

DISCLAIMER

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Day 4: Friday 26th January 2018

9:00am

I. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY – reading of Bills continued

2. National Health Service Amendment Bill 2018 – second reading

The Minister for Health, Hon TUITAMA Talalelei Tuitama moved a motion for the National Health Service amendment Bill 2018 to be second read; the motion was approved and the Hon Minister made his explanatory speech on the Bill. The Hon Minister stated that the Bill contains three clauses, and its overall purpose is to begin the process of the merger between the National Health Services (NHS) and the Ministry of Health (MOH), as was the case a decade prior. He then stated that the second clause will amend the National Health Service Act 2014.

i. OLO Fiti Vaai Afoa, Member for Salega East

The Member stated that the two departments were initially separated in 2006; he stated that at that time, the purpose stated for the separation was the same rationale put forward for the merger. He then stated that the system was not important, but rather the performance and the realisation of deliverables. He noted that the Service did not lack relevant capacity, but that the issue was with performance.

In regards to the Board of Directors, the Member advised the Hon Minister to thoroughly check member's backgrounds to ensure they had the relevant capacity and expertise to sit on the Board. He emphasised the need to focus on merit-based selections for Board membership.

ii. Hon Minister for Public Enterprises, LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell

The Hon Minister elaborated that an independent selection committee will be responsible for recommending board members to the Minister. He noted that there will be a proper recruitment process wherein candidates must supply evidence of their relevant expertise, skills and achievements. He then stated that applicants would be screened by the selection committee who would then provide their recommendations to the Minister.

▪ OLO Fiti Vaai Afoa, Member for Salega East

OLO reiterated the point that he was emphasising, is the importance of making merit-based selections.

iii. FAUMUINA Asi Pauli Wayne Fong, Member for Urban West

The Member made several comments on the importance of all relevant actors working together to ensure the merger is successful. He stated the merger is ultimately a result of Government policy, stating that as the Health Sector is not geared towards profit making, focus should remain on implementing strategies which promote “sustainability”. He then stated there should be more focus on preventative strategies to reduce the number people admitted to the hospital; noting that the purpose of the NHS and the MOH was to promote healthy living.

iv. AUMUA Isaia Lameko, Member for Falealili West

The Member noted his gratitude for the services provided by the National Health Kidney Foundation (NKF). He further noted that the NKF utilised the services of many volunteers, and that the NKF should not be affected by the merger. He then made a suggestion that a position of Deputy CEO should be created as an additional position to intended ACEOs.

v. Hon FAUMUINA Tiatia Faalotane Liuga, Member for Palauli le Falefa

Hon FAUMUINA noted that he had been a Minister at the time of the initial separation in 2006, noting that there were valid reasons for the separation to take place at that time. He then stated that the Bill should be implemented immediately, as the process is timely and any delays may negatively affect not only the staff, but the public and in particular existing and future patients.

On the positive aspects of the merger, the Member stated that it would prove cost effective; this will enable other funds to be used for hospital and clinic repairs. He also stated that it would allow the public easier access to the MOH headquarters. He then stated that there are negative aspects of doctors living in the rural areas, particularly for those who were married. He therefore suggested that sufficient incentives be provided to entice doctors to relocate, and that relocation should be permitted for the doctor’s family. He stated that the Ministry should provide both financial incentives but also ensure that there are sufficient “psychological” incentives in place. He then stated that the current condition of hospitals in Savaii is still well below standard.

vi. Hon SALA Fata Pinati

The Hon Minister stated that despite progress being noted, it has yet to be seen. However; since his entering Parliament and prior to the division of his constituency, the Hon Minister stated that his constituents were aware of the Government's efforts and progress to date.

vii. Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Nuafesili Pierre Laufo, Member for Anoamaa West

The Member stated that the initial reform phase which resulted in the 2006 separation was in efforts to increase services provided through the public service. He then noted that the MOH's role was more policy orientated, whereas the NHS focused on medical treatment. The Member noted that prior to the separation, when there was a single Ministry; there were numerous complaints by the public regarding the service. In 2013, a Bill was introduced by the current Minister to create a Management Board to become Board of Directors and that they would no longer be under the Public Service Commission. Now there is a new Bill to re-merge the two departments. The Member noted that it appeared as if the State was working backwards; and his concern after these many reforms, would be the many issues raised by the public in various main-media and social media forums. He suggested that after the merger, focus be put on addressing staff capacity issues and overall performance of services. He then suggested that the Government was too focused on improving the internal systems while not taking into account the value of existing staff that would be affected by continued changes. Finally, the Member sought clarification as to whether or not the MOH would return to the PSC upon merger completion. The member sought clarification whether the Ministry will go back under PSC when the merger is complete.

