



# FORTY-NINTH SESSION

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**MADAM SPEAKER took the Chair at 1:00 p.m.**

### **OPENING PRAYER**

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

I would like to thank our Chaplain this afternoon for visiting us once again. He faithfully does this in ensuring that he leads us in the word of God so we can have a wonderful deliberation of the business of the country.

Honourable Members, I welcome each and every one of you into this Honourable House today and thank you very much for your hard work in the last few days of our double sittings. I am sure your families will be happy when today's deliberation is over. Your families, your children, grandchildren will be happy to have you home for dinner.

I also welcome this afternoon our guests in the Gallery. It is wonderful to see our officials who are very interested in what we are going to be doing today and also our media.

Kia Orana to each and every one of our people in the Northern Group, Southern Group, and here on Tumutevarovaro – we say– greetings to you all. May you have a wonderful day listening to Parliament on the radio today.

### **MADAM SPEAKER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Just a couple of announcements.

First, thank you very much. We have now completed each Member's photo but not all the biography sheets have come back. Please make sure we can get those straightaway.

We will begin the day with our Question Time.

### **QUESTION TIME**

I see the Honourable William Heather.

**HON. W. HEATHER:** Thank you Madam Speaker.

I seek leave that the one hour of Question Time be reduced to half an hour today.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much and as I see no objection, leave is granted.

Now we will begin and I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Crown Law.

During the time I was a public servant years ago there was some talk circulating. Some of the things that were talked about were for the Government to look into people that were practicing law, our lawyers. There was a plan to bring all the lawyers together to centralise them under the guidance of the Crown Law. Today almost all of the departments of government have their own individual lawyers but not only that, there are lawyers that do work for other departments as well.

So, my question is this, is this practice still happening today?

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

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you Madam Speaker and thank you Honourable Member for the very good question.

Madam Speaker, Crown Law is one of the central agencies of Government that provides sound legal advice to the Crown. Actually the question is quite timely because the current Solicitor-General is due to finish off his contract at the end of this year and we are in the process of looking for a new Solicitor-General. Also our Crown Law is part of the Pacific Law Officers Association and they will be hosting the annual get-together of the Pacific Islands Legal Officers in two weeks' time.

It has always been Government's intention to have the best legal advice and advisers in Crown Law and we have been fortunate to date that we have received those sound legal advice from Crown Law.

Yes, there's a lot of our young graduates coming back qualified lawyers and there is a temptation and sometimes a need for departments to have their own legal adviser. In fact I am aware that the Ministry of Marine Resources, for example, has their own in-house legal adviser which makes sense in many ways because there is a lot of demand for legal advice at various regional and international meetings.

However, the trend now is to consolidate legal advice and advisers within Crown Law, to centralise the legal services. I think that is very important because we want the legal advice to be consistent emanating from the same source and that is the trend at this current moment, Madam Speaker and Honourable Members and it is a trend that Government is encouraging.

You see, there have been problems in the past because of advice that has not been sought from Crown Law. In fact some heads of Ministries or senior officials have gone off on their own tangent and committed Government to various things without seeking legal advice from Crown Law.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, you will see in the Crown Law appropriation that there is provision for an item which really is a serious indictment on a certain senior official in this Government. In fact I see that there is an appropriation of \$1.5 million. That is

because over ten years ago a certain senior official committed this Government to a proposal without obtaining legal advice first and now we are scrambling to take care of that problem.

But to come back to the question. Yes, Honourable Member, the trend now is to consolidate legal services and legal advice within Crown Law and that is why there is an increase in the allocation sought for Crown Law in order to accommodate this necessity.

Thank you.

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

I see the Honourable Kitai from Aitutaki. You have the Floor.

**MR M. KITAI:** Thank you very much Madam Speaker. Greetings to us all in the Name of Our Lord.

I would like to say thank you to the Prime Minister for tar sealing the road in Aitutaki. I would first like say thank you and then I will ask my question.

Prime Minister I would like to pose a question as to whether you are aware of the progress of the roads work in Aitutaki today. You know that the Ministry of ICI and the Island Council of Aitutaki are working together. This is my request as there is an arrangement for the workers to be returned to Rarotonga this coming October. This is a request from my constituency and I am just delivering their message.

There are two roads that have not been sealed. There are lots of metal and there is left over bitumen and if possible for these two roads to be sealed. They guaranteed that at the end of November this work will be completed. This is what they told us, these are our people asking not mine alone, but all of us. Some day you will come to Aitutaki and you will travel on those roads that I am talking about. Therefore I want your answer on that, thank you.

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

**HON. H. PUNA:** The voice is really soft and I like what the Honourable Member has said that ICI is working together with the Island Government and I asked but I don't think he heard whether the Island Government is working together with ICI?

Honourable Member, Aitutaki is really greedy. It has been nearly two years that the sealing work on the road has been going on and Atiu, Mitiaro, Mauke and Mangaia are still waiting. What I am afraid of is that the sealing will go straight into your houses.

When I came for the opening of the tar sealing of the main roads the Mayor asked if the roads from Vaipeka to Pirake and from Amuri and also Tautu and to Vainamu. He said when that is completed he said, Aitutaki will be happy. But now I can hear there are new roads.

You are correct there are left over bitumen but what I know this last weekend there is not enough metal and that is slowing down the work. The meaning of this is Amara has left the sealing work and gone to crush the metal. Where are the workers from the crusher? That is why I asked the question whether the Island Government is working together with ICI. This is not what has been shown but just to answer your humble question Honourable Member, go

back to Aitutaki during the weekend and go and meet Amara and then come and see this gentleman here and talk with him. But don't be greedy as you have had your chance, two years. That is the answer, it is not a no but come and meet.

I know the Member for Arenikau has been to Aitutaki and his job is done. He didn't beg in this House but he asked over there. Good luck to you.

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

**MRS T. MATAPO:** Greetings on this beautiful afternoon.

Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Internal Affairs. I have spoken in this House about the status of the aging population on Mangaia. My question to the Honourable Member is does Government have any ways to help the elderly people who cannot afford caregivers. If there are any way and what are they. Thank you.

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

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Greetings Madam Speaker and greetings to all our colleagues in the House today. Because we will be discussing the Internal Affairs Budget today hence the reason I have asked the Secretary Anne Herman to be present in the House.

Madam Speaker, Internal Affairs have an allocation of \$100,000 and this budget is allocated for the disabled and all those elderlies who are facing hardship and the request from the Member of Parliament is directed at paying for caregivers. There is a budget allocated for assisting caregivers.

Further to that the \$100,000 that I was mentioning, applicants especially those who are handicapped or disabled or who are elderly can access up to about \$5,000 to support those to build a ramp for easy access and for elderly to improve the toilet system that they have in their house.

Each of the Outer Islands have a welfare officer appointed and each and every one of our Outer Islands Members of Parliament are encouraged to see your welfare officer, identify those families or elderly that require this assistance and submit an application to the Secretary so that payments and arrangement can be made either for the payment of the builder or for the purchase of the material.

If the Member of Parliament for Tamarua is happy I will ask the Secretary of Internal Affairs to remain during our break so that they can have that time to elaborate more. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**MRS S. NAPA:** Greetings Madam Speaker and to each and every one of us in this Honourable House greetings to us all. The question I am about to ask is either for the Minister of Internal Affairs or the Prime Minister.

We can see the problem of fires on our island. What I see is that this problem of homes catching fire is happening to the houses that are old. People are talking and asking as to how

these fires started, and whether there are people deliberately burning these houses or if they are electrical faults.

When you get the Inspectors from Te-Aponga-Uira to check the wiring of these old houses and to have it re-wired, it costs a lot of money. My question here is whether Government can find some assistance for the people who have old houses and the owners cannot afford to re-wire their houses. This especially goes to the homes that are owned by old people with children. I can see that the houses that are burnt this is happening at the time when there is no one at home and they have left and gone to work. So I ask if the Government can help maybe from Te-Aponga-Uira or Internal Affairs.

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

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Thank you Honourable Member Selina Napa for your question. I also received a request from the Member of Murienua of a similar nature.

I held a meeting with the Secretary of Internal Affairs raising that same issue that has been raised by Honourable Members Selina Matenga and Nooroa Baker. The answer from the Secretary is that Internal Affairs normally don't get involve with providing full financial assistance to those victims whose house is burnt.

However, what their office has done is to liaise closely with coordinators who were coordinating recent fire in Arorangi and I have left that discussion with the Secretary to continue that dialogue with the coordinators in Arorangi.

Coming back to the question raised by the Honourable Member for Titikaveka. I believe that the funding of \$100,000 that I have been raising before is the type of funding that can be looked at especially if we are dealing with elderly and disable. Again, I will leave it to the Honourable Member to discuss with the Secretary whether the situation she is raising its criteria that this fund has been allocated to cover. I will be happy if the Honourable Member can talk with the Secretary to elaborate more on that. Thank you.

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

**MRS S. NAPA:** I do not have a supplementary question but I have another question to ask.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** If no one else has a question that is okay.

**MRS S. NAPA:** My question is to the Minister for BTIB. When he was under his former umbrella the Corrective side, I heard him ask this question last year to Government. My question is, whether he has allocated money for tithe from his portfolio.

Secondly, now that he is in Government, can he press on his Government to put tithing aside?

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

**HON. G. ANGENE:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to all Honourable Members. Thank you also for the question Honourable Member for Teimurimotia. The question is whether I have allocated tithing for God. The simple answer Honourable Member is, "I will ask to the Heavens and he will tell us". Honourable Member, God says, I

don't require your offering but your heart and love. You will find that in Hebrews 5:13. We must not have a greedy heart in this world and must be satisfied in what we do, God says. I will not abandon you and He will not abandon us.

With regards to the question as to whether I have allocated money for tithing from portfolios under my responsibility, I will assure you that I did not because you are putting me in a position to break the law. I will be breaking the law if I put aside some money for tithing for God.

You also asked me whether I asked my Government for tithing, I did not ask my Government because I am an OCIP and this Government is CIP in coalition.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Members. That brings our Question time to the end.

Now, let me remind you something before we begin. Our staff at the back working on the microphone have asked that if you're going to talk between yourselves while somebody else is talking, write your message on a piece of paper and pass it on because these microphones are so sensitive and you might say something you do not want the public to hear so it is best if you do not talk. Write a piece of paper and pass it along, there is a bit of noise around here and it makes it very difficult for our Hansard people, the stenographers to do their work. So please, I will be very happy with you if you make their work easier.

We will now go to Orders of the Day.

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

Orders of the Day is the interrupted debate on the Appropriation Bill on Day 3 of the Committee of Supply. The Question:

#### **That the sum of \$16,071,733 for Health stands part of the Schedule?**

I see the Honourable Mark Brown.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you Madam Speaker, I believe we need to resolve into the Committee of Supply.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I am about to do that. What I am doing is telling you what the Order of the Day will be. So if that is not a problem I shall continue.

As per Standing Orders 306, we will now resolve Parliament into the Committee of Supply.

### **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY – DAY 3**

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Yesterday, we only had a little bit of time left over for Health. So the Honourable Tingika had the Floor so if you could please round up because we will need to give the time to the Minister to finish off that item.

You have the Floor Honourable Member.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Thank you Madam Chair. Last night when I spoke, I gave my full support to the Appropriation Bill for the Ministry of Health and to thank my Honourable colleagues in the Opposition for giving their strong support to this Vote Item. Before we adjourned last night, I mentioned that I only have a small issue to talk about which I will do that now.

However Madam Chair, I would like to share with you my delight before we started our sitting this afternoon. I was very happy when the Leader of the Opposition moved a Motion to reduce Question Time so that we can spend more time talking about the Appropriation Bill before the House. We all understand that the spirit behind this is to benefit our people.

