

DISCLAIMER

This Report provides a brief of the Proceedings of Parliament on Friday 23rd June 2017. While all efforts have been made to provide an informative brief, this information must not be relied upon as an alternative to the official Hansard record of proceedings of Parliament. If you have any specific questions about the Proceedings of Parliament on Friday 23rd June 2017, you should consult the official Hansard or seek assistance from the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

Day 3: Friday 23 June 2017

9:00am

I. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY

1. Appropriation Bill 2017/2018 – resumption debate on second reading

(i) Hon. SILI Epa Tuioti, Minister for Finance and Member for Faasaleleaga No.1 East

The Minister noted Government's intention to relocate all Government Ministries and Offices to Salelologa as it will be convenient for the public; providing ease of access to different services available. Furthermore, there were plans in the pipeline to lease government land to major investors who can create businesses in Salelologa and provide employment opportunities for the public. There was also particular mention of development works needed for the Salelologa wharf, to which the Minister explained that on-going negotiations were being conducted to determine the best strategy to implement as well as identifying possible partnerships between foreign donors and the Government to finance such project.

In relation to the levy imposed on electricity units, the Minister asserted that there is no impact on the cost of electricity. The Minister concluded his statement by extending gratitude to the Hon. Prime Minister for numerous advices given to the Minister and the Ministry in ways to create surplus, then acknowledged the Ministries for Revenue and Finance for adjusting tax rates to earn revenue for the country.

(ii) Hon. FAIMALOTOA Kika Iemaima Stowers Ah Kau, Minister of Women, Community and Social Development and Member for Gagaifomauga No.1

The Minister asserted that the Ministry's programme focused on all levels in the community, from grassroots to the Village Council. It is the Ministry's objective for village leaders to take ownership of the different projects developed for the well-being of villagers. The Ministry believes that each individual is heard through on-going consultations and receiving feedback from the community.

The Minister addressed the member for Vaimauga East who commented on the obligatory roles of women in their in-law's household, stating it was a derogatory comment and that as a woman herself, she values the roles and contribution by these women to the development of different families, churches and villages.

- **INTERJECTION**

SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tauiliili Tuivasa – Member for Vaimauga East

The Member clarified that his concern was not with regards to the financial assistance received by these women; but rather why these women were used as a means of gaining such funds, but do not benefit from it, as they do not directly receive any benefit.

- **CLARIFICATION**

Hon. AUELUA Fatialofa Lupesoliai Tuilaepa Dr. Sailele Malielegaoi – Prime Minister

The Hon. Prime Minister clarified that the funding received from donors were for the purposes of conducting consultations and awareness programs in villages, targeting women who have been abused; then the Prime Minister assured the Member that the Government would not seek to benefit from such programs.

Hon. FAIMALOTOA Kika Iemaima Stowers Ah Kau, Minister of Women, Community and Social Development

The Hon. Minister for Women, Community and Social Development continued with her response, she addressed the community and reminded everyone of their duties to keep Samoa clean; specifically village representatives as they are paid to keep the villages clean. The Hon. Minister reiterated that parents of child-vendors are responsible for taking direct action to control, monitor and teach their children acceptable behaviour and conduct in the community. The Minister also noted the *Village Fono Act* which was established to empower the Village Council to enforce punishments on misbehaving villagers.

- **INTERJECTION**

LEAANA Ronnie Posini – Member for Safata West

The Member reminded the Minister of the concerning issue of littering in the town area, especially near the Matautu harbour where cruise-ships dock; suggesting that the restaurants and night-clubs near the area should also take part in clearing the rubbish.

Hon. FAIMALOTOA Kika Iemaima Stowers Ah Kau,

The Hon. Minister stated that the Alcohol Committee should also assist with the issue of littering. The Minister concluded her response by thanking her Ministry for the on-going work and addressed her constituency.

(iii) Hon. TIALAVEA Leniu Fea Tionisio Hunt, Minister for Revenue and Member for Vaa o Fonoti

The Member addressed the Ministry of Prisons, stating that there was \$8million set aside for the development of a new prison facility, noting that this amount was not enough. The Minister also acknowledged the efforts of the Ministry to decrease the number of escaped prisoners,

although there was an emerging issue of overcrowding in prison cells, due to an increase in the number of prisoners.

The Minister stated that he will not address the issue of taxing religious leaders as the bill has yet to be introduced in Chambers. However, in regards to the recommendation of switching cans for alcohol beverages as opposed to using bottles, the Minister commented that he values the contribution of beverage companies to the development of Samoa, and these companies are already utilizing bottles to store alcohol for consumption, therefore the change will be costly.

The Member added that in physical disputes where beer bottles are involved, the beer bottles are not the problem but the individuals who consume alcohol and bartenders who continue to sell beer to individuals who are already intoxicated. The Minister stated that it is the exact judgement made by bartenders and bar operators which can be probable causes to the disputes that arise later on.

