



# FORTY-NINTH SESSION

## Hansard Report

49<sup>th</sup> Session

Ninth Meeting

Volume 9

**WEDNESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**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 and acknowledge our Chaplain for his encouraging message to start us today.

Greetings to all Honourable Members this morning who have entered this Honourable House. Special acknowledgement to those of you who have travelled from the Outer Islands to be with us today and acknowledging your families that you have left behind on your islands.

Kia Orana to all our people listening in, those in the Northern Groups and the Southern Groups and on Rarotonga, special greetings to you all today. I also would like to give special greetings and welcome in our Chamber today, our Solicitor General, Stuart Baker who has joined us for this Sitting today.

I also acknowledge we have a guest in the Public Gallery today, Kia Orana to you.

Honourable Members, if you could just allow me a bit of time to please extend our deepest condolences to family members who have been former Members of this House and all other people of the Cook Islands who have under gone some bereavement in their families.

It has been a few months ago but I would like to extend our condolences to the wife of the former Member of Parliament, Tekii Lazaro from Pukapuka-Nassau, and also to the former Member of Parliament, Tiki Matapo of Titikaveka on the loss of his sister, Tereau Simmons and also Myra Kapuvai. We extend our deepest condolences to the Matapo family and other families in regards to these bereavements.

I now come to the former Minister, Nandi Glassie, who has sat a midst us here in this House and very pleased that we have gotten to know him. Our Minister Nandi was very colourful in the Pacific in the wonderful work that he has done.

To our dear Doctor Joe Williams also who we have his photo in this House and he will always be reminded, we will always be reminded of him. As we have attended the national service that was held, it was wonderful to see the support from our community.

Sadly, this morning, some sad news came regarding the passing away of Mrs Niotangi Heather who is the mother of our former Minister Teariki Heather and also our current Member of Parliament William Heather and also a very close relative of the Honourable Tina Browne.

So may I then finally extend our sincere condolences to these families I have mentioned as well as any other family in the Cook Islands who have gone through a bereavement of recent time.

I also thought that I might send out some greetings from Parliament today to all our returnees from New Zealand who have been coming in drips and draps on Fridays. It would be very nice to let them know that we are with them as they go through their quarantine waiting to be released.

Honourable Members we will now go to our Question Time for half an hour.

### QUESTION TIME

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

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. My question is to the Minister for Corrective Services. I heard on radio talkback some days ago complaints against the Minister for using the prisoners on the road. I would like the people to understand that these inmates were used to upgrade the Atupare Marae.

And rightly, according to our scripture for today as mentioned by our Pastor this afternoon, it is appropriate for me to raise this scriptural verse with the Minister this afternoon.

The question to the Minister is, is it true that you used the prison inmates to work on the Atupare Marae.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, and I see the Honourable Minister George Angene.

**HON. G. ANGENE:** Thank you Madam Speaker and Kia Orana to us all. Thank you to the Member for Matavera for your question. Is it true that I took the inmates to upgrade the Marae at Atupare?

This is not correct because I did not take the prisoners, and the term prisoners I do not agree with that term but rather to say, I took these young people within the Corrective Services to teach and educate them with this kind of work. I would like to assure you all that these young men benefited and learned from being involved in this project. I was the architect and I drew the plan for Atupare Marae and I was also the main carpenter.

Madam Speaker, I was blamed and I was accused by a prisoner. I was accused by someone however, as the Bible says, the heaven's will rejoice for one sinner to repent. Our Bible tells us to love our enemies, pray for them and be kind to them. I want to assure the people listening in that my reply to this person – I will pray for you.

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

**MR T. MAOATE:** Thank you Madam Speaker, greetings to you and all the Members of this Honourable House. Kia Orana also to all our people listening in.

My question is to the Minister of Health and this is regarding the situation of the COVID now and in light of the upcoming Cook Islands Games.

We do know that a lot of our people will be arriving from the Outer Islands and recently, we had issues with homes that were used for quarantine for our returnees from New Zealand. My question is, are we ready for the Pa Enea arriving for the Cook Islands Games, and with the continuation of the international flights arriving during that period, what are the arrangements in place for Government to ensure that all precaution measures are taken care of so there are no more mistakes? What are Government's plans in place?

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

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Thank you, and greetings Madam Speaker and all the staff of Parliament. Kia Orana also to all the Honourable Members of this House and to our listeners, Kia Orana.

To answer the question raised by the Honourable Member for Ureia, yes we are prepared Honourable Member to take on the task for our people. However, we all know that there have been some concerns with our people who do not follow the instructions given by the Ministry of Health. Our Ministry of Health is ready to protect our people but our people have to be prepared to do their part to help the Ministry and not sit back and relax.

The Ministry is still giving out messages to our people and our people are required to abide by those rules. We are taking the lead from what New Zealand is doing but we have a plan in place and if this virus increases in New Zealand, then our plans in our country will change. I hope this answers your question Honourable Member. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate.

**MR T. MAOATE:** Thank you Madam Speaker and thank you Honourable Minister for your reply.

I have a supplementary question. According to the Levels 1, 2 and 3, can you tell us what level we are on? Today, when we came into the House we shook hands with each other. Is this proper for us to do today or have we broken any rules because I am not sure whether we are on Level 1 or 2 and whether we can hug each other. We want our people to be sure so that when our people from the Outer Islands arrive for the Games, they understand what the rules are because there are contact sports during the Games.

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

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Thank you for the supplementary question. We are still on the same level since we were cleared from the virus, and the Ministry of Health has not made any changes to the level that we are currently in today. There are no laws to punish our people if they do not follow the instructions given by the Ministry of Health. The Ministry is only giving precautionary measures to help to protect our people in case this virus reaches us then we are ready and know what to do.

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

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Finance. This is not for the tractor, Minister. Maybe this question cannot be answered today but maybe you can provide an answer in the next few days.

The question Minister is, what is our standing, because in Parliament it was mentioned that we should look to the 30<sup>th</sup> September. Minister the question is, what is our position from now till the 30<sup>th</sup> September and up to December? If you cannot give an answer today, I will wait for your answer when you are ready.

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

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Thank you Honourable Member for that important question. The answer to the question is very simple, we are doing fine. We know at the end of this month this will be the end of the first quarter for this financial year.

Based on our Appropriation, we are able to operate until the end of the financial year June 2021 and we will see by the end of December, the first six months, we will be able to gauge the level of the revenue that is being received in the country then we are able to decide whether we need to adjust our Appropriation.

We know that the stimulus payment that is going out, this is to help our businesses not for the purpose of making revenue but to ensure they survive.

What I am very surprise is that, even though we are in this situation, over the last few days we witnessed the incredible fund raising activities for the Cook Islands Games and I am wondering where all this money is coming from. So the situation with our people today is that our people are fine.

