



September
2021

PARLIAMENTARY SITTING SUMMARY

DISCLAIMER

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PART A **9:29am**

Notice from the Leader of the House:

As the Chairperson for NEOC Committee, she wishes to inform the House that the next two days will be used to conduct the nationwide mass vaccination. The aim of this mass vaccination is to achieve 99% of eligible population to receive the vaccine and highlighted that there are two doses which must be taken to ensure the individual is fully vaccinated. Hon PM noted that there are enough doses for the whole country and acknowledged our partners for the assistance through the provision of free vaccines. There have been 150 teams tasked with the implementation of this important task; the teams will be distributed around Savaii, Upolu, Manono and Apolima for these two days. It is the hope of the Committee and the Government that in these two days, a total of at least 30,000 people will be vaccinated. We will be on lockdown from 8am till 6pm for these two days and shops and businesses will re-open after 6pm. The Hon PM urged the village councils and public to please adhere to the restrictions during the lockdown and be supportive to ensure the country would be safe from the COVID pandemic. She concluded by urging Parliamentarians to take lead with encouraging constituents to get vaccinated.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES (cont.)

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

The Hon Member greeted the Speaker and all of Samoa then addressed the issue raised by Hon LAUOFO regarding the Export Authority and clarified that this will be the responsible authority to connect the exporters/farmers and the distributor. Hon Minister mentioned the Export Product Division, Copra Board and Cocoa Board which were established in the past. The difference between the Export Authority and the previous Boards established in past is that the Government and exporters are co-dependent; noting that farmers/exporters are the wind beneath the wings of government. Hon Minister noted that the exporter will no longer go alone but together with the Government to ensure border securities and ‘red tapes’ are avoided. Hon Minister further mentioned the importance of ‘Government-to-Government approach’, he then asserted that the

Ministry hopes to sell our local taro at a higher price, more than the \$70, noting that price can be easily negotiated if our local taro is up to standard.

i. Susuga Hon TUILAEPA Auelua Fatialofa Lupesoliai Dr Sailele Malielegao, Opposition Leader and Member for Lepa.

The Hon Member noted the importance of the matters raised by the Minister for Agriculture, however it is important to recall the outcome of the past as they bring an important lesson. Hon Member stated that there were Cocoa and Copra Boards in the past, then posed the question why did these Boards collapse? It was because of the interference from Government in decision making. Hon Member recalled that he wrote to the New Zealand PM for assistance on the matter and the response given was that the private sector deals with commercialisation matters and the government does not involve itself. Hon Member noted the issue of having no markets available to export our taro and asserted that that was the reason of creating SROS, there are other options for farmers to take their crops to assist with preparing taro whiskey manufactured at SROS.

The Hon Member encouraged to prepare thorough plans and findings for the awareness and information of Cabinet, as it is a collective responsibility to decide on matters that involve developing the economy of Samoa.

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

The Hon Minister clarified that everything mentioned in his response and all the plans laid for the Ministry was first-hand approved by the Cabinet. He mentioned that all valid points and advices from the Opposition Leader have been duly noted. Hon Minister asserted that the mistakes of the past should not bind current and future developments, as perhaps past events did not work but may be effective and operational today. The Minister clarified the SAFPROM (Samoa Agriculture and Fisheries Productivity and Marketing) project and the government approach that they will renovate the packing house so it will be safe and well maintained for local produce exported overseas.

ii. Afioga LEALAILEPULE Rimoni Aiafi, Member for Faleata 3

The Member mentioned that the Hon Minister touched on the importance of trade, and reminded that all sectors are included in the trade process, and to utilize the proposed PACER Plus Office in Samoa.

Susuga Hon LAAULI Leuatea Polataivao Fosi - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries & Member for Gagaifomauga 3 (cont.)

The Hon Minister noted a packing place in Avele, the Minister stated that the roads then, did not need to be tar-sealed (specifically access roads to farms and agricultural areas) the roads can

still be accessed. The Hon Minister pose that the Ministry are willing to have some funds from the SAFPROM to assist in fixing the access roads because the MWTI budget is not sufficient. Further emphasized as this is part of farming and agricultural initiatives, as the access roads leads to plantations. Hon Member again iterated that the mistakes from yesterday will not ruin the plans of today.