- **INTERJECTION**

SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tuiliili Tuivasa – Member for Vaimauga East

The Member expressed his disappointment to the Minister that it has only been his first year in the position but has already strategized to tax religious leaders, asking whether there was no other possible option to earn revenue for Samoa.

Hon. TIALAVEA Leniu Fea Tionisio Hunt, Minister for Revenue and Member for Vaa o Fonoti

The Hon. Minister referred to previous earnings by the Ministry, noting a slight increase in every Financial Year, however credit should be given to where it is owed, which involve all the employees of the Ministry for Revenue; from the Chief Executive Officer, to her Assistants and all employees who continue to work diligently for the development of Samoa.

The Minister noted that \$51million was from excise on petrol; 28million from diesel; 4million from kerosene; and 19million collected from unleaded.

With regards to the issue of teen drinking; the Minister stated that the Alcohol Committee deals with all matters concerning alcohol and that the Ministry is looking at ways to try and control the fast-paced sale of imported spirits such as, Boom vodka, Maso and the likes as these spirits can be bought for as cheap as \$10.00

The Minister noted that the continued challenge faced by the Ministry is finding different ways to generate revenue in Samoa. He informed Parliament that the Ministry was currently looking into procuring a x-ray equipment for the Border and Protection Division, to assist with finding all forms of illegal dealings that may be smuggled in. There are also plans to have K9 dogs trained to pick-up the scent of money and other illegal substances brought into our country.

The Minister concluded by encouraging the Ministry to be courageous and honest when carrying out their duties, noting that all tax-collectors are despised in their communities because no one likes being taxed, but someone has to do the job, all in the hopes of developing Samoa.

Proceedings were suspended at 10:31am and resumed at 11:10am.

Hon Prime Minister's Motion:

The Hon Prime Minister moved a motion for the sitting day to conclude at 12pm.

Motion was seconded and approved

(iv) Hon. LAAULI Leuatea Polataivao Fosi, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and Member for Gagaifomauga No.3

The Minister addressed the Assembly, his constituency and all of Samoa. At the outset of his statement the Minister stated that Samoa is an agricultural nation, with 80% of its land utilized for agricultural purposes. He further

explained that the wealth of our nation lies in farming our lands and fishing our oceans.

The Minister acknowledged the Members who raised issues/concerns with the Ministry, then began to address each concern.

Taro:

The Minister informed Parliament that countless efforts by the Ministry spent on finding new markets for our taro and to create ways to build the agricultural sector.

- The Australian Market as noted by the Minister has high standards, which the Minister was proud to note Samoa met; this credit goes to the Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa (SROS) for introducing the 'freezing' method of preservation which assured the quality/texture of the taro was not spoiled. In previous years Samoa used to export 40 containers of taro to Australia, currently we are only shipping 20 containers, which gives us the chance to grow and strive for best quality taro that would increase the supply to our export markets.
- The New Zealand Markets takes a total of 150 containers per year from Samoa. In the past New Zealand paid \$8.00 per kilo, today they are only paying \$3.00/kilo, because the competition is high; Fiji and Tonga are also exporting their taro to New Zealand. The Minister stated that Samoa needs to work together to oust the competitors. He reiterated that farmers need to work together and provide taro that meet the standard of our export markets.
- The American Market was also mentioned by the Minister, stating that this was one of Samoa's highest dependant markets owing to the fact that the value of the US dollar is higher than NZ and Australia. The Minister informed the Assembly, that the Ministry continues to find ways to strengthen the relationship between Samoa and America.

The Minister asserted that ongoing awareness programs were being conducted to inform the public on the different standards required by

the overseas markets. On the 11th July 2017, Samoa will showcase these frozen agricultural products (Taro, Yam and banana) in New Zealand.

The Minister also mentioned the 4.8million received from the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Bill English for the development of the agricultural sector; the Minister informed the Assembly that this donation will be distributed between the constituencies of Vaisigano No. 1 and No.2, as these constituencies have the largest cocoa farms in Samoa.

Proceedings were suspended at 11:38am due to technical difficulties and resumed at 11:41am

The Minister continued his statement stating that there needs to be proper packaging facilities available in the island of Savaii, as it is important to ensure export goods are stored securely, to avoid the likelihood of it being damaged.

The Minister made note of the STEC programme whereby interested farmers were to pay registration fee of \$100 and the Ministry provided coconuts, cocoa and plants, in 4 years, \$4,000 is given as an incentive to encourage farmers to grow and develop our agricultural sector.

With regards to the use of pesticides in farming, the Minister noted that it should be used with cautioning noting the negative impacts of the chemicals.

The Minister made mention of the China - Samoa programme which was approved by Cabinet in the previous year. The Minister noted how important this programme was as \$7.5million granted by China, allowing Chinese to come into the country to educate Samoans on how to grow and harvest certain plants. The Minister noted that there were 5 specialists in Upolu and 4 in Savaii.

Proceedings of the Assembly adjourned at 11:59am to reconvene at 9:00am, Monday 26 June 2017