

DISCLAIMER

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Day 2: Thursday 23rd June 2016

***Continued from PART B**

[PART C]

I. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY CONTINUED

- 1. Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No.2) 2015/2016 – second reading debates continued** (*inclusive of the Appropriation Bill, Supplementary Appropriation Bill and the Report of the Finance and Expenditure Committee on the Second Supplementary Estimates of Receipts and Payments of the Government of Samoa for the Year ending 30 June 2016*)

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES

38. The Hon PRIME MINISTER

The Hon PRIME MINISTER congratulated all the Members for their comments and Maiden Speeches, noting that there is a collective understanding that we must endeavour to implement further national developments. The Hon PRIME MINISTER stated that he has observed from the individual speeches that the Chamber is filled with potential and wise Members; which he stated, is comparable to previous Parliamentary Terms. He then provided a brief background of the budget preparations, from its initial stages in April 2015.

The Hon PRIME MINISTER stated that when request for budget submissions are made in April, Ministires and Entities must present their budgetary proposals and provide adequate

justification for their requests. He noted that despite requests being able to exceed ST\$2 million, the Ministry attempts to limit spending to appropriately align with estimated revenue. After initial consultations, respective proposals are then referred to the Minister, after which a report is given to Cabinet for discussion before the budget is tabled in the Assembly. Once tabled, the Minister of Finance will deliver the Budget Speech after which the respective bills are referred to the Finance and Expenditure Committee (FEC) for scrutiny. Further consultations are held between the Committee and the relevant Ministries and Entities regarding the contents of the budget. It is a mandatory requirement that during these deliberations, no Chief Executive or Member of his or her respective Ministry may leave. The Hon PRIME MINISTER stated that in 1984, the then Prime Minister (Hon Tofilau Eti Alesana) and his Cabinet resolved that during budget deliberations Ministry representatives should make themselves available to the House, for relevant queries on matters unclear to respective Ministers as it is bad practice for Ministers to provide incomplete or vague responses to Member queries.

In acknowledging the unique set of the Chamber for this Parliamentary Term, the Hon Prime Minister noted that there are in addition to the HRPP Members, 3 independents. He stated that the Members seated opposite Cabinet should endeavour to uphold Parliament's independence by encouraging effective debate through enquiries. He stated that when Members wish to speak, they should relay their thoughts to Parliament without restriction. This he noted, will encourage transparency, accountability and good governance – despite the HRPP having a majority hold on seats in the House. He encouraged those Members who do not hold Ministerial Portfolios to take up the role of the 'Opposition' in the sense that they oversee the work of the 'Government' Members. It is for this reason that Associate Ministers have not been appointed to Parliamentary Committees, to ensure ample distance is maintained between the 'Executive' and the Assembly.

In concluding his speech, the Hon Prime Minister stated that despite Samoa lacking a robust financial grounding, there is soft term financing totalling ST\$98 million which is how the overall budget deficit will be financed. In response to the Member for Anoamaa West's issues regarding electoral boundaries, the Hon Prime Minister noted that a Commission of Inquiry has already begun to review the existing boundaries.

39. Hon FIAME Naomi Mataafa, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Natural Resources and Environment and Member for Lotofaga

After acknowledging the Ministries, Corporations and Agencies under her portfolio, the Hon Minister stated that she would address several main issues:

(1) *Seawalls*

The Hon Minister stated that there are certain criterias which govern the construction of seawalls; for example, the need to protect the shoreline from erosion and whether there are recurring instances of sea water corroding tar sealed roads. She stated that there is every intention to continue such projects, particularly to guard against future natural disasters. In addition to a focus on constructing seawalls, priority will also be given to installing water catchments and other resources necessary to ensure high quality water supplies.

(2) *Escape Roads*

For those Members who requested the construction of 'escape roads' inland, the Hon Minister reminded Members that the Government has been encouraging residents to relocate inland since the 2009 tsunami.