Maybe in the near future I will be able to give us some assistance, some funding we have received from the Asian Development Bank for the protection against the COVID situation as well as to further assist our people. However, the simple message Madam Speaker is that, we have to be very prudent at this time because it is still unclear what the future holds. Therefore, we will know by December if we need to make adjustments to our expenditures or if we are in a position where we will start to collect more revenue with the opening of our borders if that takes place. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, and I see the Honourable Member Manuela Kitai, you have the Floor.

**MR M. KITAI:** Thank you very much Madam Speaker. Greetings to you and your staff in this House. Greetings to those of you on the Government side, the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers, greetings to all of you. Greetings also to our Opposition side from our Leader to all of the Members, greetings. Greetings to our people listening in this afternoon.

I am not sure who will answer my question but I am sure somebody will answer it. My question is concerning tractors and agriculture implements. In Aitutaki, we received one tractor, my question is how come we only received one tractor and yet there are three constituencies in Aitutaki. I would have thought we will receive three tractors. I believe this money belongs to our people and that is why I am asking this question. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. Honourable Member, I will give you the Floor after the question is answered. I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to you and all of us in this Honourable House. Special greetings to our people listening in to our broadcast.

First of all, I would like to support your words of condolences and sympathy to all the families who have gone through bereavements.

I just want to add to all of those bereavements, the family of our Mama in Tupapa. This lady served our country for many good years – Mama Maara Karotaua. I was moved with comfort to see the support of the people of Tupapa and the country as a whole. To this Mama also in Arorangi that passed away last night, I would like to propose a Motion that we take rest on Friday so we will be able to attend her funeral. In that way, we will be able to acknowledge her services to the country, her children who have served in this House for this country and family also.

I will now come back to the question from the Member of Parliament for Vaipae. I am getting irritated and annoyed by this question from the Member and at the same time, feel pity for him and his people. There seems to be a notion that we just sit back and the money for the people will just come easy to us.

There is a scripture that says, “*Ask and it shall be given*”. I have never heard or received any request for a tractor from this Honourable Member for Vaipae and the Honourable Member for Amuri-Ureia. However, our ears are pained listening to the many requests from the Honourable Member for Are Nikau. I like listening to the request from the Honourable Member for Matavera.

So I am hearing this complaint from the Member of Vaipae even though he has not asked but he is expecting that it should be given to his constituency. My friend, there is no life like that. Ask and you shall receive, it is not a matter of giving when you just assumed it to come your way. But if this is the new way for Vaipae, then we shall sit on that new way.

That is the short reply to the question from this Honourable Member, Madam Speaker. Do not sit on your backside and complain saying that I should get one also on assumption. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Prime Minister and we shall bring up the Motion for Friday towards the end of the day. I see the Honourable Tina Browne, you have the Floor.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Kia Orana to all of us this afternoon, to the Government side and our Opposition side also, Kia Orana. To all our people listening to our broadcast and those watching our livestreaming, greetings.

Firstly, I just want to bring to the House a request and apology for our Member for Ruaau, William Heather as we are all aware of the situation he is in today.

Secondly, the Opposition would like to add our condolences and sympathy to the Robati family in Mauke because this Mama has a bit of family connection to Mauke but she is mostly from Rakahanga.

That is one reason in her young days this Mama was a keen sports person – in all sport codes but especially in tennis. There are no tennis courts in Mauke, it is only in Rakahanga. I would like to thank the Prime Minister for the Motion that will be attended to later on in our Sitting which will allow us to join with the funeral of our Mama. It is right for us to show our respect to this Mama because her husband was a former Member of Parliament and of course her sons.

My question is to the Minister of Transport. On the 18<sup>th</sup> day of this month, a year ago, an accident happened on one of Papa Tapi Taio's ships involving a little boy. We were told at the time that there will be an investigation done for this accident and a report will be given to us as I was the lawyer for the family.

All those involved were interviewed and I was told by the person who was tasked to write the report that he had done it at that time. I requested for a copy of the report and I was told that they cannot release it until Cabinet has deliberated and approved it. I understand that it was submitted to Cabinet in April this year.

The question is, what is the decision of the Cabinet on this report?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Member for your question and as we have actually expired our time for Question Time, you can either answer very quickly or you can respond tomorrow.

**HON. R. TAPAITAU:** Madam Speaker, if I may, I will respond to the question tomorrow morning, thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, first up on the Floor tomorrow for Question Time will be the response to your question Honourable Member.

Honourable Members, that completes our half hour of Question Time. We will now go to Orders of the Day.

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

The Orders of the Day is the Interim Report of the Agriculture Bill 2020 from the Select Committee to be tabled by the Chairman of the Select Committee, the Honourable Patrick Arioka.

**MR P. ARIOKA:** Madam Speaker I have the honour to present:

**The Interim Report of the Agriculture Bill 2020 by the Select Committee that was scheduled to be submitted this September 2020**

I now lay this Paper on the Table.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, you may speak to the Paper.

**MR P. ARIOKA:** Madam Speaker pursuant to Standing Order 261. I stand to move:

**That the time allocated to the Agriculture Bill Select Committee to provide a Report by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 is extended as recommended in this Report for another 3 months, to allow the Crown Law Office and New Zealand Pacific Desk Parliamentary Council Office to coordinate the final drafting of the Agriculture Bill 2020 amendments approved by the Select Committee**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you is there a Seconder for the Motion? I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker, I rise to put forward my support to this Paper and to also commend the Committee for the hard work resulting in this Report.

**Seconded by the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, if there are no further speakers, I will put the Question and the Question is:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

We will return to Orders of the Day. I call on the Leader of the House.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

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

**That in accordance with Standing Order 261, that Standing Order 265 (2) paragraph (c) relating to the Consideration of Papers be suspended to allow Parliament to consider the Report on this day**

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

**Seconded by the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa**

Honourable Members, before I put this Motion to the vote, there is an error in the Motion and what we are actually suspending is Standing Order 65, it is a typing error, it is 65. If you go to your Standing Order 65, so we can get this correct. As you know the Consideration of Papers would normally happen on a Thursday. So due to have that Consideration of Papers shifted to today, we are suspending 65 (2) (c).

So we will have the Leader of the House put the correct Motion forward.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I stand to amend the Motion previously put before the House and it should read:

**That Standing Order 65 paragraph (2) sub-paragraph (c) be suspended to allow Parliament to consider Papers on this day**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. Is there a Secunder for that Motion?

**Secunded by the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa**

I will put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

We will now go back to Orders of the Day and that is on the Consideration of Papers. Our first Paper for Consideration today is Paper No. 55 and that is on the House of Ariki Act 1966, the Regulations Act 1971/72 and the Legislative Service Act 1968/69, but the Paper we are considering is the House of Ariki Allowances Order 2020.

The way we do the Consideration of Papers is, when I call the number and the name of the Paper, if any Member wishes to consider or to speak to the Paper, you may move that the Paper be received and you speak to it, but if you do not wish to make any comments to that Paper, that Paper will then fall off the Orders of the Day.