viii. Hon GATOLOAIFAANA Amataga Alesana-Gidlow, Member for Faasaleleaga No. 1

The member noted the composition of the Board, noting that there will be 5 Directors. She then stated that the initial separation was based on the need to establish a monitoring agent to oversee services provided by the MOH. She stated that there were concerns over the possibility of conflicts of interest if the MOH were to continue monitoring its own services. She was therefore unsure how this issued would be addressing, namely, the issue of decision making and monitoring of services, once the merger was complete.

ix. PAU Sefo Taumata Pau, Member for Faasaleleaga No.2

The Member noted the provision in the Bill which stated that appointments were to be made by Cabinet on the recommendation of the Board. He then stated that he frequently visits the hospital and believes that it is currently in a good state. However; he did note the need for additional beds for Motootua and Tuasivi, and further noted the lack of parking spaces at the Savaii hospital suggesting that the Hon Minister consider remedying this.

▪ Mr Speaker – point of order

The Hon Speaker instructed the Member to restrict his comments to the merits of the tabled Bill.

▪ **PAU Sefo Taumata Pau - continued**

The Member stated that despite the fate of the Bill being in the Minister's hands, he urged the house to ultimately keep in mind the decisions which benefit the public most, if the need for the NHS and the MOH to separation arose again in the future.

Proceedings were suspended at 10:30am.

Proceedings reconvened at 11:22am.

x. **ALIIMALEMANU Alofa Tuuau - Member for Alataua West**

The Member stated that for future practice, it would be advisable to ensure that relevant Bills are tabled before they are implemented. She stated that this would ensure work activities are properly planned and aligned with the Samoa Strategies for Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Despite supporting the Bill, the Member stated that despite the number of mergers and separations that take place, the crucial focus should be on promoting collaborative work by employees and that all enacted policies are followed through.

xi. **ALAIASA Moefaauouo Sepulona Moananu - Member for Anoamaa East**

The Member noted that new facilities and equipment are not as important as having a capable Human Resource Unit, as it is their responsibility to enact the services and functions of the Ministry. He then stated that post mortem and funeral services should be left to the private sector.

• **PAU Sefo Taumata Pau**

The Member noted that these services contributed significantly to national revenue, noting that approximately 100,000 is contributed indirectly to the economy, via funeral services.

▪ **Hon PRIME MINISTER**

The Hon Prime Minister sought clarification from the Member for Faasaleleaga No. 1 in regards to any known methods of preserving cadavers in their original state.

▪ **PAU Sefo Taumata Pau**

The Member clarified the relevant processes for the information of the House.

xii. **TAFUA Maluelue Tafua, Member for Aleipata Itupa i Lalo**

The Member noted that the Bill will reverse the health processes and that despite policy changes, the services provided will remain unchanged. He then emphasised the need to improve services to a higher standard. In regards to the transitional board, the Member noted concern over the involvement of the Ministers for Health, Finance and Public Enterprises, noting the possibility for conflicts of interest when recommendations are given to Cabinet. He then stated that there should be suitable severance packages in place for those who will be made redundant post merger.

xiii. FUIMAONO Teo Samuelu Teo, Member for Falealili East

The Member queried when the transitional board will be dissolved, particularly due to the fact that Ministers will be involved. The Member then noted his support for the ministerial involvement noting that they have the relevant capacity and experience to assist the other Members.

The Member noted that although less than 20 people will lose their positions as a result of merger, they should be well compensated. He made reference to police officers who had been forced to resign without compensation, stating that the Government needs to recognise that these workers have financial commitments.

The Member then acknowledged the infrastructural designs of the hospital, but raised concerns over existing hospital equipment, noting that there is a shortage of beds. He noted that the most pressing problem in the hospitals was not the lack of equipment but, the lack of doctors. He also noted that these issues are not evident for the private practices, but he stated that the fees are expensive.

**Proceedings were adjourned at 12:06pm.
The Assembly will reconvene at 9:00am, Monday 29th January 2018.**