(3) *Rubbish Collection*

The Hon Minister noted that this particular service has proved to be a challenge to the Government in that where the service is provided, it has not been provided in full. She stated that the Government will continue to review relevant policies which will help guide the evolvement of this service. However, she noted her support of a solution raised by one Member that rubbish collection be the responsibility of individual villages, provided that rubbish disposal follow environment friendly guidelines. She noted that a partnership between villages and the Government could be established wherein funding currently extended to contractors, may be redirected to villages.

(4) *Aquifers*

The Hon Minister stated that a programme has been initiated which will remedy issues raised by Members. The sewage plant has already been established in Apia, other projects will be implemented for the other areas of the country in due time. The Hon Minister stated that she will consult with the responsible Ministry to determine exact timeframes.

(5) *Climate Change*

The Hon Minister commented on recent global efforts to counter climate change, noting several meetings in which the Hon Prime Minister has attended such as the United Nations Conference in April, where it was resolved by the General Assembly that the issue should be addressed as a matter of urgency. She stated that other international meetings were aimed at finding responsive solutions such as one held in New York whereby set targets for funds to be collected were established. She stated that the effects of climate change affect everyone and therefore suggests that the country work together in an effort to combat and

minimize its effects; a first step is for everyone to be environmentally aware so as to preserve natural resources for future generations.

40. Hon LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell, Minister for Public Enterprises and Member for Satupaitea

The Hon Minister noted that only several Members raised issues relevant to his portfolio:

(1) Employment

The Hon Minister stated that a primary way to create more employment opportunities is to develop the private sector. He stated that by seeking major international businesses to invest in Samoa, employment opportunities may be created. He also stated that he is attempting to assist non-degree holders to find employment, such as through the various schemes promoted through the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD) for youth. He also noted that recent legislation enacted by Parliament are further attempts to attract major businesses to establish branches in the country. For example, Yazaki has provided Samoa with a large amount of employment opportunities for locals.

(2) Business Development

In terms of assisting the development of small locally owned businesses, the Hon Minister stated that a collaborative effort is being undertaken with the Small Business Enterprise Centre (SBEC) wherein they are able to guarantee business start-up loans to assist small private entrepreneurs. He also noted that apprenticeship programmes continue to be implemented for students who have graduated from various technical programmes.

(3) Tourism

The Hon Minister stated that in regards to tourism, the aim is to increase the number of tourists visiting Samoa on an annual basis; for this reason support for continued infrastructure development is vital. He noted that there is a collective understanding, even amongst *Ali'i and Faipule* as to the overall benefits of developing Samoa's tourism sector. He also stated that it would be beneficial to the country to acquire its own plane, noting that it would decrease the cost of travel and further entice tourists to the country. He agreed with the Member for Anoamaa East's comments regarding negotiations of a direct flight from China and stated that the agreement will soon be signed. He also noted his support for the continued development of Salelologa as a main centre for Savaii. He concluded his speech by thanking his constituency for electing him as their Member of Parliament, and for their ongoing support.

41. Hon TUITAMA Talalelei Tuitama, Minister for Health and Member for Aana Alofi No.1 East

The Hon Minister expressed his gratitude to the Members who raised issues for the Health sector in their Maiden Speeches. He thanked them for their advice and for their words of encouragement. He then stated that he would respond to member queries and responses generally.

(1) Hospitals

The Hon Minister noted that at least 6 constituencies have requested the construction of medical centres and that despite his willingness to comply, he stated that we are restricted by available funding. He then stated that it is senseless to construct a multitude of medical centres and/or hospitals when there is an existing shortage of medical personnel. The Hon Minister then made reference to the existing hospitals and medical centres in both Upolu and Savaii which are available to the public. He then stated that patients suffering from non-communicable diseases should be referred to district hospitals; however, he noted that the patient-doctor ratio at Tuasivi is currently 150/180:2 (one doctor is from Upolu who visits one per week). He stated that the situation is similar at the Motootua hospital, where the ratio is approximately 75:1 with an average of 380 patients visiting daily. He stated that there are attempts to ensure that rural residents utilize district hospitals to avoid lengthy travel to Apia.

- The Member for Vaisigano No.1, LOPAOO Natanielu Mua, interjected and claimed that the Tuasivi hospital only receives between about 35,000 patients, from a total population of approximately 82,000.
- The Hon Minister responded that he was referring to daily visits, not annual figures.;
- The Member stated that the figures he has quoted were provided to him by the Hon Minister.