Madam Speaker, I am very hopeful that they will continue with the same spirit until we pass the Appropriation Bill so our people can reap the benefit from what we have allocated in this Budget. We must not waste our time making worthless comments in here but to utilise our time well so our people can benefit from what we have appropriated to them. We can come back next time and boast about our own efforts. Based on that good spirit Madam Chair, I will not be long with my comments.

I would just like to talk about the referral system in our country. We can see what has been appropriated and we must not think that this is a lot of money. Based on the comments made by the Honourable Members for Matavera and Akaoa, this allocation is insufficient. Therefore, I give my full support to their comments made by these two Honourable Members and believe that they will continue their full support to this Vote Item because this issue not only affects our referral patients from here to New Zealand but also from the Outer Islands to here in Rarotonga.

The reason I raised this concern Madam Chair is because I do not want to see pregnant women referred from Pukapuka to here in Rarotonga on Papa Tapi's boat. I want them to be referred from Pukapuka to here on the jet, like me. So therefore, Madam Chair, this is my plea in terms of the patients, in particular the pregnant women from Pukapuka, not to be transferred here on boats but to be flown down.

So therefore Madam Chair I am supporting together with the other Members that this Appropriation Bill be passed.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Honourable Member and I give the Floor now to the Minister of Health.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Thank you Madam Chair and all your staff and the Honourable Members in the House. A special thank you to all our friends in the Gallery – the Secretary of Marae Ora. Thank you for your patience of sitting up last night until 10.00 p.m. and you are back again this morning. And also to the father of Justice, Papa Nono Tearea and of course Anne Herman from the Ministry of Internal Affairs – greetings to you all.

And to all of you who have shared your views on the appropriation for Health. I say thank you to you all for your support and your great ideas. As we all know and acknowledge this is one of the most important aspects of our nation and this is the concern for all our people every day and every night and we have been affected with all these diseases without us realising that we have it every day.

To our Honourable Member, Nooroa Baker, I extend to you from myself, the Secretary of Health and all the Ministry of Health staff our greetings and apology for what has happened to your wife and your families and to all our people who have gone through this experience and are still going through this issue. This apologies is from all our doctors and nurses and staff of Health. We want to convey to you that we are prepared to improve our health for the future.

Before I give my greetings to all the staff up at the hospital, I would like to convey my greetings to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and all the Ministers especially to the Minister of Finance. To Garth Henderson and Angelia Williams-Tangapiri and all your staff, thank you for putting this budget together and for supporting an increase in the allocation for the Ministry of Health. Thank you also to the Secretary of Health for co-ordinating and organising things so that the increase in the Health budget looks good.

As we can see, there is a huge amount of increase for the Ministry of Health this year. Although it is a huge amount, it is still insufficient for the Health services. So thank you again to the Members of the Opposition for your support in this budget.

Madam Chair, I want you to know that there are over 300 staff working for the Ministry of Health comprising of the Secretary, Aumea Herman-Tepai, and all those under her supervision, as well as the doctors, nurses and the newly trained nurses. I would also like to convey special greetings to all the retired nurses who are now reinstated to serve our people. To all our dental doctors and all your staff and to our public health staff whom are also tasked to visit our clinics around the island, Kia Orana. To the Cleaners and the Cooks, greetings to you all. You are also important because you also have a part to play in ensuring that your responsibilities are carried out.

I want to make special mention about the event for the Te Maeva Nui. As we can recall, many people visited the island during that time. We encountered events where some people suddenly encountered health issues but our staff at the Ministry of Health did their best to address these issues at the hospital. This has drawn our attention and that of the Secretary of Health to put in place future planning to ensure that we have enough doctors and nurses at the hospital.

Also with doctors and nurses visiting our schools in Rarotonga to check rheumatic disease on children from age 5-6, the result revealed that one out of three children has been affected with this disease. Thank you for your work and effort in doing the health check on 505 of our children. We still have more children to be checked so I am making a plea to all the parents to allow their children to be checked. Although they didn't turn up during the time when they were visited by the staff of health, doctors are still available at the hospital so please make an appointment to see Dr May. She will organise a time and appointment so your baby can be checked.

To all our patients up at the hospital as well as the Pa Enuu, I give you all my greetings. You have the nurses and doctors to look after you.

I will now come back to the appropriation for Health. I do not have much to say but you can see the appropriation for Health before the House.

I would like to express my views on the issue of flying doctors, the doctors and the nurses. I am happy to advise that this has been started on Mitiaro because there is a slight problem in Mitiaro. With regards to our Northern Group Islands, I would like to advise you all not to worry because the same service will be provided to you starting next year.

Coming back to the issue on mental health, I want to confirm that the accommodation for our mental health people is up at the hospital. The delay is the workers from CIIC as they are committed to other jobs. However, we have an appropriation already in place and the support from the Justice Department to help with the doctor in charge of this area in providing assistance to mental health patients that are being sent to Prison and also those in the homes on our island. So this is great news for us and our people listening in.

I will now talk about the disease called NCD. Although it has not been mentioned, we all understand the effect that NCD have on our people.

Next week the nurses from around the Pacific Region will meet and discussions on NCD will be the main agenda. The main focus is for doctors and nurses to lead by example. So I would like to extend an invitation to our people, if you are available, please attend and provide input.

I will come back to the issue on referrals from the Pa Enea as well as to New Zealand. Before us is the appropriation which includes a list of requests submitted by the Member for Pukapuka. I will not go through them because it will consume time. The allocation is still insufficient but we will work to increase this. Thank you very much for your support.

The Secretary of Health and I will be travelling to Auckland with the support of Government to meet with doctors and organisations to find ways to help our people going to New Zealand with accommodation and to reduce their cost of living in New Zealand. We will also try and do the same for our people from the Pa Enea coming to Rarotonga to live.

To conclude my views, I would like to bring to this House my last comments on the appropriation for the Ministry of Health. I would like to acknowledge and to say thank you to Pa Ariki for the discussions with Government about providing an accommodation for our elderly people on Rarotonga. This good lady has given a land to Government to build a house for our elderly people and Government needs to work with some organisations to seek assistance to complete this project.

Today Agriculture and Health are working together to try and find ways to help our people especially focussing on growing natural food in the agricultural sector and encouraging our people to take care of their bodies by buying the natural products and eating right. So I provide my full support for this allocation with the hope that we will be able to increase this Vote Item again in the future.

Thank you and God bless you all.

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

**That the sum of \$16,071,733 for Health stands part of the schedule?**

**Motion agreed to**

We will now go to Infrastructure Cook Islands.

INFRASTRUCTURE COOK ISLANDS:

The Question is:

**That \$5,785,664 for Infrastructure Cook Islands stands part of the Schedule?**

I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you to all of us in this House. The message from our Pastor earlier today encourages us in this House to work together.

Madam Chair, I would like to say thank you to the Minister of Finance as well as the Minister responsible for Infrastructure because when I look at all the appropriations before us today there are increases in all areas.

For example, if we look at the payment for our staff at ICI, and when we look at the Budget Madam Chair, it is over two million dollars increase appropriated compared to last year. When we look at the outputs for ICI, there are increases under all these outputs compared to last year.

When we look at Corporate Service there is an increase of over \$119,000. When we look at Regulatory Services there is an increase of over \$14,000. Under planning and design, it is over \$700,000 increase.

When we look at civil works, there is over \$1.3 million dollars increase. That is why I say, Madam Chair, I want to say thank you to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of ICI.

Madam Chairman, when I look at our workers at ICI, it has been a very long time since they received this kind of appropriation. I know that and so do the Leader of the Opposition. I feel sorry for those who have retired without benefiting from a salary increase. This is the reason I want to thank the Minister of Finance and the Minister for ICI for allocating some money to adjust the salaries of our staff at ICI.

Therefore, my request to you Minister is that there are still some workers in ICI who have served the Ministry for a very long time but their wages are still low. One example, although this person is from my constituency, and I quote Papa Iotia Atera. It has been a very long time, 30 years to be actual, he has been paid the same salary. So please I urge the Minister to look at this and maybe give an increase to this long serving employee, not too much maybe \$40,000.

I also would like to make mention of one of my friends who is in charge of the road sealing. Although he is also from my constituency, this is my friend Amara Tutakiao. I know they are listening in as they are beginning their work. So my humble request to you Minister is to please give this employee an increase maybe of about \$45,000.

I also look at the elderly who are nearly at their retirement age. I also know in the Ministry of ICI, there are some employees who are nearly 60 years of age. Why don't you grant them another three years and maybe give them a salary package ranging between \$35,000 to \$40,000 because they have served our country well. I think this is the appropriate time to provide our support for these long serving workers. I am not worried about any other department just this one because they have served us for a very long time.

Madam Chairman, I will come back to the outputs under this allocation. When I look at Corporate Services, I take this area into consideration because they manage so many divisions and the work of ICI. I see that you have given them a significant increase of over \$119,000. I know there are some older and long serving workers there who are nearly retiring. Please consider providing them with some financial support.

Under output Planning and Design, this is one of the most important areas for regulating the work that is done in our country. Therefore I fully support this significant increase of over \$700,000.

I will now talk about Civil Works. Under the program for tar sealing roads on Rarotonga, there is an asset management plan. I believe the Minister and I agree on this program of tar sealing the road on Rarotonga. That is why I asked you right at the beginning Minister when we started Parliament, to start this program in Takitumu but we start from the head of the fish of Tangiia.

That should be the arrangement Minister because we cannot do away with history, culture and tradition. Our ancestors have likened Takitumu to the fish of Tangiia. The head of the fish starts at Matavera and the stomach of Tangiia's fish is Ngatangia. Teimurimotia, my sister here, is the tail of the fish whose special task is to fan the movements of the fish of Tangiia.

Therefore Honourable Minister, I want to assure you that today I give my full support to this appropriation for ICI. But please Minister do not begin the work at the tail end of the fish of Tangiia, but start with the head and then working through the rest of the fish of Tangiia.

Another submission Minister is on the Capital Projects of the Outer Islands. Under Goal 5, it was set for the program of tar sealing to begin with the island of Aitutaki and after it will begin in Atiu.

I am not aware if this is your arrangement or the whole of Government but may I request please include the island of Mangaia in this program maybe not this year but certainly in the future. I am not worried about Mauke just leave her to be last in this tar sealing program.

To end my thoughts Minister, I thank you for this allocation as well as to the Minister of Finance.

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

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

Firstly, I would like to give my congratulations to one of my female workers at my Captain Tama Tour office who gave birth to a healthy boy. A new citizen of the Cook Islands. I do not know how much the new born are being paid today. Maybe she will receive a double bonus because she works for Captain Tama.

Madam Speaker, in line with that of the Member for Matavera, the head of the fish of Tangiia. When I look at the budget for ICI, I am very happy that some areas have been increased. It is right to increase these areas because these projects have not been completed last year. My only request to the Government is that all the projects that have been approved must be completed this year.

For example, the road improvements for Atiu, the Mitiaro water upgrade, Omoka harbour development in Tongareva, the Mangaia project and the Aitutaki water gallery. We are approving all of these allocations for these projects but they are not completed. However my only concern is that the Atiu airport development is not in the allocation for this year. If I do not see it in this year's Budget it means it is not in the Appropriation for this year. If it is in there, it should show that this project for Atiu is in the Budget allocation. Therefore it is not in there.

We look at \$9.5 million on page 124, within this are resources for this agency. However, when I look at storm water drains, because one of our projects in NES we are requesting from those who are excavating hills, mountains and waterways for new buildings on Rarotonga. To the actual engineer conducting the plans for these people to include a storm water drain for their land. In many cases what happens is that during heavy rains the soil are eroded and these are moved onto other people's section of land.