I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I rise to comment on this Paper however, our number is 56. Madam Speaker, maybe all of us are in the same situation, our number is 56.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I will just speak to the staff and sort out the number of that Paper that you have raised. So on your Parliament Paper No.55, do you have that? It's on the House of Ariki Act, do you have that Paper?

**MR V. TUPA:** Madam Speaker, we don't have No.55

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You don't have that Paper? We will go on to the next Paper for now while the Secretariat sorts out as to what the issue is with the Paper. The response that I am given is you were already given these Papers when they were originally presented. So do you have this in your cupboard below where you are?



I see the Honourable Tingika Elikana.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Madam Speaker, if it would assist, we were given a Parliament Paper Number, and 5 was typed and then 6 was written on it. So we got 56 but notwithstanding the number, I think for us to move on, that Paper refers to the House of Ariki Allowances Order 2020. I am just wondering whether we are talking about the same Paper. We might have different numbers on the headings but the same order that we are looking at.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much for pointing that out. If we can just put this Paper aside and perhaps deal with the other two Papers while our office staff look into the first Paper.

So our next Paper and I hope everything is in order, is Paper 56 and that is on the Ministry of Health COVID-19 Supervised Quarantine on arrival in Rarotonga, Regulations Revocation Order 2020, do you have that?

I see the Honourable Tingika Elikana.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I think we are in the same situation as the previous Paper. We got a 5 typed and then 7 handwritten onto the Paper so we have a 57 where you are advising us it should be 56 and I understand that Paper refers to the Ministry of Health COVID-19 Supervised Quarantine on Arrival in Rarotonga Regulations Revocation Order 2020.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Alright, I will just wait for some information before we carry on. Just bear with me while we are sorting this out.

Honourable Members, let us begin with this. On the Order Paper that you have, you have 56 as the House of Ariki allowances order 2020 serial number 2020/15.

Then on this Order Paper we shall change the number 55 to 56 to be aligned with the Orders of the Day Papers. Thank you for bringing that to my attention and so if anyone wants to consider this Paper you will need to move a Motion for the Paper to be received.

I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa, would you move a Motion to receive the Paper if you are going to speak to it.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I rise to move:

**That we accept Paper No. 56 and to consider it in the House**

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

**Secinded by the Honourable Tingika Elikana**

The Honourable Vaitoti Tupa, you have the Floor.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Firstly, Kia Orana to all of us in the Name of the Lord this afternoon. A special acknowledgment from me to the Minister of the House of Ariki. I want to assure all of us in this Honourable House that the President of the House of Ariki is listening to our deliberation on this Paper.

He is requesting that we approve this Paper and this will help to advance the work of the House of Ariki. Madam Speaker, it has taken us a long time to deliberate on the allowances for the House of Ariki. Soon the House of Ariki will hold their Annual General Conference on the island of Atiu in November or December. The Nga-Pu-Toru Islands will coordinate and host the Conference.

Last time, they held their Conference on the island of Mauke. Later on this year, they will hold this Conference again and what we will approve today will assist the Nga-Pu-Toru islands with the Conference. The main important thing for us Madam Speaker is to consider the assistance given to the House of Ariki and their staff and to the programmes they will be conducting. This will assist them with funding the Conference in Atiu.

Just recently, a meeting was conducted at the House of Ariki premises which was run by the President and the Clerk of the House of Ariki. I attended the meeting together with the Member of Parliament for Ivirua. The Member of Parliament for Pukapuka tendered his apologies from attending the meeting because he was involved with the Select Committee meeting at Parliament.

Included on the Coordinating Committee is the Member of Parliament for Titikaveka. The aim of this meeting was to strengthen and support the work that is taking place in Nga-Pu-Toru. Therefore, I rise to give my support to this request that is presented by the House of Ariki.

My humble plea to all the Honourable Members in this House is to please support this request from the House of Ariki. I am certain the President and Members of the House of Ariki are listening to our deliberations and they will be happy to see our support. I am certain the President of the House of Ariki will send a thank you email to all of us for our support. Thank you Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, and I see the Honourable Minister George Angene.

**HON. G. ANGENE:** Thank you Madam Speaker for allowing me to speak. Greetings again to all the Members of Parliament in the House under the leadership of our Madam Speaker. Greetings to all our people listening and watching our Sitting wherever they may be today.

Madam Speaker, it is only proper that I as Minister for the House of Ariki stand and give some comments about the House of Ariki. Before I give my comments on the matter before the House, may I ask for some time for me to greet the people in my constituency of Tupapa.

*(Minister delivers a traditional chant)*

Kia Orana to my people of Tupapa-O-Au. To all the title holders and those old, young and little ones, greetings to you all. My sincere condolences to the two families that lost their loved ones last week. To Papa Kiki's family, my deepest condolences to you all. I also extend my deepest condolences to the family of Mama Maara Karotaua.

Mama Maara is also my Aunty and every time we meet, she encourages me with the word of God. She is always appreciative of the scriptures that she hears me use in this House. She told me, with all the accusations and complaints against you, just remember it is because you are doing the right thing. To Aunty Maara's daughter and your husband and family, I am always here for you. If you need any help, I am available. May God Bless us all.

Madam Speaker, I will now come back to the Paper before the House. This Paper goes back to the year 2018. Since then, Government has been providing support and assistance to the House of Ariki. Thank you to the Government of the day, the Prime Minister and your Deputy Prime Minister and Cabinet, thank you for all your support.

I know we have not approved this Paper yet, but I strongly believe every Member in the House will give their support and approval.

Kia Orana to the Kaumaiti Nui listening in. I assure you that this Paper will be approved today. Once this funding is approved, funds will be available to pay someone to cut your lawn. Please do not rely on me the Minister of House of Ariki, I only have enough funds for my Constituency of Tupapa but I will try and find ways and means to help you. There is a saying, if there is a will there is a way and find that way and do it. Kia Orana to all of us.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, I see the Honourable Tina Browne, you have the Floor.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Greetings again to everyone. Maybe I have not interpreted this Paper correctly and maybe the Minister can help me. This Paper is an Order in Executive Council and this was approved on 1 July 2019. There is no need for us to approve this Order because it has already been approved.

What I understand is maybe if we have some comments to make, then maybe this is the time for us to make those comments. If I am wrong, please correct me because that is the way I am reading this Paper.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, I see the Honourable Tingika Elikana.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I stand and I do agree with the Leader of the Opposition that this is an Order in Executive Council that has come into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019. To put it in a very succinct manner, the allowances that is referred in the Paper, the Ui Ariki is already receiving it hence my reason for standing up to speak on this Paper.

As you have correctly stated at the outset, the Motion was to receive the Paper into this Parliament. Madam Speaker, that is just to clarify that matter. They are receiving their

allowances, they are very happy about it and now I would like to move to what I wanted to speak on this Paper.