Susuga Hon TUILAEP Auelua Fatialofa Lupesoliai Dr Sailele Malielegao, Opposition Leader and Member for Lepa.

Hon Member accentuated that the mistakes of yesterday provide lessons tomorrow.

Susuga Hon LAAULI Leuatea Polataivao Fosi - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries & Member for Gagaifomauga 3 (cont.)

The Hon Minister clarified that there are 10 gallons of flour made from breadfruit with high export potential as well as collecting samples from (water from all our lakes and rivers, and other water sources) to research on, to make sure it is safe for consumption and enable to conduct the hydropower project.

iii. Afioga Hon LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell, Member for Satupaitea

Hon LAUTAFI reminded the Minister that there are other exports such as handicrafts and local produce apart from taro and crops that can be exported.

iv. Tofa Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Nuafesili Pierre Laufo, Member for Anoamaa 2

In regards to water, the Hon Member recalls a water company that was generated by the Member for Faleata 3, noting 20million was expended for it. This company was operated on STEC lands. He then queried whether SROS can produce sanitizers given that it contains 75% alcohol because we were able to produce whisky locally.

v. Afioga Hon TAPUNUU Papaliitele Niko Lee Hang, Member for Vaimauga 3

The Hon Member spoke on the matter of exporting water and pushing for hydropower as these are important developments, he then requested the use of independent water for these projects, such as the river in SILL. The Member acknowledged the Hon Minister on clarifying the 51 million proposed for constituencies.

Susuga Hon TUILAEP Auelua Fatialofa Lupesoliai Dr Sailele Malielegao, Opposition Leader and Member for Lepa.

The Hon Member reminded that the water source at Mulifanua as mentioned by the Minister is underground water and the usual risk is that during drought season, there is no rain to refill this source and will dry out. However, it is best and most appropriate to look at using the independent rivers such as that in Sili Savaii.

vi. Afioga Hon LEOTA Laki Lamositele, Minister for Women, Community and Social Development:

The Hon Minister stated that with the million tala for respective constituencies, it is important that Village Councils consider similar developments that benefit the constituents. The Minister asserted that Sili will develop its water and export to overseas markets with their million tala.

Afioga Hon TAPUNUU Papaliitele Niko Lee Hang, Member for Vaimauga 3

The Hon Member again raised the water source in SILI and emphasized its importance for development purposes, such as exporting the water. Furthermore, EPC can also use this source for hydro-power and contribute to the development of the economy.

vii. Afioga SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tauiliili Tuivasa, Member for Vaimauga 1

The Member notified the House that there are two water sources in his constituency, and their constituency are keen to test their water if it is safe for consumption that can benefit their constituency.

viii. Tofa MAUU Siasoi Puepuemaia, Member for Vaa o le Fonoti

The Member stood to inform the House that the village of Fagaloa has 5 streams and these waters are open for government development.

Susuga Hon LAAULI Leuatea Polataivao Fosi - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries & Member for Gagaifomauga 3 (cont.)

The Hon Minister emphasised that he works together with the Minister for Trade and also acknowledged an opinion by the Member for Satupaitea to have trade shows in the country and overseas as an exhibition to showcase our traditional crafts and products, and to market our handicrafts to overseas countries. Hon Minister then concluded by addressing the Government of the Day and public servants. He asserted that ‘we are one country’ working together for the betterment of Samoa, it is not for one person or one party, it is for Samoa. He then addressed the CEO’s and encouraged them to conduct their duties with honesty, and urged to leave politics with the politicians. Mentioned the difficulty of the outcome relating to the termination of the previous Attorney General and Clerk of the Assembly, however highlighted the importance of being independent and conducting our duties according to the law. He acknowledged his constituency and the FAST Party supporters for their constant prayers and support. He especially acknowledged his wife who has been his constant source of strength and comfort; and his children and families. Just before he took his seat, the Hon Minister reiterated that church Ministers tax will discontinue.