When we look at page 128, Rarotonga culverts and it reads, the culverts in Nikao will be made and also on this page it say, the storm water drains of Tereora will be constructed. Madam Chair the last time I looked Nikao and Tereora are the same places. Why are they saying the culverts of Nikao and the storm water drains of Tereora will be constructed? There are so many other places on the island that requires culverts. One of our discussion was about the widening of the road at Ngatangia and the water drainage.

We know that around Rarotonga all our roads during the heavy rain it will be full of water. And this should come under town planning in ICI especially those who approve building permits. That is the reason I am recommending that through them this new initiatives for us to take good care of our lands. When I look through all these documents I am happy of the new initiatives that will be done for our people. Particularly the cyclone centers in the Outer Islands because these islands of ours are low-lying islands.

I wanted to tell the Prime Minister that I lived in the Outer Islands for two years. Because he did say that unless you live in the Outer Islands for some time. Then you will know what they are talking about.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** May I interrupt you as it is now our break time. Parliament is now suspended until 3.00 p.m.

**Sitting suspended at 2.29 p.m.**

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

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Please be seated.

Welcome back Honourable Members. We are now in our Committee of Supply and we will continue with the debate on the Vote Item for Infrastructure Cook Islands and the Honourable Tama Tuavera had the Floor.

**MR T. TUAVERA:** Thank you Madam Chair.

The kuru soup was so nice but our people in the kitchen are quite smart because they made us use a fork instead of a spoon. It is the first time for me to see soup eaten with a fork. We will be moving forward on our debate on our Appropriation. Madam Chair, Captain Tama's boat was on full speed earlier but when we had that lunch my mind was blown off course.

I just want us to go back to the Capital Projects item. I am quite happy because some of the projects here we have discussed that in the past and now has been brought back into Parliament. What I know there has been a plan shown to me for the wharf in Omoka and I am so happy that it's been put into this Appropriation. When we look at it, we can see that Omoka will be a good deep sea port. I am not going to dwell and say any more about Omoka because it is not my island, even though I have family on those islands, I do not have to say anything for them.

I will bring us back here in Rarotonga. I can see here the Appropriation for Rarotonga. There has been a lot of money allocated for the roads. I can see one is the Rarotonga Road Asset Management and the budget for that is \$2 million. And for the Rarotonga Muri road widening and Rarotonga Road Network Maintenance. For the last project I mentioned it was in the Budget of last year and now I cannot see that in this appropriation for 2018-2019.

In my opinion, they should not be using the money from the Rarotonga Road Network Management appropriation to fix the Road Asset Management because it is not right to use this money elsewhere. It might end up like last year and we did not finish our capital projects.

This is all I have to say Madam Chair.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Tetangi Matapo. You have the Floor.

**MRS T. MATAPO:** Greetings Madam Chair and all our Honourable Members.

Firstly, I would like to bring some thoughts on our Appropriation for Infrastructure. I can see in this Appropriation that there is an allocation in here for Tamarua for the water system but I am saddened because there is still major work in Tamarua for the roads and water. In the past we have not been hearing any talk on road improvements in Mangaia. It is really sad to see that there is no allocation for the roads in Mangaia. Maybe it will be in the 2020 Budget. Oh, well, if we come to 2020 maybe the cars and bikes will be in the holes.

The question here is where is the money from the 2017-18 Appropriation? What about all the workers that came over to Mangaia for the projects? There is a common saying by the people of Mangaia about people coming from Rarotonga to Mangaia for Government work. This is

what the people in Mangaia will always say, our project money has been spent on the airfares of these people flying over from Rarotonga.

I have met with the Minister of ICI and I asked him about the projects for Mangaia and I am grateful that the Appropriation is here and the project will be completed.

Regarding the tar sealing of the Mangaia road, the tar is ready and the quarry machines has been relocated but nothing yet is happening. If we are going to wait until 2020 all this machinery will rust. Maybe there is an issue between the ICI and the Island Council. Maybe the people of Mangaia are too lenient and just say yes, yes. To me it is proper for ICI and Island Council to negotiate on all project and also to make known to the people of Mangaia as to what is happening.

This is my thoughts concerning the water in Tamarua because in the past there was someone that came to Mangaia to do some work and discuss with the people as to how to improve the water for Mangaia. Because it is them that lives on the island and in the village. It is the local people that knows what is going on and knows what would be wrong and right. By the time they started on this project, the proposals given by the people was never considered in the implementation of the project. I am so worried for the people and their voice for the island. Today I met with the Minister of ICI and asked that I be included in the plans by ICI for my constituency. I am happy this was agreed.

I am not sure about those Ministers before and I can see in this Appropriation an allocation of \$10,000 allocated for the central water system for Mangaia. I am not sure what this allocation is for because when we say central water for Mangaia that is referring to Oneroa. Madam Chair, I do not know as to what this money will be spend on and that is the reason I am asking. I have other thoughts and views to put to the House but my time is up.

Thank you very much.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much and I see the Honourable William Heather. You have the Floor.

**HON. W. HEATHER:** Thank you very much Madam Chair.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Honourable Member, Vaitoti Tupa for saying good things about the Budget. I just want to touch on the planning and building of houses for our people. We can see that we are coming into the cyclone season and as mentioned by the Honourable Member Tupa earlier, the people who do the work on the roads they are the same people that are called to work during the cyclone season to clear fallen trees on the road to enable the ambulance to get to the hospital. Therefore I thank this Member for recommending an increase of pay for these workers.

Madam Chairman, I am familiar with the kind of work these people do because I have done this kind of work before. There is always dust, and you sweat and other things that are hazardous to our life. You are working with hot bitumen and when a hose is broken you will get burnt by the tar. The danger allowances which were paid to the men was cut during the time I was working at the Ministry. We all just worked for the love of the country.

We know in 1996 the number of workers was cut and that is what happened and there was no more danger allowance or dust allowance paid to the workers.

I want to talk about the road that leads to the sanatorium. Our Appropriation refers to all the roads of Rarotonga but it does not show if the road to the sanatorium is included. When you drive up to the hospital if there is a vehicle coming down you have to stop so that the other vehicle can pass because the road is narrow. The drain is quite wide and this made the road narrow. I want to ask the Minister to look into this problem. If this road can be sealed by Chris Vaile then we will have a good road to go to the hospital.

I also want to talk about the Te Mato Vai Project the \$30 million dollars that the Minister is talking about that will be spent on the Te Mato Vai project. I want to ask if an amount of money can be set aside to investigate underground water for Ruaau and Nikao. If this can happen this will help with agriculture and animal husbandry in Ruaau and Nikao.

We know in the past the watermelons grown in Takitumu are big because they have enough water but the ones grown in Ruaau are small because there is not enough water.

I want to talk about solid waste. I am looking at the Appropriation and I cannot see that. We know that our waste dump is filling up and it is time to look for another area for dumping our waste. We have lots of cans and bottles going to the dump and maybe we did not sort our rubbish earlier that is why this area filled up fast. I say thank you to T & M for doing this at this time.

I want to talk about liquid waste. This system is in Ruaau and the problem is at the Blue shop in Ruaau. When this area is flooded the waste from the system at the Blue shop overflows into the stream and run down into the lagoon.

One of my relatives complained about this because that is our land and he complained because the waste was not looked after properly. He is right with what he is saying because we are not doing our job, the Government and all of us including the Member of Parliament.

Lastly, I want to bring the request of the former Member of Parliament for Mangaia, Papa Pukeiti on sealing the road of Mangaia. Papa Pukeiti is no longer with us but I am asking for the roads of Mangaia to be fixed on his behalf. Thank you very much and God Bless us all.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much and I see the Honourable Minister Rose Brown.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to give some thoughts on the appropriation for ICI and to support it. Because some Members in this House have talked about the roads and the cry from the Members for Mauke, Mangaia and Aitutaki so I do not want my people in Atiu to think that the Honourable Member Tehani and I have forgotten the roads for Atiu.

The Honourable Member for Ngatangia said that there is no appropriation for the airport of Atiu I want to thank the Government and also the Minister of Infrastructure and ask the Honourable Members especially the Member for Mauke to be patient because Atiu has been earmarked after Aitutaki. I want to ensure my people of Atiu that it will not be long maybe at the end of October the machinery will be on Atiu to start the work on our roads. In regard to

the airport even though it is not in this Appropriation but the plan is when the road is completed then we will move on to the airport. So thank you to the Minister of Infrastructure and your workers and we will wait for the time when you go to Atiu and work together with the people on the island. Thank you.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you and I see the Minister of ICI.

**HON. R. TAPAITAU:** Greetings Madam Chairman and greetings to all Honourable Members in this House. Let me just say that all the Honourable Members that are talking about the condition of their roads have forgotten where this particular Member of Parliament comes from. I think instead of tar sealing the roads on Tongareva, Rakahanga, Manihiki, Pukapuka and Nassau, the Northern Group islands, we will have concrete roads. As referenced by the Member for Matavera, we start from the head and work down all the way to the tail and that is just a comment for fun.

On a serious matter concerning the views raised by the Member of Parliament for Ruaau, I take working dangerously really seriously. Safety was introduced to me in the last fifteen years when I worked in Australia and I know the hardship he talks about when you have a crew out there in the hot sun working with tar and all that stuff. We have a plan to introduce correct PPE and PPE is the dress code.

He also spoke about the allowances that have been cut off during his time, let us know what the danger allowance was as we have reintroduced the wet allowance back into the system. I am also a Minister who does not sit in the office. So for those out there who think that I just sit here and do nothing, I can give you my CV to show all the projects that I have done in the past in Australia.

This man in front of me called the Action Man, I am just behind him and I do not want to be above him. In saying that, all the issues and concerns that the Members have raised, ICI has already hit the ground running.

With regards to the comments made by the Honourable Member for Matavera, even though Papa Iotia Atera and Papa Amara Tutakiao reside in Matavera where I also reside, I was brought up by the Member of Parliament for Matavera. We are considering of putting something in place for public servants who have served our country for twenty to thirty years. I know Papa Iotia when I was still a young fellow, he was already working in the Ministry of Infrastructure. It is sad for me to return home and now I am a Minister of Infrastructure, Papa Iotia is unwell. Papa Iotia be strong.

ICI's vision is to ensure infrastructure development to meet the needs and aspirations of the people of the Cook Islands and not the aspirations of the Minister.

As the Minister for Infrastructure, I am honoured and also privilege to be in the most popular and talked about Government agency at the moment. At the moment I feel like a rock star. I would like to bring an example to the House; there is a mango tree that has very sweet fruits. And a lot of people want to eat the sweet mango so, they throw the mangoes on the tree with rocks to get the fruits to fall on the ground. That is where the Ministry of ICI is at the moment.

From day one, I worked closely with the ICI team to gain an insight of the good, the bad and the ugly. So whatever happened in the past, and I know most of your concern is from the past, let us leave it in the past. Let us look to the future and what result we can produce going forward because I will turn Infrastructure into a well oiled machine. That can only be done through dedication and cooperation from my team and to all the stakeholders to achieve great things for this nation.

Some of the problems that we have been having, and I will bring this up, the Aitutaki road project for example. This project started almost two years before I came in here. If there had been cooperation from the start to the end, Aitutaki would have sealed all their roads by now. I will not go into details about the problems, at the moment Aitutaki is almost sealed fifty kilometres of road.

With regards to the Muri road widening for the Member of Parliament for Ngatangiia, like I said in my earlier statement, me and you have to sit down and have a good chat because according to resources from my office, we still need to sort out an agreement between the landowners and us. Just to let all Honourable Members know that if there are land issues which are legal issues, that is not ICI's work programme. We will get in to do your project and get out. So, please Honourable Members let us work together to sort out these other issues besides the project itself. I can go on and on about the problems but a change is going to start now.