Madam Speaker and to all our staff of Parliament, greetings. I rise to convey to you the heartfelt appreciation from my Paramount Chief, Pakitonga Ariki for what has taken place. He would like to thank the Government, the Minister of the House of Ariki, the Minister of Finance, as well as the President of the House of Ariki for the increase in their remuneration.

When I became the Member of Parliament for the Constituency of Pukapuka/Nassau, this is what he requested me to look into. He wanted me to consider reviewing the pay for the Members of the House of Ariki, and for Cabinet to approve this Order. Just a fortnight afterwards, I received a call from Pakitonga Tetio Ariki expressing how happy he was when he took his bank book to the Bank of the Cook Islands and there were some funds in his account. He did not know where the funds came from the reason he wanted to call me. I explained that the funds were the increase paid to all the Members of the House of Ariki in our country as a result of the review.

I know that Pakitonga Tetio Ariki is listening to me right now and also the people of Pukapuka, and therefore to my Paramount Chief, I am extending your words of thanks to Government, Cabinet and to the Members of Parliament for this increase. As you requested to review the remuneration for the Members of the House of Ariki, and we all know that the cost for goods and materials on the island of Pukapuka is rising, I therefore extend your words of thanks to all those who were involved in this review.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. Honourable Minister you can have a few minutes but we will have to suspend for lunch very soon.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Madam Speaker, if I can make a few comments.

I stand as the Chairman for the Immigration Select Committee, and just looking through Standing Orders 327, the Order sets out that unless Parliament otherwise directs, no Select Committee shall sit during the Sitting of Parliament. As you are well aware Madam Speaker, we were supposed to table our Report today but due to some technicalities and some pending discussions, I wanted to call a meeting, if it is allowed for the Immigration Select Committee during the lunch time or for an extra fifteen minutes so that we can discuss with Crown Law on what is required for us in terms of tabling our Report.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Minister and Chair of the Immigration Bill. I was not quite sure where you were going with you taking the Floor but that is certainly an issue that we can take up which you and your staff will have to organise straight after.

Actually, 327 not while we are in here, you cannot excuse yourself and go for a Committee meeting but you can during your break time. So as we are going to be suspending to go for lunch, maybe I could just quickly then inform the rest of your Members that you want to meet in the back room, you can get your lunch and bring it down and have your meeting down there.

We are still on the Orders of the Day which is still on the Consideration of Papers and we will take suspension and go to lunch, and on return the Honourable Rose Brown can have the Floor.

Parliament is suspended until 3.00 p.m.

**Sitting suspended at 2.28 p.m.**

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, please be seated. Parliament is resumed. Welcome back everybody, I hope you had a wonderful delicious lunch. Welcome also to our new Interpreter this afternoon.

Honourable Members, before we went on our lunch break, we were on the Orders of the Day on Paper 56. I open the Floor to the Honourable Minister Rose Brown.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Thank you very much Madam Speaker. Greetings again to all the Honourable Members of this House and to all our people listening or watching our sitting this afternoon around the Cook Islands.

Again, I reiterate the words of condolences and sympathies to those whose loved ones have passed away. There are many of our families who have gone through times of bereavement and I cannot name them one by one, but I would like to incorporate all of them and say, may the comfort of the Lord be upon you.

Furthermore, we must not forget those of our loved ones who have passed away in New Zealand and Australia, words of comfort is also extended to you all.

Madam Speaker, I stand to add my thoughts to this Paper before the House. When you look at the end of this Paper, you will recognise that it was presented by myself, the Honourable Rose Brown. I believe it is appropriate for me to stand before this House and speak on this Paper because I could hear a lot of praises going to the Minister of the House of Ariki. I know that all the Ministers of the Crown support all the Papers that is presented in the House.

You may recognise the Paper before the House is not an increment on paid salary but they are allowances for the work done by the staffs. So this is our reward to them by paying them allowances and not public servants' salary payment, this is allowances for the duties they perform. I would like to thank all the Members of Parliament for giving your support when this Paper was presented in this House.

To all our Traditional Leaders, the increase has been given to you on top of what you have been collecting. I would also like to pay tribute to the late Ada Rongomatane Ariki because when she was still alive this is one of the things we talked about during one of our discussions. She asked me to ask the Government and Parliament to increase the allowances for the Members of the House of Ariki. Unfortunately, this Ariki did not reap the benefit that we see today.

However, that is not a problem because this is the kind of leader we want, a leader who seeks the benefit for all. Today, there are no Traditional Leaders on the island of Atiu; two of our Ariki are currently in New Zealand as a result of patient referrals. Rongomatane has a representative today and that is Apii Porio. At the investiture of Numangatini Ariki in Mangaia just recently, there was an invitation extended to everyone to attend the investiture of Rongomatane Ariki in Atiu in July next year. The family unanimously agreed that the next Rongomatane will be the son of the late Ada Rongomatane.

I would like to convey my appreciation to the Traditional Leaders and the Council representatives on the island and also to the President of the House of Ariki and the Clerk of the House of Ariki. There was a meeting held on Atiu a couple of weeks ago to set a programme for the Marae Moana. The Traditional Leaders of the three islands of Enuamanu, Akatokamanava and Nukuroa will meet and the meeting will take place on the island of Enuamanu in December of this year. We will make the final decision when we meet in December and we will finalise what we started on Nukuroa.

Finally Madam Speaker, maybe my Colleagues from Nga-Pu-Toru will not be standing to talk but I stand on behalf of all of us. I would like to convey our appreciation from the Traditional Leaders of Nga-Pu-Toru and the support of the President of the House of Ariki for the three islands to meet together. I also thank the Government, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of the House of Ariki and all the Members of Parliament for your support.

May God richly bless us all, thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. As there are no further speakers on this Paper 56, I will put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

Perhaps before we move on to the next Paper, I would like to make a remark regarding the comments made by the Honourable Member Tina Browne relating to the Papers. Could I just say to everybody in the House that when these Papers have gone through the Cabinet, the rest of you do not have any information on this Paper.

So the reason it is brought to Parliament is so everybody is informed that such a situation has happened. So you cannot put a Motion to change it because a decision has already been made but it is really received for your information. It also does say that if anybody wants to talk about the Paper, you move a Motion to receive the Paper. We have seen a very good example today where the Leader of the House and the Honourable Rose Brown and Honourable Vaitoti Tupa spoke on behalf of the House of Ariki.

So this is just an example as to why we receive these Papers even though we cannot change them. Thank you.

We will now go to Paper 57 on the Ministry of Health COVID-19 Supervised Quarantine on Arrival in Rarotonga, Regulations Revocation Order 2020. As there are no speakers to this Paper we will move on to Paper – I beg your pardon, I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Greetings to all of us in the Name of our Lord and to our people listening in to Parliament, I greet you in the name of our Lord.