Proceedings were set aside at 11:13am; and resumed at 11:54am

4. Tofa Hon OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai, Minister for Works, Transport and Infrastructure and Member for Salega 2

The Hon Minister acknowledged the Speaker and expressed gratitude to the Leader of the Opposition for all the years of service under his leadership. He praised the Hon Member as he is his political mentor and he has full knowledge of parliamentary matters and emphasised that he has learnt a lot from him.

Access Roads:

The Hon Minister noted that the majority of members spoke on the issue of development works for roads. The Minister also noted that there were several roads maintained continuously, while others are on the waiting list. The minister noted that he cannot comment on other member's request as he has yet to visit the roads that needs fixing. The Minister also noted that these road works requests are similar to requests for access roads; and that the Minister and Ministry will need to conduct site visits before the work is done. The Minister noted to his surprise the hefty costs that associate with developing and maintaining access roads and it is not below 10million. Hon Minister then reiterated that the Ministry will not always response to the requests to build access roads, they will visit and monitor, emphasizing that the access roads which lead to much farming and plantations will be considered and given priority.

Access to drinking water:

The Hon Minister noted the status of the Independent Water Scheme and asserted that it is not safe for consumption. The Minister put emphasis on the matter regarding water sources eg. Independent water scheme, and stated that there are regulations in place to protect these natural resources, however, permission is still required when these sources are intended for commercial purposes.

Electricity:

The Hon Minister noted that there were several members who commented on the use of 'smart meters' and explained that at the outset of this initiative he expressed concerns, however as with all developments there are pros. He then reminded concerned Members that smart meters provides an easier way for the Ministry to manage the use of electricity and also allows our families overseas to top-up our electricity.

The Hon Minister further added that when there is a drop in electricity rate, there is a high demand in supply, which means families will be able to afford refrigerators, ovens and other electrical appliances which also require electricity.

Hon Minister further reiterated the point made by TUILAEPa regarding the Social and Economic aspects of the economy which must go together, and therefore the quality of life increases as well as the economy of Samoa.

i. LUPEMATASILA Tologata Togia Tile Leia, Member for Falelatai ma Samatau

The Member noted that it is a good change with the drop in electricity however he is concerned that our Corporation would need more generators to supply the nation, and these generators need servicing which are all costly tasks. The drop in Community Service Obligations (CSO), as this was especially useful for families, schools, villages who need street lights and those who cannot afford the costs associated with setting street lights and power lines. He further noted that a few years back we were not able to use our other water sources for hydro-power, however, this is another way to utilize our water sources effectively to generate electricity (hydropower) which is a cheaper alternative.

ii. Afioga Hon TAPUNUU Niko Lee Hang, Member for Vaimauga 3

The Hon Member noted the constant challenge for him as a Minister for Works in the previous parliamentary term, was dealing with complacent road maintenance contractors.

iii. Susuga Hon TUILAEPA Auelua Fatialofa Lupesoliai Dr Sailele Malielegao, Opposition Leader and Member for Lepa.

Hon Member noted that road maintenance is important as there are some villages prone to heavy rainfall and therefore require roads to be tarred. Hon Member then highlighted the importance of support of the current government to CSOs (Community Service Obligations). With regards to electricity issue - the Leader of the Opposition noted that hydro-power is the cheapest alternative for our people, he also noted that, the easiest way to get electricity is to use water sources such as Fuluasou as one of the projects in progress. Hon Member noted that solar energy and hydro energy are the cheapest sources of electricity.

iv. Tofa LEALAILEPULE Rimoni Aiafi, Member for Faleata 3

The Member stated that as politicians, we desire to drop everything by 30% - 40% however we need to be mindful of the usage and supply, whether it is worthwhile in the long run rather than looking at the present time and current situation.

v. Tofa MAUU Siasoi Puepuemai, Member for Vaa o Fonoti

The Member noted that his constituency is the only constituency without access roads and they are only using government roads, then requested for access roads for his constituency.

Afioga Hon OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai, Minister for Works, Transport and Infrastructure and Member for Salega 2

The Hon Minister added that he cannot confirm anything as he would need to conduct site visits and assessments before a conclusion can be made to how many access roads will be implemented and which will take priority.

