. This is the Capital and also the money under POBOC. And this year's budget Book 1 was the same during our time and the same for Book 2. So, this is what I have come to understand with the allocation of our appropriation.

So, I stand here to fully support this Budget as there is an increase especially with the remuneration of the staff and this is all that I would like to speak on this allocation and I have another engagement to go to. God bless us all.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Member. Sorry Honourable Member, we have come to the end of Parliament today.

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

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

I move:

**That progress on the Bill through the Committee be
reported back to Parliament**

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I shall now put the Question. The Question is:

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

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Parliament is now resumed.

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

HON. M. BROWN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to happily report:

That progress in the Committee of Supply is going very smoothly

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Minister.

Thank you very much Honourable Members for your good work today.

Further considerations in the Committee of Supply as Orders of the Day for the next Sitting day.

Honourable Members, we have now come to the end of our meeting for today. Parliament will now adjourn until 9.00 a.m. Monday, 10th June 2019.

As I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa is the first one to speak today and he will end us with a prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you.

Parliament is now adjourned until 9.00 a.m. Monday, 10 June 2019.

Have a happy and safe weekend to all of you. Goodnight.

Parliament adjourned at 5.51 p.m.