I would also like to thank the former Minister for Infrastructure because he has already put in place a strategic plan 2017, so that is something for us to build on. The team at ICI are currently finalising the new Cook Islands Building Code and working towards the final stages of the draft for the Public Infrastructure Bill and Regulations.

This is to set the infrastructure development standards and remedy the challenges highlighted. ICI has also been supported by Government to streamline coordination and communication between ICI and the Pa Enua through the establishment of the Pa Enua Coordinator role, not only for the Pa Enua as a whole but the Pa Enua of the South and the North.

Madam Chair, let me assure Honourable Members of this House that under my watch, I will not be held at ransom for power struggles between ICI and Island Government agencies because these projects will not benefit me as the Minister and ICI, it will benefit your constituency, your community, your island and the whole of the Cook Islands. My team at ICI are there to do our work to benefit all of us. Campaigning time is over, a newly formed Coalition Government has set new directions so let us get on with it. Remember we are here for the people and not ourselves.

I will plea to all Honourable Members of this House, let us work together as a team to achieve results for our people. My door is always open, please come and see me because I want to make it happen and let us make it happen, together we can make it happen. Thank you.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Honourable Minister. I will now put the Question.

The Question is:

**That \$5,785,664 for Infrastructure Cook Islands stands part of the Schedule?**

**Motion agreed to**

Honourable Members, may I just now bring to your attention. We are now only half way with our 27 list. We are now on number 13. So if you would please observe your time used.

We will now go to Internal Affairs.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS:

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$4,091,269 for Internal Affairs stands part of the Schedule?**

I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Chair. Just some thoughts. Maybe I will be the only one that will be speaking on this Appropriation.

I support this Appropriation. I fully support the welfare age to be increased from 12 years to 14 years and in the next fiscal year from 14 year to 16 years of age. I fully support this.

I would like to speak about our pension. As previously mentioned, maybe we should look into partitioning the payment of the pension. As the Government has arranged, when you reach 60 years you are in a certain payment of pension and when you get to 70 years your pension will increase. So here are my thoughts for these arrangements Madam Chair.

If the Secretary, with the Minister, please look at certain gap numbers for our old age pensioners starting from 60-70 years. At 65 to 70 years old, the pension should be increased. So the next increase should be from 70 to 75 years. The previous arrangement should remain the same. I am asking that when you reach the age of 75 to 80 years an increase of maybe \$200 on top of the current pension should be given to this age group.

Those are my views on and I do believe we will support this. I do believe that there are some of you that is going to reach those ages. Likewise for us that are lucky to reach that age.

I return back to Output 4 – Civil Services. Even if there is an increase in this appropriation, I would like to suggest for us to look at this again for this is what makes Rarotonga the best for our people that our roads are looked after properly. I noticed that the areas that are cleaned on our roads is where the bridges are. Otherwise the rest of the streams has not been cleaned. Even if the Minister of Finance is not here but through the Prime Minister this is what I am asking as it is impacting on our tourism. I am speaking to the Minister of Finance as he is the one giving us the money.

I do believe the Minister of Internal Affairs has supported this. I do believe some of these Government Agencies when they come together, for example, Internal Affairs, Cultural Development are supportive of our tourism industry and this includes our beautiful smiling faces, the people of the Cook Islands. That is why there is an increase in tourism because of the agencies working well together.

Those are my views on Civil Services especially with people cleaning our roads and cleaning around our bridges.

There are my thoughts Madam Chair, thank you.

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

**MRS S. NAPA:** Greetings to us all in this House. I will not have too much to talk about but I will speak about the Family Support and Protection Unit which is very close to my heart.

The Family Support and Protection Act was passed as of the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2017 and I see there is an allocation under the Ministry of Internal Affairs for a Family Protection and Support Manager of \$37,000. Whether this position is yet to be advertised or has it already been taken? I really want to find out whether the responsibilities of this person is going to be responsible for the training of each family support staff on each island.

When we travelled to the Outer Islands for public consultation on this Bill, we were asked by the people as how we will be utilising this Bill on the Outer Islands. Maybe someone from the Select Committee will be able to enlighten the House, if it was agreed that there will be a person appointed to train officers in the Outer Islands, especially concerning domestic violence and protecting our children.

Under the Family Support and Protection Bill appropriation only the salary for one staff is highlighted and nothing else. There is also an area which I think is of importance regarding the welfare of our children and elderly which will include the Ministries of Agriculture and Health. I am hoping that a collaborative effort will be made between these two Ministries and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

I do hope that these three Ministries will come and work together in tackling the NCD issues in our country. How are we going to do that is for Internal Affairs to also assist in awareness programmes and look at ways that can curb these problems through funding?

I heard the Minister previously mentioned that there is an allocation of a \$100,000 for hardship support. I would voice that this allocation is not enough because when I do my calculations there will only be about 50 people that will benefit from this. Maybe this hardship support funding should be increased to \$500,000 because if we look at our elderly they are living longer. This allocation, should be enough to improve the toilets and bathroom facilities of our elderly. There are help needed for improvements around the homes where the toilets are outside. So this \$100,000 is not enough to give assistance to our elderly where support are required.

I wish now to speak on the Price Tribunal. I am always asking myself whether the prices of our goods in the shops are right and if the workers from the price tribunal are inspecting the shops on the island to see if their price of goods are the same. When I go into the shops the prices for a can of corned beef are different in all shops. The price of a bottle of Vaiora is different in all the shops.

When I looked at this Book I saw that the sum of \$30,000 was returned from the Price Tribunal back to MFEM. Why has it been returned and not used? These are just questions that I am posing and hopefully we can put it right and there will be an explanation.

Lastly, I know that the Ministry of Internal Affairs are very strong in promoting gender equality. We the women promoting the gender balance and gender equality value want to work together with our men for the benefit of our country.

I know in some areas the men are still dominating the women but at this time I want to swallow my pride and congratulate the Government because they have elected a woman to be a Minister of Cabinet so there is a voice for women in our Cabinet.

As we see in this House of Parliament we need more women to make sure things are balance and the women of our country are happy because today there are five of us women in this House including our Madam Speaker.

The men say that the women folks are stubborn and at the same time we like to work equally with our men folks but I think all of us women in this House know that when it comes to family and home we know who the head of the home and family is. Those are my thoughts, Madam Chairman.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Your time has expired you have two minutes.

**MR M. KITAI:** My question is on welfare. We are talking about the old age pension but that is not my issue, I am going to another side of welfare. We have a widow with the husband dead and now left with two children but the problem is the children are over the age of entitlement for child benefit. The question is do we have any allocation or assistance that can be given to this widow? That is all I have to say and if this is possible, thank you Lord.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you, it is right that you are given two minutes. I see the Minister of Internal Affairs.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you for all the questions from those that raised their issues. I would like to thank the Secretary of Internal Affairs Anne Herman who is present amongst us. I would also like to thank the Deputy Prime Minister and the staff at MFEM for giving Internal Affairs a boost of almost a million dollars increase for this financial year.

Madam Chair, the payments for the old age pension has increased from \$6.5 million in 2017 to \$6.6 million this financial year. So we are looking at about 1,892 people over the age of 60 that is collecting this money and of those 1,892, 1,311 is collecting from Rarotonga.

Just to respond to the Member of Parliament from Matavera query about separating and categorising the age level of collecting old age pension I can see that he is only looking at himself because he is already collecting that pension.

In all seriousness, Madam Chair there is a scoping and review of the welfare system funded together by the Cook Island Government Superannuation Fund working together with the Internal Affairs. The purpose of this study is to see whether there should be a home to be built for those elderly who are unable to look after themselves.

This answers the question posed by the MP Selina Napa, the allocation of \$100 thousand for hardship if increased to \$500 thousand is still not enough because if you convert that into allocations towards each applicant you are only increasing from 20 to a 100 people that will be receiving this fund. So, in another five years' time we will be anticipating of looking after 2,300 elderly in the Cook Islands.

One of the challenges that we will be facing or which we will be currently facing is answering the question from our MP from Tautu. This imposes on the challenges for providing caregivers because the challenge now is there are very few people who have been trained as caregivers in the Cook Islands. Irrespective of that the Ministry of Internal Affairs will continue to provide this support to our elderly both here in Rarotonga and in the Outer Islands.

Madam Chair there are other key policies that the Internal Affairs will have to develop to progress and map the pathway for looking after our people collecting welfare benefits.

As mentioned by the Member for Titikaveka working in collaboration with health, agriculture including CISNOC to develop a physical sports policy to look at the reduction of NCD.

It is also a policy required and we are working together with the Office of the Ombudsman on the issue concerning human rights abuse. There is also the third policy that is looked at which is the national policy framework for child abuse and the fourth policy which I have mentioned before is the welfare review targeted at the elderly.

The Member of Parliament for Titikaveka was questioning about the reason why \$30 thousand has been taken back to MFEM from the Price Tribunal, this is because there is a request from the MFEM to see if they can link this particular position with the Statistics reviewing the cost of living and to factor the necessary cost which will cause an oversight in terms of prices both here and the Outer Islands.

In conclusion Madam Chair the Member for Titikaveka has praised the Government for appointing Honourable Rose Brown as the only female Minister in this Government. I support her wholeheartedly because she is very bias in selecting her Heads of Ministry and she is always going for women. So, congratulations to all the women within this House and in my meeting with the Secretary of Internal Affairs she has posed a request which we have to discuss in Cabinet and to the Prime Minister.

In all our international meetings concerning gender that the delegates be led by a female Minister or women Members within our House of Parliament. And I support that notion.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Honourable Minister and I shall put the Question. The Question is:

**That the sum of \$4,091,269 for Internal Affairs stands part of the Schedule?**

**Motion agreed to**

We will now go to Justice.

JUSTICE:

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$2,702,436 for Justice stands part of the Schedule?**

I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you very much Madam Chair. Honourable Members please bear with me as this is the reason why my constituency elected me to this Parliament to stand and speak for them on issues presented to this House.

I now speak on the Appropriation for the Ministry of Justice. However Madam Chair I am in full support of this Appropriation. I am now looking at the personnel section and the salaries of the staff of this Ministry. I note a considerable increase in this appropriation and that amount is \$178,903.00. I would like therefore to thank the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Justice for this increase which will help the staff of the Ministry.

Also on the Court and Tribunal Services, I see an increase in this area also, an amount of \$139,905.00. I will now come back to their trading revenue, an amount of \$700,000.00. I know a lot of our people are finding it difficult when they go to the Ministry of Justice office. Particularly in paying the fees for doing research on ones entitlement to lands and other services by the Justice. Maybe if we reduce these fees that we charge our people for the services of Justice it will make the burden on our people lighter. If we reduce this \$700 thousand revenue to a lower amount it will cover this area and our people will not be charged a lot of fees when they go to the Ministry of Justice office. This is a real burden on our people paying these heavy fees charged by the Justice department. Maybe this is one way we can make it less of a burden on them.

However I fully support the appropriation for the Ministry of Justice. I have one more issue however to raise with the Ministry of Justice and in particular the area of Occupation Right to lands and the Leasing of Lands and other land matters. Although as a former Secretary of Justice the Member of Parliament for Pukapuka in this office has gone on the radio and in the newspaper to explain all matters related to lands. This is one area that is a problem to our people. Even though funds has been allocated for these area it should always remain a priority area. So our people will not be confused and especially our young people because they are the future of our nation.

I will strongly support for the Ministry of Justice to carefully order this area and make it right to benefit our people. This is the reason I stand Madam Chair to give my views on the needs of the Ministry of Justice in relation to servicing our people and to express my full support to this Vote Item.

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

**HON. W. HEATHER:** Kia Orana Madam Chair. I would like to look at Output 4, prison services. I am happy to note of the increase especially the personnel and salaries of this agency. However I still believe that the wardens of our prison are not paid adequately. We

must remember that they are our first line of defence especially with regards to the prison inmates.