If I may please, I would like to share some comments on this Paper.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Member Selina Napa, could I just interrupt you. In order to receive the Paper, would you mind putting a Motion that the Paper be received before you can talk to it?

**MRS S. NAPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. On that note, I would like to put a Motion to the House:

**That this Paper be received**

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

**Secinded by the Honourable Tina Pupuke Browne**

You may continue Honourable Member.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Madam Speaker, I am looking at the Paper for Consideration and it is to do with the Ministry of Health, COVID-19 Supervised Quarantine on Arrival in Rarotonga Regulation Revocation Order 2020. I think since this Paper was tabled, prior to that, we have had like two different Papers on COVID-19 and also I just want to seek clarification on the revocation.

The revocation was for the supervised quarantine up to June 2020. I would like to seek clarification on the supervised quarantine especially from the 30<sup>th</sup> of August coming forward whether an Executive Order has been made for this.

When we initiated the first arrivals back home, the Ministry of Health went through all the Puna and worked with them to set them up and get them ready to receive our returnees. We know the first cohorts of arrival, there were some complications at that time. We also realised the weakness in the system in terms of communicating the information and also we had no knowledge of the homes that were being placed under quarantine. Furthermore, some people failed to follow the rules and arrangements that were put in place by the Ministry of Health.

My biggest concern is that between the periods of March to June, all the Puna areas were open however, after June, most of them were closed except for a few. At that time when the Ministry of Health came back to seek the assistance of the different Puna, there were some communication issues and they also did not have the resources required and therefore were not ready to receive the next arrivals.

There were a lot of questions raised with the Ministry of Health and the Secretary answered these questions. I know this because I was in one of their Zoom meetings and I observed what was discussed. They went ahead with the supervised quarantine. I was one of those people that supported and pushed for a centralised quarantine arrangement where it is easier to secure the premises for our people.

I was thankful and happy when I heard that one of the hotel facilities offered a cheap rate of \$150 per person per week for people undergoing quarantine. This was not intended for Government to pay but rather by each person undergoing quarantine. I think this \$150 per week is a very affordable rate for our people. However, within a week we learnt that the rate for this hotel had increased to \$800 per week. How can our people afford such a rate?

For this reason, our Puna teams decided to return the quarantine back into our individual homes to help our people because there were concerns from our elderly.

I am also thankful to the Minister of Finance who supported the notion to provide 24 hours security service to these quarantine homes. I support the payment to our young people performing security services for 24 hours.

I would estimate that within our village of Titikaveka, we have about 50 people doing security work due to the number of quarantine homes in our village. My concern here is that only some Puna teams provided 24 hours security service and some did not adhere to the request that was arranged by the Minister. Maybe their arrangement is different from ours where there is a patrol every five to eight hour intervals, however, I then wonder what happens in between when there is no security.

There was also a proposal from the Puna teams to spread out the arrivals and to wait until the previous arrival complete their 14 days quarantine before we accept the next cohort. However, this was not agreed to.

There was also a proposal to stop incoming passengers from New Zealand during the Cook Islands Games until after the Cook Islands Games. However, I do not know if this is possible and especially during this time because our own young people and adults are finding it difficult during this time of preparation for the Games to conduct security service so our expatriate workers, Philipinos and Fijians are having to help out to take on the security services.

I would like to comment that our expatriate and foreign workers are looking for work to help them and their families with their living expenses here. On top of that, our young people do not like attending work in the middle of the night so we have to call on these expatriate and foreign workers to carry out these duties.

I heard that there has not been any breaches during the last couple of weeks with the current returnees undergoing quarantine, and with the upcoming Cook Islands Games, I would like to encourage everybody to work hard and follow the quarantine measures to protect our people and country from COVID.

To all of us, here are some words of encouragement from my village of Titikaveka during this crucial time. Stay safe and be kind to one another. Kia Orana.



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

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to all of us again as well as to all our people.

I rise to present a couple of points on the subject of supervised quarantine. It was good how the Member for Titikaveka presented her train of thoughts about the issue and also the good explanation from the Minister of Health on this same matter.

Rightly so, this is a very important topic for us the people of the Cook Islands because this is all our collective need to ensure that this disease does not come into our country. I strongly believe this is the reason for calling all of us to work together and to cooperate for one purpose.

I believe that all of our people in the Outer Islands are doing fine. Thank you Rarotonga because you are responsible for protecting our country. I strongly believe you are working hard and spending a lot of time implementing protective measures for our quarantine while the Outer Islands are training for the Cook Islands games. Never mind, this is the responsibility that parents carry and that is to take care of their children.

Madam Speaker, the Government and I are very satisfied with the situation and status of our quarantine. When we first opened our borders to the first arrival of cohorts about three weeks ago, we heard some complaints about the arrangements of the quarantine. The complaints were right because it was discovered that there were two breaches of the quarantine. Sorry, there were three.

I mentioned two because two were deliberate and one was just by mistake. I feel for my friend who went through this mishap and he and his family was placed in quarantine and he was unable to play his golf game in the finals.

The problem is, and I think we should all be concerned, there are some of our people even though the rules and policies of the supervised quarantine are explained to them, they still intentionally break the rules. In my mind, although we may set up a central quarantine, if someone makes up their mind to break the rules, they will break the quarantine.

We have seen the news in New Zealand with those quarantine facilities, hotels that they have set up, people are still escaping from these quarantine places. We did not believe that our people will do such thing because the first order that was placed for this quarantine was not able to prevent these two from breaching and breaking the laws of the quarantine.

This person from the village of Vaimaanga, he meant to give the cigarettes to his Aunty. The nurse on their transportation from the airport explained clearly to him that he was not permitted to do that and the leaflet containing all the information and rules were presented to them on the plane. This person still chose to break the rules. He still found a way to pass these cigarettes to his Aunty by telling her to pick it up from him.

Therefore, to me, it does not matter what facilities we set up, if somebody wants to breach the rules, they will and they will find a way. These two people from just down the road were the second breach. The couple asked Vodafone to come and fix their telephone problem. They knew they were not allowed to do that and contact people outside of the quarantine but they chose to break the quarantine rules.

Because of what happened, we went back and reviewed the quarantine rules because it was not adequate to capture all the incidents. Our Ministry of Health and the Crown Law Office were quick to establish a new Quarantine Order for the next arrivals. I do believe we are all of one mind to ensure these quarantine rules cannot be broken.

Therefore, this new Quarantine Order has been approved and it is operating right now. To me, there is an important and positive lesson that we can take from these two incidents. Firstly, this showed our people's combined spirit to stop these breaches of quarantine. They were quick to report to the authorities of what has happened. Secondly, this encouraged us especially those in our Puna to improve our quarantine security. To me this is the secret and how fortunate we are as to what is happening in our Puna. Everybody knows everybody else.