The Hon Minister continued his speech by stating that the Ministry intends to increase the number of health centres in the near future.

(2) Medical personnel

The Hon Minister stated that the Ministry is also attempting to source more doctors to service these centres and hospitals. He stated that there is currently a shortage of medical personnel and that district hospitals and centres are being serviced once a week by private practitioners. He stated that it is hoped that during this Parliamentary Term, there will be an increase in medical personnel or in the number of rural visitations carried out by existing doctors.

(3) Pharmaceuticals

In regards to the current scarcity of medicine, the Hon Minister stated that he has consulted the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Health and the Minister of Finance as to possible solutions. He stated that there are issues in the timely release of funds from grants which the National Health Service (NHS) has negotiated with the Ministry of Finance, wherein in stock will be ordered and released every 6 months.

He further stated that it is common practice that medication is dispensed by medical staff. He noted that when mobile clinics visit rural areas, a dispensary is also taken to re-stock out of stock items at various hospital centres. However, he stated that if a hospital only has panadol on hand, it is because it is the only non-prescription drug that hospital staff are permitted to prescribe without a doctor's prescription.

(4) Viral Threats

The Hon Minister stated that the Zika disease is similar to dengue and chikungunya, a virus which is transferred from the aedis type Mosquito. He stated that between October and November last year, 3 cases were confirmed, thought to have been transmitted from New Zealand visitors. He then elaborated on the symptoms of the disease and noted that since 2015, of the 168 samples sent to New Zealand for testing, only 24 were confirmed to be Zika. He stated that the virus has been limited to certain areas of the country and it has potentially harmful effects on a pregnant women.

(5) Overseas Medical Treatment

The Hon Minister noted that he was part of a research team tasked with investigating the need for medical insurance in Samoa in 1989. He stated that their report was presented to Parliament, yet there was no resolution as to a feasible timeframe for the initiative to begin. In regards to overseas medical treatment, the Hon Minister stated that it is the doctor's discretion to recommend patients for overseas treatment, when all efforts to treat them in country have been exhausted. He stated that it is stated in the current report that the NHS' expenditure figures have increased owing to an increase of patients being transferred internationally for medical treatment; however he stated that in fact, the

expenditure costs have decreased. He then concluded his speech by thanking his constituency for their support.

42. Hon SALA Fata Pinati, Minister for Police and Fire Emergency Services and Member for Gagaemauga No.1

The Hon Minister delivered general comments during his speech in regards to road fires and polic posts. He stated that there is currently a need to establish more police posts in various districts. He stated that he will deal with all the issues raised in the House throughout the term. He then expressed gratitude to the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, the Police and the Prisons and Corrections Services, for without their support his work would not be possible. The Hon Minister emphasised the need for collective responsibility in terms of public safety and other relevant issues raised by Members.

- FAUMUINA Asi Pauli Wayne Fong, Member for Urban West queried whether there is a strategy in place to deter and stop inmate escapes;
- The Hon Minister stated that a new prison facility is in the works.

43. PAPALIITELE Niko Lee Hang, Minister for Works, Transport and Infrastructure and Member for Urban East.

The Hon Minister noted that the main requests made by Members were for the following:

- Access roads;
- Water;
- Electricity;
- Streetlights; and
- Access roads to tourist sites.

The Hon Minister asked Members for their patience as all of the individual requests cannot be implemented in one year. He then noted projects which are currently in the pipeline such as hydro projects; micro-hydro projects as well as solar projects. He stated that there will be hydro plants constructed at Faleaseela, Vailoa and Safata which will assist with the development of renewable energy as a primary energy source.

The Hon Minister then responded to requests made by Members for Urban West and Faleata West for the 4 lane road to be extended and stated that this is not possible at present due to a lack of funding. Other Members put forward additional requests at this time however, the Minister stated that the requests will be noted for consideration.

***Proceedings were adjourned at 11:32pm and will reconvene
at 9:00am, Friday 24th June 2016.***