We are aware of some bad experiences in the past related to the prison wardens and inmates. However, this is our way of life, our culture, and we embrace it. I am glad to announce in this House of Parliament that some churches are embracing the inmates and training them life skills. They are taught how to cook, plant different kinds of crops, taught to carve different artefacts, they are taught how to draw and paint and other kinds of training. There are many kinds of training to up skill our inmates.

The only concern here Madam Chair is the wardens looking after these inmates. The wardens are not staying on the job for long, some resigns after a few months or even a year. The wardens continue leaving because the wages and salaries that they are paid is very low.

I would also like to share with you as to what I do in helping these prisoners. At times, I hire their services especially the cleaning of the CICC church yard in Arorangi. I hire maybe three or four prisoners to cut the lawn and clean the yard of the Church. So a percentage of what I pay for their services goes into their bank accounts. So this is what I am happy about that some portion is going back to help them.

If we put our trust in the prison wardens to take care of these prisoners, it will help to retain capable staff members in the Service.

I also would like to highlight in this House, Madam Chair that the home of my younger brother has become a place for prisoners to learn how to cook and I can see improvements in their ability to cook. This is the kind of attitude and work that I am hoping our young offenders will take on as able people in our society.

Madam Chair, through you, I would like to make a request to Government to please consider this area. We also know of some prisoners in the past who wants to play sports. They have been given that opportunity but are taken to these games under the care of a prison warden. We know that not all of them go out and play sport but only those who are authorised to play sports.

Therefore, Madam Chair, in supporting this appropriation, I request the Minister responsible, the Prime Minister, and the Minister of Finance to consider my views.

Thank you.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Honourable Member, and I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate on the Floor. I will give him the Floor.

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

Greetings to us all Honourable Members this afternoon.

Regarding the allocation for the Ministry of Justice, we have discussed this issue in Aitutaki because it extends to us in the Outer Islands. I support the comments made by the Honourable Member for Matavera on the notion of spending money on the people and that is correct.

In terms of the money that our people spend in researching their lands on our islands, the increased charges for the land division had a great impact on the landowners.

On Rarotonga you are able to ring the survey department and lawyers to come and conduct your land business. He has an office, and a vehicle. I believe in Pukapuka Government is hiring these vehicles.

Now the expenditure by the people in the Outer Islands is above the cost of securing their services of the surveyor or a lawyer because they will spend money on airfares for both the lawyer and the surveyor and their transportation – cars or bike – and their accommodation. When they require their services. Our proposed Bill has not even considered this area.

Therefore Madam Chair, I totally support the notion expressed by my colleague to eliminate the fees in the Outer Islands. I do not know if he is speaking only for Rarotonga but I am talking for the Pa Enea.

Secondly, to recommend to the Ministry of Justice to set aside some money from their allocation to bring the surveyor to the islands once or twice a year before the land meetings are conducted. If you are able to do that I am sure the people will be very happy to re-elect you back into this Parliament.

The most important issue is our people and our priority always is that we are able to help them in all matters of life. As expressed by the Prime Minister, some of our leaders do not understand the situation in the Northern Group Islands because they have not experienced the life there.

I have been to the island of Nassau with the Honourable Member, Patrick Arioka. When we got there they were already singing our song. We did not know how to reply to their song but I will ensure that I do not return to this island and that is a different story. The idea here is to help our people to lift this very heavy burden from them in terms of conducting their business with the Ministry of Justice. Thank you.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you. I give the Floor to the Honourable Selina Napa.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Madam Chair, I shall not be long but I want to talk about the allocation of \$54,000 for the Family Law Bill. I am happy with this allocation but there is another area of family support and protection which is way above this allocation. When you look at the proposed Bill regarding Family Support and Protection, the heavy responsibility lies with the Ministry of Justice. First of all, they include domestic violence and abuse of children and women and in terms of retrieving funds for looking after children for those who have left their spouses. That is why I am saying that Justice has a heavy responsibility in this proposed Family Law Bill.

I will now focus my thoughts on the area of Child Maintenance. I am corrected by the Honourable Elikana that it is called, Family Support. Because one of the weaknesses in the Ministry of Justice is going after the maintenance support for those wives whose husbands have left them, while the mothers remain here with the children waiting for the assistance from the husbands working overseas.

Some fathers when they leave for overseas work, they disappear and forget their family here in Rarotonga. This places a very heavy burden on the wives that remain here with the children in seeking ways to take care of their family especially their children. So I am requesting the Minister to explain and clarify what is happening in this section within the Ministry of Justice and whether this has improved.

Now I am looking at the section on Land Administration. It seems the allocation has reduced somewhat. I would have thought this would have increased if they are able to reduce the fees for those requiring service from Justice. However, this has reduced instead of increasing and I have heard the Minister for Justice say that this is one area they will be reviewing.

On the scale of fees at the Ministry of Justice, many people complain with what is happening there. So those are my thoughts for Justice regarding maintenance as well as land fees.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Honourable Member and I see the Honourable Tingika Elikana.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Madam Chair, greetings this afternoon. I will not be long because I can see that the Opposition support the appropriation for the Ministry of Justice. They are correct in their cry because there is a heavy burden on our people.

**MRS S. NAPA:** You raised the fees.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** We do not have to look far because I was the one responsible for reviewing the fee scales for those requiring the services of Justice. There is a right reason why it is like that but we will not go into that now, but maybe next year when we debate the next Appropriation in the House I will further explain to the Members about the reason for those increases. The most important thing for us now is the benefit that our people expect to see.

I just want to touch upon two areas that have been mentioned and this is the fees for land research. We know that the fees collected enable the Land Court to travel to the Outer Islands to hold land sittings. This is one of the issues that I struggle with the finance officials to find funds to allow land sittings in the Outer Islands.

Our people on Aitutaki, Atiu and Mauke are well aware that during my time as Secretary of Justice, Land Court sittings were held on their islands.

Regarding the decisions by the Court as mentioned by the Member from Matavera, I just want to bring to our attention and for us to seriously consider what we really want for our lands because our current law says the land belongs to the family and that means we all own the land. But today, our approach is different and we are moving away from what is provided by the law. The landowners now say the land is mine, it is no longer us.

Therefore, those of you who have asked the family to grant you a piece of land consider that it is your land. Therefore maybe in five years times it does not matter how big the family are you still insist on five acres. These are my thoughts on this area but we shall further look at this in the future.

On the question from the Member of Titikaveka, yes it is right what she is asking on this area and that is protecting the family. This is one of the most important things in our country protection of our families and within our appropriation there is some assistance that has been provided. I support her that this is not enough and should be increased. But as I have said before this is a new Government and we only have a short time and our focus is to ensure that our people reap the benefits from this Budget.

At this point Madam Chair I would like to give my acknowledgment to the staff in this Ministry, the Secretary Papa Nooapii Tearea, the Registrar Claudine Henry and all the staff of the Ministry, work hard but it is not only for yourself but also for the people.

Acknowledgment to our young people in prison. Maybe you heard me before saying that you are able to solve or cure problems. All of you from your head warden, Black Heather I have not come across people who are wise like this in my whole life. In there are people who understand mental health, doctors, lawyers and carpenters. So please work hard in your area as you work for our people. That is why I stood up Madam Chair to express my thoughts as well as to support this appropriation for Justice.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you the Honourable Member for Pukapuka, Nassau and to the Honourable Minister Rose Toki-Brown as it is time to go for a break I will give you the speaking time on return at 7.00 p.m. Parliament is suspended till 7.00 p.m.

**Sitting suspended at 4.56 p.m.**

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

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Please be seated.

Committee of Supply is resumed on the debate on the Appropriation Bill on the agencies and when we suspended the Minister had the Floor, you may continue.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Kia Orana again to you all Honourable Members and Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to the Acting Secretary of Justice, Papa Nono Tearea, the Chief Probation officer Tai Joseph, thank you both for being patient to sit with us and listen to the Vote Item for the Ministry of Justice.

To all the Honourable Members who expressed their views on this Vote Item, I thank you all for your support and contributions.

With regards to the fees that were mentioned earlier on, I am happy to inform this House that we had discussions about this to find a good resolution to reduce the fees affecting our people. We also discussed about other issues which we want to improve in the future.

We also know that soon, the department of Corrective Services will be a department on its own and later on the Minister will talk about this department. Today, both myself and the Minister for Corrective Services will sit down and further discuss about areas that need to be addressed and improved.

I do not have much to say on this area but the Minister of Infrastructure mentioned earlier on that we are all new in our Ministerial roles and also with the portfolios under our

responsibilities. We had a short time to look at the appropriation for our Ministries. However, with the short time given to us, we were still able to make some changes. The most important thing here is our people. Thank you very much.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much Honourable Minister. I will put the Question. The Question is:

**That \$2,702,436 for Justice stands part of the Schedule?**

**Motion agreed to**

We will now move down to Corrective Services.

**CORRECTIVE SERVICES:**

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$150, 000 for Corrective Services stands part of the Schedule?**

I see the Minister responsible. Minister may I ask that you allow the Floor to the Honourable Member Selina Napa and you can round up the contribution because if you speak, no one else can speak.

The Honourable Selina Napa you have the Floor.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Thank you Madam Chair for giving me the opportunity to talk on this Vote Item.

When I look at Book 2, it was actually roped in the Vote Item for the Ministry of Justice. As previously mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, the issue about the salary for workers in this Ministry. Under the Vote Item for the Corrective services, personnel has been allocated \$100,000 to pay staff salaries and yet only \$50,000 is for operation. Can the Minister tell us how many staff members can be paid out of personnel and also if the allocation is sufficient for Corrective Services.

Madam Chair, I am aware that sometimes when new staffs are employed at the Corrective Services, they leave their jobs not long after due to low salaries. This is my concern, if the amount of \$100,000 can pay the number of staff at the department of Corrective Services and how many staff is there. It is important to look at this department carefully because a few months ago a prisoner escaped from prison and sometimes notice is slow to notify our wider public.

My question here then is, why do prisoners escape? Maybe there is staff shortage or maybe the treatment in prison is not good. \$50,000 allocated under operation is a small amount. What can you achieve with a small amount? Thank you.

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

**HON. G. ANGENE:** Thank you Madam Chair. To you and your staff, Kia Orana to you all. To our Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and to us Ministers of the Crown and also

Honourable Members in Government, Kia Orana. Kia Orana also to the Opposition side of the House. To your Leader the Honourable William Heather Jnr, and to all Honourable Members in the Opposition, Kia Orana.

I stand Madam Chair to talk about the spirit of the appropriation for Corrective Services. Before I convey my views about my interest in this area and for this department to be under my portfolio, it is because I am very familiar with the prison and I know how prison runs. You people has never been a prisoner.

Madam Chair and all our radio listeners, before I became Minister, I spent over \$150,000 from Government to renovate the prison. I would like to thank Government for their assistance and above all, the Minister for ICI for giving the support we needed to renovate the prison.

We all know Madam Chair the budget allocated for the Corrective Services. The Honourable Member for Teimurimotia mentioned about \$150,000 for operation. I am not surprise with the comment made that this allocation is insufficient. I believe we are a Christian nation and if we put our trust in God, we will be successful like how Jesus fed the 5,000 people with two fish and five bread. What were left were twelve baskets of food. Therefore, my belief and faith is in God to help the prison.

Money is not important here Madam Chair but our heart and love to help our children. The Leader of the Opposition earlier on said that our prisoners should be taught how to plant. He also spoke about other things but this is not my intention. My desire is to put good sense in their heads so they can change their lives. The Bible verse says, *“Stop doing evil, do good and look for peace”*.