We know who has just returned last Friday on the plane and therefore it is easier to monitor. Today, I would like to convey my appreciation to all our Puna around Rarotonga. I know the Ministry of Finance are standing by ready to give the support that they require in order to provide proper supervised security to the quarantine system. That is why I stand, to give my thanks and encouragement to all of us to work hard to ensure that this disease does not enter our country.

I am sure we will remain in one spirit to stop this disease to never reach us. Our good news for now is that the situation with COVID in Auckland is decreasing and the Prime Minister of New Zealand announced last night that they are waiting for things to get better and for New Zealand to be in a good position before they can open the New Zealand borders to the Cook Islands.

It was the first time for me to hear her admit publicly that we the Cook Islands are COVID-19 free. That is where New Zealand wants to be so that they can reopen to us. Let this news comfort us that we are on the right track but as long as we continue to work together as one.

You are correct Honourable Member, we are doing this because we accept we are all in this together. God Bless us all.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Prime Minister, and if there are no further speakers, I will put the Question:

**That Paper 57 be received?**

**Motion agreed to**

We will now go to Paper 58, and this is on the Cook Islands state of the Environment Report 2018.

If there are no speakers to the Paper, we will move on. I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Madam Speaker I would like to put a Motion:

**That the Cook Islands state of the Environment Report 2018 be received**

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

**Secinded by the Honourable Tina Pupuke Browne**

You may continue Honourable Member.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I took this Environment Report home and read it because I have some concerns with what is happening with the environment in our country. This Report is very colourful and I commend the people who produced the Report.

I have studied the biodiversity, the invasive species including the sea water. When I look at this, they were talking about everything in our environment including climate change. However, my concern is they did not stipulate in the Report what ways they had to improve the situation of our environment.

When I look at the situation in Rarotonga, maybe it has not reached the Outer Islands yet, there are some invasive species, plants that are harming and killing our native plants and foliage and this is not stipulated in here.

For us on the Rarotonga Environment Board, we consider this plant the African Tulip which has a bright orange bloom on the mountains. We approved the introduction of a pest for this invasive species, an insect to be brought from outside of the country to control the spread and growth of this invasive species.

There are other plants like the red guava, the mile-a-minute, these are devastating our local indigenous plant life.

I do know that we the women have been blamed for maybe smuggling these invasive plants when we return from overseas but I also think, and we should remember that sometimes these introductions are done by birds that fly over our borders.

As mentioned before, we are all working together to protect our country from COVID-19 and we should also be of the same mind and work hard together to protect our country from the introduction of invasive plants to our natural environment. So when you bring in your plants and seeds, I ask all the planters please declare these to protect our environment.

When we look at what is happening in our lagoons, the *vana* are disappearing from our lagoons and from the reef, so what is happening? We also see the diminishing of numbers of shell fish, sea slugs. Maybe this is all due to climate change.

When I look at the Government agencies, the National Environment Service should be given the resources and the funds to carry out their work. For us members of the Environment Board, one of the concerns for us is the protection of our wetlands, and right now our wetlands are being used to build structures on and yet, our people know these wetlands have been created by nature, by God as natural water catchments to drain the water through the soil.

Maybe through this Report when we consider this in the future when our situation improves again, extra resources will be given to the National Environment Services to protect our wetlands, our beaches and the strengthening of the EIA process. Those who write these EIA Reports know all the gaps and the weakness in our system where they are able to carry on without being stopped by the EIA process.

Further to that, I am encouraging the staff of the National Environment Service to hurry and amend the Environment Act.

During this time of the COVID situation, I have seen one of our local Pacific pigeon flying around, before that you do not see them flying in the low lands but lately they have been seen flying lower and lower towards the coast.

For us on the Board who are working to help the National Environment Service, what we are looking at now is the chlorination of our water system. My last comment on this is for a report to be provided in the future, if it may, to please stipulate how the Environment Act can be strengthened for the future. Thank you very much.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Patrick Arioka, you have the Floor.

**MR P. ARIOKA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Greetings to all of us in the Name of our Lord this afternoon. To all the Honourable Members on both sides of the House, greetings to all of you. Greetings to you Madam Speaker and to all your Parliamentary staff.

Madam Speaker, may I be permitted to convey greetings to the people in my Constituency and to all the people of Puaikura. To Tinomana Ariki, to all the Aronga Mana and all your people from Tuoro to Toreiva, a special Kia Orana to all of you today. It is fitting for me to convey my appreciation to you Tinomana Ariki because you have been instrumental in keeping our Vaka together during this time of COVID-19. With the help from the other leaders in the community, we have been able to put a plan together to protect our people during this time.

However, we the Members of Parliament for Puaikura are very satisfied for your support throughout this time of the quarantine situation that we are in.

Kia Orana to my people in Murienua. To the Traditional Leaders, Church Leaders, Government Leaders and everyone listening in to our Parliament, special greetings to you all. I also acknowledge and thank all the Traditional Leaders of Murienua for all your support with the project for coastal protection for Rutaki. Thank you so much for your wonderful support.

I would also like to acknowledge all those who were working in our Puna. To the coordinators and volunteers that have come on board to support all the services that we provided to our people, thank you very much.

Special thank you to my Committee, and the youth in my constituency, thank you for your support.

Madam Speaker, I also rise to thank the Minister responsible for this Report and I am sure that everyone in the House appreciates the amount of work that was put in this Report. Madam Speaker, this Report is not only to do with the Government but as well as the stakeholders and other Ministries that was involved in this project.

We also note that the Te Marae Moana, Agriculture, Environment, Marine Resources and the Ministry of Health especially NCDs are in this Report. We can see in this Report Madam Speaker the connection we have with our Environment programme. Where are we today in terms of our Environment state?

This Report is telling us our position; like 16 percent good, 55 percent fair and 26 percent poor. This is telling us that our environment is not good. I believe Madam Speaker this is the purpose of this Report. It is to tell us as a country where we are at. This Report is not prepared only for the Environment, but it includes other Ministries which they also have a big part to contribute to our environment.

This simply means that this Report is not only focusing on one particular area but our way of life, the people of the Cook Islands, which simply means there is a lot of work we need to do, we need to review and look at and improvise as to what is required by this Report. I thank the Minister for bringing this Report to Parliament and for all of us to work hard to make improvements for our country and our future.

To all the Ministries that are mentioned in the Report, remember you have a huge part to play and we must all work together to improve our future. I am happy to hear the comments made by the Member for Titikaveka that there is a part for the Agriculture sector to play in this Report. It is only right for Agriculture to be included in this Report.

Madam Speaker, I believe we have enough information to know where we are at and what to do so our environment can improve in the years to come in our new budget. Therefore Madam Speaker, I give my full support to this Report and ask all of us to consider our approval to the Report. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Member, and I give the Floor to the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. If I may be allowed to greet the people in my constituency of Matavera. Firstly, I greet all the Church Leaders in the village of Matavera. There are five churches in this village and added to that is the Apostolic Church. All these house of worship are churches in the district of Rangiatea.