Before we had this Parliament Session I visited the Prison in Arorangi to talk and to share some good things with these prisoners. I asked the Superintendent there to really look after our children in there. I have told those people in there to obey the law because if you break the law, there will be a punishment on the top of that. The reason is because I have been through this. At the end of my bad behaviour is a punishment and I was locked up. For your good work you will get a good pay. So Madam Chair I did not turn away from this responsibility I went to the prison to help and to look after our young prisoners.

This facility in my own belief a place that will shake the land – an earthquake. This is my reason for referring to this prison house as an earthquake. At this moment there is calmness but when one of the inmates escapes, from the prison. There will be a lot of commotion even in our villages the people will be shaking because of these people that have escaped out of prison. That is why I really wanted this Ministry to be under me so I can help. I know Madam Chair that I can do this job. Do not look at the appropriation because I am pretty sure that the Minister of Finance will give me some more money for this when this agency is separated from the Ministry of Justice.

I was not worried when I saw the appropriation in this Budget because I know there will be some money coming from other areas That is why, Madam Chair, I say that this appropriation is good.

That is why the MFEM is not so worried about this because they already know that there are other incomes for this Ministry and I want to tell our Honourable Members in this House and

our people listening in, that every Sunday I always go and visit our prisoners in the Arorangi prison.

On top of that, every time we take a break in our parliament sitting I always go and visit the prisoners and the staff at our Arorangi prison. So to all of you my children in the prison and all the staff there, I will assure you after this meeting I will be coming there to give you a thigh of pork.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Secretary of Justice, even the Chief Probation Officer, for giving time to sit in the public gallery to listen and to give support to our Vote Item.

I just want to ask the Prime Minister and all Honourable Members in here just to give me time and see what I will be bringing back from this Ministry. In the past two weeks the Superintendent of a New Zealand prison together with the New Zealand High Commissioner came to visit me. We discussed about this facility and we are looking into making a difference in there and on top of that I have found someone that can come in here and rehabilitate our children in prison.

Lastly Madam Chair, I want to inform the people regarding our prison and the prisoners. They are living a good standard in prison and eating good food, even their sleeping place is in a good condition. I am not blaming the Minister for the conditions before but this is what I am doing today.

I have explained to our prisoners that they should be happy because when you sleep you have human guards to watch over you but for us at home in our houses we have dogs to watch over us. And I also told them that: “You are not being punished in here. It is your family that is been punished by coming in here to visit you every weekend.” And I truly believe that we cannot change them. All we can do is to give them a good message, and a better message to improve their life.

Madam Chair, I really support this Appropriation in the House today.

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

I will now put the Question. The Question is:

**That the sum of \$150,000 for Corrective Services stands part of the Schedule?**

**Motion agreed to**

We will now go to Marine Resources.

**MARINE RESOURCES:**

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$2,003,443 for Marine Resources stands part of the Schedule?**

I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Chair.

I just want to express my views on this Appropriation and firstly I would like to thank the Minister of Marine and the Minister of Finance for this allocation especially the workers' salary. I can see there is an increase in this of \$107,000. Under this Output 1, Output 2, and Output 3. I can see there is an increase in the offshore allocation of \$73,250. I can see also in Output 2 the pearl industry there is an increase in this program. I can see this allocation will help our pearl farmers in Manihiki. That is the reason I support this Vote Item.

One of the aim of our Government is to improve the quality of our pearl farming in Manihiki. That is why I am so glad that this is under the Ministry of Marine Resources.

I want to touch on the policy and legal services. This is one of the areas that needs to be strengthened in Marine Resources. As the Prime Minister was mentioning earlier about the situation of the lawyers here in the country, so it is right to have a lawyer for the Marine Resources.

The reason being because of for our offshore fisheries and our inshore fisheries that has developed and operated in the past, especially in the offshore fisheries. But we are not to look into what happened in the past but we need to strengthen these areas.

That is why I am happy with this appropriation because in the past there was over \$264,000 and this year it has increased to \$338,178. I believe this is one of the thing that has been strengthened in the appropriation of the Marine Resources. We all know that this helps to feed our people.

I want to commend the Ministry because they are helping the fishermen in our country and I talking about the local fishermen on Rarotonga and the Outer Islands because this aid has come from the Ministry.

I am looking at the help that they are giving to the pearl industry. One of the things that they are doing is to improve the quality of the lagoon in Manihiki. I think this is important to help the pearl farmers for the quality of the lagoon to be good.

That is why I stood up to speak to give my thoughts and I will speak again when the Pearl Authority vote comes before the House. Thank you.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you and I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate you have the Floor.

**MR T. MAOATE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The appropriation for Marine is good. Regarding the income we are getting from fishing, I do not support purse seining in the ocean but the income that we receive from Marine Resources is what I would like to talk about.

I would like to talk about the help that our people are getting with their fishing within the lagoon and in the ocean. In years gone by people have been able to access funds through the Ministry of Marine. But I find that there has been some difficulty in filling in the forms. The funds available is only one thousand dollars but it is very difficult to fill in the forms. I have

helped some people but I was not the Member of Parliament and it is the Member for this Government. This shows the difficulty that people have in accessing these funds.

What I am anticipating is for the Ministry of Marines to look at ways of making the funding available from them easy to access. The Outer Islands people are finding it difficult to send applications to access this fund. This fund when it started people can apply for three thousand dollars and all that is required for people to send in one invoice.

In the Outer Islands there is only one or two shops that sell fishing products. I do believe the Government supports our people that is needing help. But when these forms arrive to the Outer Islands to be filled in, it is difficult and all I see is that the Rarotonga is reaping the benefits. I find that when there is only one shop on the island then people cannot get the three quotes that is needed for their application.

Now the funds have been reduced to one thousand dollars and you only need to get one quote from a supplier. If you want three thousand dollars then you will have to get the quote from Rarotonga and this money then goes back to Rarotonga. I agree with what the Prime Minister said that maybe it is the HOMs who do not understand the life on the Outer Islands. These funds are for the Outer Islands also and not just for Rarotonga. But I am sure these matters can be sorted out by the Minister of Marine.

One problem we encountered when we asked for help the people who put in applications they were approved and they asked for snorkels, flippers, guns and torches. When the things arrived were only flippers and torches. Firstly when we enquired first, we thought it was given to another supplier but there was a problem in the Ministry of Marine. I am only highlighting this fault so that it can be looked into.

This fund that is available to our people is difficult for our people to fill in the forms to access the funds. Secondly, I believe that the people in the Outer Islands know who are entitled to the funds. In the past we have to send the application forms to Rarotonga and they approve it but they do not know who the people applying for the funds are. I do believe a combination of organisations can help for example ourselves, the Government and maybe one from the Outer Islands as well.

I am asking that we all work together regardless which party we are associated with because life on the Outer Islands is quite difficult. So, therefore we should change our ways and to work together to make things easier for the Outer Islands.

Another thing I would like to talk about is the protection of our fishermen like the saying, prevention is better than cure. All the boats in the Outer Islands we want them to have GPS on them, safety lights and radio also. I know in Pukapuka there are heaps of boats there.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Just finish up what you are saying if you have not quite finish.

**MR T. MAOATE:** If the Marine could have funds available maybe some subsidy to assist these fisherman to prepare to protect themselves from future disaster. Even to register their boats so it makes it easy to search for them should it happen?

This has happened in Manihiki and Tai Herman has attended to such a case. Fortunately the boat and its occupants was found. And there was no safety equipment on their boat. It is up

to you how you are going to make this available to the people for free or at a cost. Thank you.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Honourable Member and I see the Honourable Nooroa Baker, you have the Floor.

**MR N. BAKER:** Thank you Madam Chair. I am looking at our Appropriation Bill especially for the Marine Resources - \$2,003,443.00. I believe that amount allocated for Marine Resources is a good amount to assist our fishermen.

I am looking in Book 1, page 66, it reads, “the main benefit to the Cook Islands Government from fishing activities is revenue from Treaty arrangements, license fees and sales of catch quota. Provisional revenue estimated for 2017-2018 is \$10.6 million dollars.”

This is total revenue from fish that are caught. I suggest for Government to look at increasing the sales of fish that are being caught. We are aware that here in Rarotonga our fishermen are not catching enough fish for the demand of our people. Fish sold in our shops are quick to run out. The fishermen are admitting that fishing is not like before and the fish population has diminished. These are what the fishermen are actually saying. I am not a fisherman to know this fact but this is what our fisherman are saying today.

I remember one protest march in town a few years back. Our people protesting against purse seine fishing and for the Government not to permit it in our ocean. I would like to ask the Government as to what is the status with this and where are we with purse seine fishing? Because the people ask for that not to take place in the Cook Islands.

I looked at another aspect of fishing because of the few fishes in our ocean and available in our shops. It came to me regarding the lagoon on the island of Mitiaro as there was in the past fishes farmed in this lagoon. Milk fish was farmed in the Mitiaro inland lagoon. And the program was a success in those days. This may be the solution to our problem of not having enough fish available for sales in our shops.

I am not sure whether this subject goes under the Marine Resources or the Agriculture. Because we have a lot of projects and plans of finding ways to improve our way of life in Agriculture and fishing.

Those are my thoughts to look at our fishing industry and to start farming fish again. Thank you Madam Chair.

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

**MRS S. NAPA:** Kia Orana to all of us Honourable Members. Output 3, Inshore Fisheries and Aquaculture. This is one of the topics that was discussed last week at a workshop run by the Marine Resources on the subject of Rauī. I am also unsure as to who is responsible for this program of Rauī whether the Marine Resource or the Environment but I see this under this Output 3 of the Marine Resource appropriation.

Coming back to Marine Reserves especially here in Rarotonga and I requested in this workshop for the two passages in Titikaveka to be reserved areas or Rauī. My request is not

to stop people from fishing as our local fisherman knows as to the right time of the year to be fishing in these passages. My concerns of reserving these passages is to stop the tours offered to the tourists that are taken here for business.

A person responsible for taking tourist here for swimming must know the movements of tides and currents as not to cause risks to lives. I know that signs are set around the island regarding dangerous passages in our lagoons but these are not taken seriously, they are still swimming in these dangerous areas.

I notice under this Output 3, there is a work program deliverable that is to establish partnership with the Aronga Mana to maintain Raui for fisheries management purposes. The main issue with our lagoons is in regards to climate change that is having an impact on our lagoon and lagoon life. Not just on Rarotonga but including the Outer Islands. The bleaching of our corals and our paua is actually dying - maybe not Manihiki's one – and this includes our sea urchins.

There are not a lot of them on our reefs and one thing that is disappearing is our octopus. In days gone by people did not know how to economies from our takings from the sea but today I can see that our Mamas are finding ways to make money from what they can get from our sea. Unfortunately for our future children, I think there will come a time when our children will not know what the vana, looks like or an octopus or paua. So, therefore it is up to us in this House to protect our ocean, to return it to its original state.

We would like to find ways to return some of the food back into our lagoons and one thing that is spoiling our ocean is the dirt that is flowing from our land area into our lagoons. Every one of us has to find ways to protect our lagoon and not just to rely on the Ministry of Marine Resources but for us to work with our traditional leaders for our ocean is our food source. Thank you.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you. I see the Honourable Toka Hagai. You have the Floor.

**MR T. HAGAI:** Thank you Madam Chair for giving me the opportunity to contribute my twenty cents to the Vote Item for the Ministry of Marine Resources.

I will focus my views Madam Chair on purse seining. Last year, I was a Member of the Purse Seining Select Committee. During my time on this Select Committee I learned something that I never knew before which assisted me in my capacity as a Member of the Select Committee in formulating the law to help our country. According to the Agreement that was signed, purse seine is to catch skip jack fish only. When you go to Rakahanga, this fish is in abundant just like flies.