To our Traditional Leaders in the village working hard and upholding our traditions in the village of Matavera, Kia Orana. To all the elderly in the village of Matavera and

special mention to my old man Papa Motu and to all of you, I greet you in the Name of our Lord and Saviour.

To all our youth people, there are many of them still looking for work and maybe in the near future we will be able to secure employment for you. I greet the leaders of the Takitumu Primary School, the Principal and teachers as we all work together to complete our road especially the clearing of trees on the road in Matavera.

I would like to thank the Member of Parliament for Akaoa, his family and business for trimming and beautifying the big utu tree at the entrance of the school, thank you very much. Thank you to the Puna team of Matavera, from your leader Takapi Kora and all the staff of the Ministry of Health and all the workers and volunteers, I greet and thank you all.

I would also like to thank the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health because during the recent arrival of cohorts, some of them resided and quarantined in Matavera. During this time, the Village Committee asked those who did not have employment to take up the security services available. If you look at the rate of \$67 per day to pay each person, and when you look at the working hours from 7.00 a.m. to 11.00 a.m., 3.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. until 7.00 a.m. again the next morning, this is good money.

I just want to advise you Minister of Finance that we were able to pull together up to 20 people to work so that they can be paid this money. One of them who worked for a while to look after our people in quarantine was paid \$600. These people do not have any employment in the village but they are permanent residents in this country. I want to assure you Madam Speaker that they were very happy when they received their first pay. The person who received the lowest pay was for \$300.

Therefore, I would like to thank all the people working in the Puna for taking care of our returnees in quarantine from the first day they arrived until today. I would also like to convey my sincere appreciation to my wife who is the Secretary of the Puna. Sometimes she returns home at 1.00 a.m. the next morning. Her job is to make sure these people are working in the village. Therefore Madam Speaker, I would like to thank all these people working in the village, and maybe next Friday we will receive another group of returnees and all these people will work again. I would like to thank the Minister of Finance again, the remuneration these people received enable them to look after their own families.

Madam Speaker, I will now come back to the Report before us. Madam Speaker, as previously mentioned, I also give my support for the approval of this Report before us. Madam Speaker, the first Report was compiled back in 1993. During the years I worked for the Environment Service, I started back in 1980, the staffs at the time were Teariki Rongo and Gerrald McCormick. We worked together until the enactment of the first Conservation Act 1986.

During those years, the Outer Islands disagreed for them to be included into the 1986 Act. The Act was amended in 1995/96 for Rarotonga only. The Act provides that everything conducted on Rarotonga must abide by the Act.

However, after we established this new Act, there were some problems in the Outer Islands, especially on the island of Aitutaki because tourism was then starting there.

When I became the Director of Environment, in 2006 we amended the 2003 Act to include the Outer Islands again. Under this, we returned and reviewed the Reports written from the year 1993. Madam Speaker, I want us to know that the concerns then was the work of the Government employees during those days. The aim of the 2003 Act was to try and get all the other Government agencies to work together with the Environment Service because before that, when we approach the Ministries, like the Ministry of Works to work with them, they say no, you have your own responsibilities and we have our own but without them realising that the waste they were disposing was also a responsibility for the Environment Service.

I would say that it took them until maybe the year 2005 to realise that they have to work closely with the Environment Service. It was not only them Madam Speaker, the Member of Parliament for Murienua also mentioned Government agencies like the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health. It became obvious that some of the activities undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture also impacted on the environment and some of the activities conducted by the Ministry of Health impacted on the environment as well.

An example is, when we look at the chemicals utilised in agriculture as well as in the field of health, when we look at disposing these chemicals, they have to consider the impact on our environment. We know Madam Speaker about the activities we undertake and we know what the impact would be on the Outer Islands.

One of the major concerns in those days Madam Speaker was the chemicals used for citrus industry. In those days, the Ministry of Agriculture did not know how to safe guard these chemicals. What we did in those days Madam Speaker was to look for funds and safe ways to bring these chemicals into our country without harm.

**MR T. TUAVERA:** Madam Speaker, because of the wonderful speech by the Member for Matavera, I ask that his speaking time be extended.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** There is a Motion on the Floor, is there a Seconder?

**Seconded by the Honourable Patrick Arioka**

I will put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You have extra time, Honourable Member you may continue.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker and also my Colleague for his support and all those of you on the other side of the House for giving me your support to continue with my speech so that we will all know what is in this Report.

So, what we did about these chemicals Madam Speaker was that they were returned to Rarotonga from the Outer Islands. We packed these properly and because we had an agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture in New Zealand, they agreed to export these chemicals back to them.

We also worked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and as well as the Ministry of Marine. We also worked closely with the Prime Minister's Office. Why I mentioned Foreign Affairs is because of the International Agreements that we assented to in those days and working with them we were able to establish a Memorandum of Agreement with these other agencies.

Through this, we were able to compile a Report looking at the strength and the weakness of environment here in the Cook Islands. In those days there were many Reports put together for the Outer Islands and for Rarotonga.

After that, we worked closely with the Ministry of Culture and one of the topics we dealt with was how to preserve our traditions following the phases of the moon. In those days we were able to compile a document. If you all want to know the phases of the moon for Nga Pu Toru, you can find it with the Ministry of Culture.

We also looked at the plants used for medicinal purposes and they were included as well. That is why this Report was put together for us to know exactly where we are with the environment today.

The Environment Service worked together with the Outer Islands in preserving islands like the island of Manuae and Takutea. In those days we crafted a plan how to conserve and protect Manuae. That was put to the Island Council of Aitutaki and I am unsure where that is today. We sourced a lot of funds to help us look at a plan to protect Manuae. This is not our funds, it was aid funds that we requested to assist this work.

With the island of Takutea, they were able to establish the Regulations for the caretakers for the island of Takutea. These Regulations provided good support and strengthen the position of the Traditional Leaders in preserving the island of Takutea.

Fortunately, the island of Takutea is protected today because if you want to go to Takutea, you have to seek the permission of the leaders of the island. I do believe this will prompt the island of Aitutaki to establish something similar in terms of managing the island of Manuae.

My concern here Madam Speaker is the complaints coming from the people of Aitutaki with people from Rarotonga going straight to the island of Manuae to fish and return to Rarotonga. I strongly believe if we are able to work with the island of Aitutaki to establish caretakers on the island of Manuae, this will be good for the island. Maybe this will become like the island of Suwarrow where there are two caretakers on the island.

Therefore Madam Speaker, that is why I rise to give my support to this Report because this will tell us the areas we are doing well, and to continue with that and where we are weak, to improve it.