Our Cook Islands Exclusive Economic Zone is not established so countries like Kiribati and Samoa can catch skip jack as they travel through the ocean. For these reasons, we agreed for fishing companies to catch skip jack only. Our people in Rakahanga do not eat skip jack. When fishermen go fishing and they catch skip jack, this is the first fish they will offer to their friends but they will keep the tuna.

This fish has a different taste when you eat it but if you boil it and eat it together with coconut sauce and rice, it is beautiful. This skip jack fish is what our people here in Rarotonga are

protesting as if they group in the ocean here in Rarotonga. Yet this fish is helping the Fishing Association here in Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Nga-Pu-Toru, Mangaia and Rakahanga. All these islands get equal amount from the funds.

The good thing here is that we are not greedy like the people in Aitutaki. When we receive these benefits, we all benefit from it and this is the good thing about purse seining. When we look at the Te Marae Moana Act we will see the boundaries set for fishing boats when they come and fish in our ocean. In the past, fishing boats can anchor seven miles from the land out to the ocean but today, that has been extended to twenty four miles out. Our small fishing boats can only travel out between seven to eight miles and when we look at the life span for skip jack, it is only four years.

The question we should then ask is, if we do not catch skip jack using purse seine fishing, what will happen? Samoa and Kiribati will benefit from it.

Our Government have put in place a good plan to help improve our fishing industry in the Southern and Northern Group islands. So I would like to ask our Honourable Members in the Opposition to go and see our staff at the Marine Resources so you will understand what is happening.

Secondly, I would like to make some comments on the point raised by the Honourable Member for Amuri to register small fishing boats. When we got our boat called Te Vahine Rakahanga, this is a flying boat, I tried to have this boat registered so we can utilise it during times of search and rescue. We have a Marine officer in Rakahanga who has a licence to take boats from Rakahanga to Manihiki and he also have an international license from Nelson which qualifies him to attend to emergency events in Rakahanga.

As previously mentioned, we should consider registering these boats and to install beacons on them so that the office of Marine can spot these boats when they are in trouble. Today, we are unable to pick up these boats when they are in trouble.

Therefore, Madam Chair, I fully support this appropriation for the benefit of our fishermen all around the islands.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you and I see the Honourable Tereapii Kavana, you have the Floor.

**MR T. KAVANA:** Thank you Madam Chair for allowing me to speak. Greetings to all the Honourable Members in the House.

I am not going to be too long. I will go straight into the issues because our people out there are waiting for us to adopt the appropriation. Just so we can move on, because at the moment everything is locked.

To you the Opposition – greetings. Do not talk too much. We need to move on.

I did not intend to stand up but because I am a fisherman, I want to make some contributions. I heard the comments made by my friend from Amuri, the Member, Terepai Maoate so I thought to stand up to make some comments on the point he raised. Sometimes when we are

in here we should not talk about negative things only we should talk about the good things as well.

One of the points he raised was the grant that is given for our people, in particular our fishermen. You people here in Rarotonga do not know who were given this assistance and I am talking about the marine. I know the Prime Minister has no idea what is happening because there are process put in place to award these assistance. We have a Committee established on our island in Aitutaki and their responsibility is to make recommendation as to who should receive these grants.

Madam Chair, the problem here is, these grants have been offered to people who are not fishermen. Sometimes they are given to our women folks but that is alright. I do not think these women that has been given the grants they go fishing. The youth on my island have been moaning because of the way that this grant has been administered.

I am the only Member from the Government side on my island and I can go and visit these people and ask them what is going on. One of my purpose here in Parliament is to be the voice of the youth in fishing. I want to visit the Marine people here and find out what is happening.

I thank the Government for the number of buoys that is being thrown into the ocean and this are helping my youth in terms of fishing. This month two weeks ago we have four that has been placed into the ocean through the approval of the Government of today and that really helps our fishing efforts in Araura. And this programme will continue because this is a great help from our Government for our fisheries.

One of the good things that is really helping our fishing industry is that Government have given subsidy for fuel that is given to our fishermen in Aitutaki. According to this programme when you go fishing you have to fill up a data sheet and we will take this data report to the Marine and they will check how much fuel you have used. The more fuel you use they will see from the data and Government will give you some free fuel.

My request to our people of Aitutaki is for them to go to Richard Story and present all your data so you can get the assistance from Government in terms of fuel. That is why I got up tonight to give my full support to this Appropriation and give my views to its benefit for our people of the Cook Islands. Madam Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to speak and I will give the opportunity to the Minister of Marine. Thank you.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much and I see the Prime Minister and Prime Minister if you watch the clock and then we will go for suspension but you can start now.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you Madam Chairman. Greetings to all of us. I gladly accept all the thoughts that have been expressed by the Members who have spoken. I will try and explain some areas.

I like the thoughts of the Member from Amuri-Ureia because he is right as there are some areas that is difficult for our fishermen when they seek assistance. I can hear that some of the things that happened in Manihiki it is happening elsewhere and this is people who do not go fishing but they are getting the assistance. We are only human, nothing is perfect.

I do not want to hear any moaning from Honourable Members because you are now in this House you have been elected by your people to be their servants and it is up to you to put these matters right. Go and see the Marine Ministry and find ways to remedy the problem.

When I first heard of the difficulties in Manihiki I went to see the Marine and this is what we discussed with the Island Councillors we told the Marine, you do not know our people but the Councillors know. They do not know about our people on the Outer Islands, the Island Councillors do.

So go through the Island Councillors and ask who the fishermen are on the island. It all came right and the help is going to the right people. So, do not look at me, no go to the Marine but try and find ways that will suit your island. This is the Manihiki way we go through the Island Councillors. Just as an example the first lot, some of the people live on Rarotonga but not anymore.

Regarding purse seining the problem is correct, Honourable Member this is a problem for our people in the past couple of years but let this be an example like what the Minister of Finance said when he presented the Budget that sometimes the Government know what is good for the nation but it will not be popular to our people but we still go ahead with it. This is one idea that the Government believe that this is the right direction and we went ahead with it.

Most of the thoughts have been given by the Member for Rakahanga because the fish that is caught by purse seining is the skipjack this is the target fish for purse seining and this fish only live for four years and it is like rabbit it produces a lot of fish. At six months it starts breeding.

We are told that in our Cook Islands waters we can fish 200 thousand tons skipjack a year. This is the sustainable catch limit but we are now selling only 12 percent of this figure.

So, it is well, well below the sustainable limit. We do not have any knowledge on this and we have to rely on those who know, the scientists. They are the ones giving this information to the Government and that is what we believe. We are not going to just guess and when we see people protesting we get afraid and stop. We have to have all the information.

I will come back to the people fishing here in Rarotonga. Yes, it is true we do not have enough fish in Rarotonga but the problem here is when they get a lot of fish you do not hear about it. Last month I heard they catch 60, 70, 80 tuna but you do not see this in the newspaper or on the TV.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Honourable Prime Minister could I please interrupt you, we will now suspend and return at 9.00 p.m.

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

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

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

Committee of Supply is resumed. When we suspended the Honourable Prime Minister had the Floor and you may continue.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Kia Orana again to all Honourable Members and Madam Chair.

I was talking about the fishermen here in Rarotonga. There is an arrangement that big fishing boats in our country will not bring their fish to Rarotonga. I remember when my friend Teina Bishop was the Minister for Marine Resources, two fishing boats called Luan Thieu Fisheries were permitted to bring their by-catch to Rarotonga. Our people were happy because the costs of the fish were cheap and there were many choices.

However, our fishermen on Rarotonga were not happy. They were right in a way because this is their only income. So this is the choice we face whether we will support our local fishermen and I think we should or whether we should source cheap fish and many choices.

I will leave this for our people to think about because these by-catch in our ocean are fish such as mahi-mahi, wahoo and many others. These fishing boats do not want these fish but we want them but our people had made their choice and we will wait for their views.

Madam Chair we had discussions with the Outer Islands for their part in correcting the assistance provided by the Ministry of Marine. They agreed that they have a part to play to address these issues. I would like to acknowledge the Ministry of Marine Resources and our Government because every year, we put aside \$300,000 to assist our fishermen and Fishing Clubs in our country. It is this assistance that Honourable Members are talking about that we receive to assist the fishermen in our Pa Enea and those on Rarotonga.

They are assisted with cheap fuel, fishing gear and others but sometimes some people misuse the fund and buy an oven instead of what the money is intended for. Maybe they are looking at cooking the fish after they catch their fish.

However, this is a very good arrangement. I was advised that the assistance is not only limited to this because under the Fishery's Access Agreement signed with the European Union to give them permission to fish in our ocean, they have money to give to the Ministry of Marine under the heading of Policy Support to assist with fishing in our country.

Therefore, to our fishermen, the assistance is available but do not come and request for little items such as hooks and fishing lines. Go to your Members of Parliament to give you assistance to purchase those little items. Go and ask for things such as safety equipments and ice to store your fish or EBIRB and so forth and if there is left over then a boat motor.

Soon the Secretary for Marine Resources will be appointed so it is the right time to get close to him. So, Madam Chair I would like to ask the Honourable Members to support the small allocation for the Ministry of Marine. By the way, to my Honourable friend from Akaoa, this is not the total sum. Money is still coming in because funds available to our fishermen to apply is in January, February and March so there will be more to come. Today, I signed two fishing licence which brings in nearly \$300,000.

Finally Madam Chair, this is good news, when I was at the Forum in Nauru during the last couple of weeks, I received a gift from the Australia Government to patrol our ocean in the

Pacific. We all understand that the Government of Australia gifted to us our Patrol Boat and also other countries in the Pacific.

These are new Patrol Boats that the Australian Government will gift us. The only problem is, we are at the back of the cue but it is not for a bad reason but it is because we are the best country in the Pacific in looking after our Patrol Boat. They discovered that our Patrol Boat, Te Kukupa is still in good condition. The condition of the Patrol Boats for the other countries is bad. This is the reason those countries became priority over us.

The gift from the Australia Government also includes two patrol aircraft because they discovered that a Patrol Boat alone to watch over our waters is not sufficient. We need planes to pick up illegal fishing boats in our ocean. This programme by the Government of Australia is almost to the tune of \$34million. The good thing is that the Government of Australia will not make use of this.

We have our own fishing body in the Pacific known as the Forum Fisheries Agency. This agency is based in Honiara in Solomon. These two planes will be managed by this agency. They will come to our country when we request their assistance. When our Ministry of Marine Resources is ready, we will look at the right time for this plane to come to us and help the Te Kukupa. So if you have friends illegally fishing in our waters, this is a good time to warn them because they can be picked up by these two planes.

It was also discovered that there are many illegal practices undertaken in our Pacific Ocean. There are boats carrying drugs entering our ocean. It has been picked up in Fiji and there was also one that we suspected which was in Aitutaki sometimes ago. Our people in Aitutaki cared for them very well because they lied their boat is a fishing boat and yet there were no fishing gear on the boat.

However, I am comforted that from now on we have the two planes and our Patrol Boat to patrol our ocean which is also assisted by the USA, NZ and France. I would say that the future of our fisheries is looking really good.

Thank you Madam Chair and thank you also Honourable Members. Kia Orana.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Prime Minister. I will now put the Question.

The Question is:

**That \$2,003,443 for Marine Resources stands part of the Schedule?**

**Motion agreed to**

We will now go to Ombudsman.

**OMBUDSMAN:**

The Question is:

**That \$301,930 for the Ombudsman stands part of the Schedule?**

I see the Honourable Vaine Mokoroa.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Thank you Madam Chair. I have not got much to say apart from thanking our colleagues on this side for supporting and endorsing the allocation appropriated for the Ombudsman's office.