Like the Member for Titikaveka, my last words to the staff of the National Environment Service are to work hard on the Bill as well as the Regulations to improve our environment. I also ask to work closely and in line with the vision by the Office of the Prime Minister regarding climate change. I know the Prime Minister realise the importance of climate change and that is why he is trying to strengthen this. In the past, this area was not considered well.

Madam Speaker, that is why I rise to support this Report and to also ask the support of all the Honourable Members in this House. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, and I see the Hon Prime Minister, you have the Floor.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Greetings again to our people.

Madam Speaker, I stand before this House to support the comments made by the Honourable Member Vaitoti Tupa. He raised valid points and it shows the experience he has had as Head of our National Environment Service.

There are other areas that need to be looked at and taken on to improve our country. I remember in 2017 when everyone in this House supported one of our legislations and that is the Marae Moana Act. Some of our people may think that this is just a name but I want to emphasise before this House, this is a big step that our country has taken forward to show to the world of where we are heading.

We are the only country in the world with a big ocean and that we have dedicated to the environment for conservation and this is not just word of mouth because today through the Marine, we can show how we can improve and administer the resources that we have.

The Heads at the Ministry of Marine are claiming that our country is leading in the way we control fishing activities in our ocean. Yes, we should take pride of this because we are not just talking but we are taking action.

We see our solar system, and the main purpose is to conserve and protect our climate. There are many countries in the world who have been boasting about what they will do, but they have done nothing. I can assure you that this has eliminated the burden on our people in the Pa Enea, especially for us in the Northern Group. We do not have any problem in relying solely on ships for our diesel to be transported to our islands.

Many times in the past when we ran out of diesel, we begged fishing vessels to deliver our diesel. We were fortunate and blessed to have some Chinese friends who own fishing vessels to help us, but those were past days.

This Ministry, Honourable Members is an important Ministry to our country. I am also very happy with the points that was raised by the Member for Matavera in that we need to have the structure to protect the two islands that was mentioned.

The island of Takutea is under the management of the Traditional Leaders of Enuamanu. I can hear some talk that the people of Mauke and Mitiaro want to be included in the management of Takutea. Go and make an island for you two.

We mentioned about Suwarrow. This is a beautiful island and I do not think many of us have set foot on this island. I have been there and I would say this island is like Nassau, it is a beautiful island. I know this island is under the management of the Environment Service and they have placed two caretakers to look after the island and to keep watch on the yachts that visit the island. I strongly support this arrangement because there are many boats passing through our ocean. We cannot just remain on our individual islands without keeping an eye on this island.

Aitutaki, I want to speak directly to you because that is the reason the Head for this Ministry, who apparently is your son came to the island of Aitutaki to discuss about how we can manage the small island of Manuae.

Those who know about Manuae will agree with me that the situation of this island now is not the same as in past years. We have taken the goodness of the ocean and we have been wasteful. This is done by Aitutaki's very own people.

There is support given to us through the programme Ridge to Reef and the people from the Environment Service wants to assign some funds so that we can maintain the beauty of Manuae. That is the spirit and the intention why our son came to meet with the people of Aitutaki. But what I am hearing now is a different story. There are some suspicions that this Government or the Puna family are planning to go and build a hotel on Manuae. What are you talking about? If I want to build a hotel, I will build it in Manihiki.

To our people, do not think like that. The intention is for us to work together to see how we can protect this beautiful island of ours, Manuae. I suspect that those who want to ruin the island are the ones who are objecting and we do not have any vision for the generations to come so that they will see the beauty and the blessings of this paradise.

Madam Speaker, that is the reason I am standing before this House, to make things clear to our people about the rumour that has been circulating. I appeal to those who are making up stories to please stop. How can I build this hotel when Papa do not have the money to do that?

I stand before this House to give my support to the Environment Service and to make some comments about the news that has been spreading around about what is happening or will be happening on the island of Manuae. I think the three Members from Aitutaki are hesitant to correct what I have said. It is only right for the Member for Manihiki to put things right. So I appeal to the people of Aitutaki to behave. Thank you Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. If you would like to speak Honourable Member Tamaiva Tuavera, we will need to start rounding up at about five to.

**MR T. TUAVERA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I will not be long so I can give the Minister wrap up time.

Greetings to all of us this afternoon. We are approaching five o'clock. I would like to make some comments on sewerage and sanitation.

We have heard previous speakers and our Prime Minister praising the beautiful islands in the Outer Islands. This Report in this book today, when I look at the status for Rarotonga, it is rated from fair to good. However, when I look at the Outer Islands, it is rated very poor.

This Report was compiled in 2018 but when I look at some of the recommendations, it goes back to 2001, 2011 and 2014. When I reflect on this, no work has been done to improve the situation for us.

Consultants came from overseas to tell us that the seaweed is growing in the lagoon in Ngatangia and yet we already know that. My question to them was, what do we need to do to prevent this? They explained that the under-lying foundation, water was seeping through this and this water was the one we do not want to seep into the lagoon.

I am sick and tired of listening to all the blame accorded to our old people for all the chemicals that they sprayed on their oranges and animal farms and seeping through the water table into the lagoon.

I hear this problem has also reached Aitutaki regarding the algae. My request is for the report because we have not received a report from these Consultants to be used by the Agency to help with this problem.

Today, the sea water is cooler and slowing down the growth of this algae in the lagoon. Soon we will enter into the warm climate. This is the time this seaweed will grow fast. People have tried harvesting this, however they are only able to pull the top layer and the root still remains.

Therefore, I recommend that a group be established to review this Report and to tell us what needs to be done to prevent this in our lagoon.

I now revert to hazardous waste. Outside of our country I have seen hazardous waste. I am happy that the Head of the Ministry of Infrastructure Cook Islands' initiative to remove them and to start the work on the island of Penrhyn where a lot of these waste are being parked. She shared her views with myself and the Minister Tapaitau and she told us she want to remove this waste from the Outer Islands. Her views to start the removal of waste from the island of Penrhyn is a good idea.

I would like to support her proposal, however, there is no more barge to repatriate this waste. Therefore, in the Outer Islands the status is poor. White waste is always something that we have to get rid of, such as bikes and cars, which need to be removed from our islands.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, I am going to interrupt you with your debate and I am sure there will be other people who will want to speak to the Report, so we will just have further discussions on that on another day. Thank you.

I now call on the Leader of the House to move a Motion for adjournment.

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

**That this House adjourn until Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> September at 1.00 p.m.**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** There is a Motion on the Floor and I look for a Seconder please. I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

**Seconded by the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa**

I put the Question:

**That the Motion for adjournment of Parliament to Monday, 28 September at 1.00 p.m. be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

This is of course to expect all Members to attend the funeral on Friday as was requested at the beginning to adjourn our Sitting. Thank you very much for the work you have done today. Can we have somebody volunteer to close us in a prayer.

**CLOSING PRAYER**

**Sitting adjourned at 4.58 p.m.**