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

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$301,930 for the Ombudsman stands part of the Schedule?**

**Motion agreed to**

We will now go to Parliamentary Services.

PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES:

The Question is:

**That \$668,124 for Parliamentary Services stands part of the Schedule?**

I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Chair.

I stand for all of us in the Opposition to give full support for this Appropriation because it has increased, so thank you very much.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you. I see the Minister of Parliamentary Services.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Thank you very much Madam Chair and all of us.

Thank you to the Opposition for giving your full support for this allocation for the Parliamentary Services. I believe it is an appropriate time to give you my congratulations, Madam Chair, for your re-election on to the Speaker post.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Because I am the Minister for Parliament, I give you my congratulations and good wishes.

As well as all the staff under your jurisdiction. As well as to give my condolences to the former Clerk who has passed away, Papa John Tangi and his household and family for his good work serving our people in Parliament.

Madam Chair, also thank you to the Acting Clerk and all the staff for the wonderful work you have done with the support of UNDP, to our Speaker for the training of our new Members of Parliament. As well as the Ceremonial Opening for our new Parliament for this term. We saw how beautiful it was and good the work that was carried out.

Now, I come back on to the Appropriation and it is right in front of us even though the increase is not significant. However, I believe that we can adjust this and correct this in the future especially in the case that there is not enough staff in our House of Parliament.

I congratulate our new Interpreters. This is an area which requires the appointment of a Senior Interpreter to carry out this very important task because it is not only the interpreting in Parliament while Parliament is in session. It is also in translating all the Bills that is coming into this House. It is obvious to us that we have not been able to achieve this. Therefore, Madam Chair, this is a very crucial part of what happens in Parliament plus also somebody to assist the Members of Parliament when they require it.

Another important area of Parliament is the Select Committee and their budget allocation. This is a small amount of money for this very important area of Parliament. Bills need to be translated before it is introduced into the House. When the Bill is referred to a Select Committee, it is taken to our people on every island for public consultation.

It is not right that we, the Members of Parliament, are the only ones to debate on these. However, our people have not been fully explained the merits of these Bills. We know how high the cost is for flying to the Northern Group to take our Members out there to consult with our people as well as to the Southern Group. Therefore, we will make every effort to find extra assistance for this area even though it is supported by the UNDP.

I would like to give my special thanks to this organisation – UNDP – for their great support for us.

So, let us review this allocation to increase it and that UNDP will assist and enable us to reallocate these funds to help other areas like our Youth Parliament and the Women's Mock Parliament and other areas we are proposing for the future.

I believe this last point that I will bring to all of us, Madam Chair and all Honourable Members of this House, is a proposal that we have discussed in this House many times before. I believe we will agree and support the proposal for a new place or house of parliament for us. Madam Chair, we are all aware that it is a plan that is ready and the request to our Government is to reconsider this for the future.

Therefore, Madam Chair, I have concluded my remarks on this allocation and thank you for the support.

Thank you.

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

I will put the Question. The Question is:

**That the sum of \$668,124 for Parliamentary Services stands part of the Schedule?**

**Motion agreed to**

We will now go to the Pearl Authority.

PEARL AUTHORITY:

The Question is:

**That the sum of \$478,524 for Pearl Authority stands part of the Schedule?**

I recognise the Honourable Terepai Maoate.

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

The Pearl Authority was established around 2008. The purpose of the Authority was to source markets for the struggling of the pearl industry in Manihiki. We understand in the days of the pearl from Manihiki and the people of Manihiki collecting a lot of money from the pearl industry but there was a time when the income from the pearl industry actually decreased.

When we look at diamonds, there is protection for the diamond industry so that it remains a high-quality industry and we have not reached that status for our pearl industry.

During the time when the pearl industry was really good, there was actually more demands for the Tahitian pearls. It actually became a negative for us and there was a fall in demand and supply. When this Authority was established to help the people that were producing pearls to sell out to the markets, there was actually help out there when this Pearl Authority came about.

I do not think from ten years ago until today or maybe five years when this Authority was established, and there has not been any increase in the pearl industry to improve the market to the target that they wanted to reach. I look at the income to day and there is a sum of \$480,000. When they started there was an allocation of \$330,000. Over ten years there should be \$4 million dollars. I do not see the benefit going to the people. If this office is not working we should consider maybe sending this money to Manihiki to the farmers so they can find their own market.

When this office started I did not fully support the establishment of this Pearl Authority. Because the allocation money is staying here on Rarotonga to pay the people that work in this office and yet there are other means of income. Nobody wanted to hear what I had to say on this at that time. This is a good example of money being poured into a project that actually did not get to the roots of the problem.

I admit it was a good idea, good plan but the flaw is you are creating employment that could have employed the pearl farmers to do the same thing with the marketing side of their own product.

If you were to divide this \$4 million between the families or farmers in Manihiki I am sure whether they actually achieve something over ten years. Then that is what we are doing helping our people in the Pa Enea.

I am sorry to say what I had to say on this Pearl Authority Office but that is my view of this set up and I hope that we do not create another body for the pearl industry which is the

planting in the Outer Islands because this is a classic example of something that do not need to be in place. We have private sector that we can go through to help them carry on building our economy. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

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

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Chair. I stand in support of what has been said by the Member for Amuri-Ureia the Honourable Member Terepai Maoate, because in this year's budget there is an increase of \$79,203 and this is for the wages of the staff. Just as the Honourable Member had said the actual amount to pay the staff is \$478,524.

We look further into sharing financial assistance for the people of Manihiki this has increased also by \$47,385 and the total for this is \$194,772. There is an increase for the section of management and support services. Last year their appropriation was \$195,264. This year it has increased to \$219,697. This is a big appropriation.

Furthermore on what the Member for Amuri-Ureia presented to the House. During the time of the Te Maire Maeva Nui here, some of the pearl farmers from Manihiki were asking about the work of the Pearl Authority and I asked them why are they asking and they told me that they are marketing their own pearls. But when you look at the Appropriation for marketing in this Vote Item there is over \$194,000 dollars. You will ask the question just like the pearl farmers from Manihiki. Where is this allocation spend on?

There is a suggestion from the Member for Amuri-Ureia, why don't we give this money to the people of Manihiki. Maybe we can look into the Island Council of Manihiki and maybe the Island Council of Manihiki can help the Island Council of Rakahanga and also that of Penrhyn. This is the sad part, Madam Chairman the pearl farmers are saying they market their own pearls. So I think I support what is being suggested to the Minister to return this money to the Northern Group.

I feel sorry for some pearl farmers these days because they are using the Punanga Nui Market to sell their pearls. I know who the Manihiki people are that are selling their pearls at the Punanga Nui market because I help them. This is the way I propose for us to help our pearl farmers to sell their pearls.

I have been told that there are only four staff in this Pearl Authority but I stand to be corrected. I stand to give my thoughts that I am sad on this Appropriation. I believe that what is important is for our people to benefit from their farming. Maybe also the Marine Resources can give scientific and technical support to our pearl farmers in Manihiki.

I support the suggestion that we should look at giving the Appropriation to the pearl farmers of Manihiki to assist them not only in marketing their pearls but also to assist them in the farming and also get the Island Councils involved as well.

So Madam Chair I do not support this Appropriation that is set for the Pearl Authority. Those are my thoughts, thank you Madam Chair.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you I see the Honourable Prime Minister you have the Floor.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you Madam Chair and thank you also to the two Members who have shared their thoughts. I am not the Minister of the Pearl Authority it is my friend to my left but I thought I am the Member for Manihiki but when I listened to the presentations by the Members, no it is taken by Matavera and Amuri-Ureia. That is alright at the next election we will change seats and I will go to Amuri-Ureia.

Madam Chair, some of the thoughts that are being shared by these two are correct. The main purpose of this Authority is to help market the pearls of the farmers in Manihiki. I have been a farmer and it is a happy life. You get tanned and very strong. When you come into this House and sit for two years you will get a heart attack.

But in that life your main job on the farm is to look after the farm, to make the pearls grow well. Even better if you are a pearl farmer have an overseas market who is ready to purchase your pearls. It encourages you as a farmer to grow more pearls on your farm for future supplies to your business partner waiting to purchase your pearls. And it encourages you to forward plan. This is the important issue and I agree with the Honourable Member for Amuri-Ureia that is the purpose of this Pearl Authority being established for marketing our farmer's pearls.

This will ensure our pearl farmers in Manihiki that after they harvest their pearl farm there is a market ready to sell their pearls. On top of that the long distance of Manihiki from Rarotonga and the cost of about \$3,000 to travel from the farm to Rarotonga and back. Even the good reason for setting up this body and true it did not work as planned. It did not fulfil the vision it was established to perform. There are a few reason for this.

We had a vision to brand our pearl for the world market to go to Europe and the rest of the world. But that vision did not transpire. On the matter of helping the farmers in Manihiki, I agree with the Ministry of Marine Resources, they have helped quite a lot of work, especially in monitoring the pearl shells, and the monitoring of the lagoon sea water. They have done a lot of work for the pearl farmers. I will say that if these Marine Resource personnel did not do what they did the pearl industry would have not come this far.

If they tell us that the sea water is too warm and not to work on the farm that is the way to go. Because when the temperature of the sea water is too warm the pearl will not grow. If they tell us this is the depth for you to put your strings we follow because it helps the pearl to grow healthy. I have discussed this Pearl Authority with the pearl farmers in Manihiki and they tell me that they are still utilising this Authority today.

Even if the money they get is not attractive but the assurance of the sales of their pearl is the most important thing. I am satisfied the farmers that have good sales and very patience are able to find other markets. And finding other means of business on the island by making craft and jewellery and that is the way to go.

I am happy to know that this had encouraged these farmers to find ways to improve their situation. However some other farmers are still depending on the Pearl Authority to buy their pearls. So to the Member of Parliament for Matavera that funding is going into the pockets of our pearl farmers. I want you all to know that there are a lot of pearl farming equipment still remaining on Manihiki. I am saddened because I was responsible for sourcing these

materials and those things are not supposed to remain or stocked in the homes. Their rightful place should be in the lagoons.

I want you to know there are a lot of assistance available and these are lying in wait for the people. The marketing is the area that needs assistance. I would like to ask all of us to support this Appropriation today. I will be travelling to Manihiki in 2 weeks' time to meet with the pearl farmers. If they say to me shut down this Pearl Authority then I have something to tell you on my return. If they however they say no, but these are the areas that needs to be improved, I will also tell of their decision. But for now I ask for your support of this Vote Item.

Thank you.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Honourable Prime Minister perfect timing. I will put the Question. The Question is:

**That the sum of \$478,524 for Pearl Authority stands part of the Schedule?**

**Motion agreed to**

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** I call on the Minister Responsible for the Bill to move for a Motion to report the progress to Parliament.

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

**That we resolve into Parliament to report on the progress of the Bill**

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

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

Parliament is resumed.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** I ask the Minister to please report to Parliament on the progress of the Bill.

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

**That the passage of the Bill through the Committee of Supply is going smoothly like the roads in Takuvaine**

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much Honourable Minister. I have one announcement to make before we adjourn the sitting.

Tomorrow morning the big bus from the Ministry of Health will be parked just out here at 8.30 a.m. I am sure you still have your cards from our medical check-up at the last time we were checked. We are going to have our blood pressure, our blood sugar and our weight

done. This is part of our NCD support to the Ministry of Health and you walk the talk as Members of Parliament by coming and having those things done in the morning.

No excuse, to the new ones, you will get a card tomorrow if you do not have one. Hundred percent turn out tomorrow – please.

May I ask someone to say our closing prayer, please and we will adjourn until 10.00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

**CLOSING PRAYER**

Parliament is adjourned until Friday 28 September 2018 at 10.00 a.m.

**Parliament adjourned at 10.00 p.m.**