Tofa LEALAILEPULE Rimoni Aiafi, Member for Faleata 3

The Member posed a reminder that the revenues will decrease due to the reduction of 20% for electricity which costs at about 26million. He then advised the Minister to consider and look at this as it will be a revenue loss for us

vi. Afioga Hon LEOTA Laki Lamositele, Minister for Women, Community and Social Development:

The Hon Minister noted an issue raised by one of the Member's regarding the ago with the river at Sili, he noted that there is a possibility that this river can be used for hydro power. The Minister also quoted from the Report that he has gathered from the Budget that there is enough funds in the EPC (recorded on the 30th June 2020 EPC has \$98million Current Asset), therefore a drop in electricity rate would not affect this.

Afioga LUPEMATASILA Tologata Togia Tile Leia - Falelatai ma Samatau

The Member stated that with hydro-power, we can still market and sell water at the same time while we use the same water supply to generate power.

Afioga Hon TAPUNUU Papaliitele Niko Lee Hang, Member for Vaimauga 3

Member justified that the Minister does not have the authority for any CSO project to be conducted as there was a Cabinet Committee responsible for the decisions regarding applications and proposals for the CSO.

Susuga Hon TUILAEPA Auelua Fatialofa Lupesoliai Dr Sailele Malielegao, Opposition Leader and Member for Lepa.

The Hon Member confirmed that decisions regarding the usage of CSO was decided by the Committee and from memory he recalled there was never a proposal declined; and that other proposals were returned to prepare and provide proper documentation and explanations as to why 2 – 3 street lights or electricity posts were required; which was either due to the family home being farther inland and therefore required 2 – 3 light posts from the main road to the family home.

Afioga Hon LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell, Member for Satupaitea

The Hon Member reiterated on the 20%, suggests the Minister reconsiders this as this money could be used for maintenance and to pay those contractors. Furthermore, the Member noted that there were villages on the list of road works last term that needed fixing to look into making sure that they get maintained and fixed during this term. He requested to the Minister to reconsider his decision that states; villages which do not cultivate land or have plantations will not be considered to have access roads provided, however LAUTAFI further stated that the reason some villages have no plantations is because they do not have access roads to travel to their plantations.

vii. TOFA ALE Vena Ale, Member for Faleata Faleata 4

The Member reminded the Minister for access roads, (Saina, Toamua etc), also touched on the issue of smart meters, to re-consider looking into this initiative as there have been numerous complaints regarding this project.

Afioga Hon OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai, Minister for Works, Transport and Infrastructure and Member for Salega 2

The Minister commented on the hydro project at Alaoa and stated that this project was progressing well. He further clarified that smart meters are advantageous, also added that he was one of those that did not accept this new development however, when he was aware of the pros of this initiative he agrees with the implementation. In regards to the wharf in Asau, Manono and Apolima, the Minister added that, there is a fund already in the budget for the development of these wharfs.

Susuga Hon TUILAEPA Auelua Fatialofa Lupesoliai Dr Sailele Malielegao, Opposition Leader and Member for Lepa.

The Hon Member added that the wharf at Asau has complications, the (ava) is not deep enough for boats, ferries cruise ships and cargo ships. It needs to be dug deeper to further widen the reef that needs to break down so cruise ships and ships can access and dock at the harbour.

viii. Afioga AUUAPAAU Mulipola Aloiafua, Member for Aiga ile Tai

The Member stated that he conducted recent studies which have provided that the wharf at Apolima Tai has vanished, therefore heightening the need for a wharf in this area.

Afioga Hon OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai, Minister for Works, Transport and Infrastructure and Member for Salega 2

The Hon Minister concluded by addressing his constituency in all its honorific salutations, then acknowledged his church Ministers, families and friends for all their support. He also acknowledged and commended the efforts of the CEO's and Ministry under his portfolio.

Other Announcement by the Speaker

Hon Mr Speaker informed the House that FESA are conducting health checks behind the Parliament House for any Member who wishes to check their glucose level and blood pressure.

**Proceedings were set aside at 1:05pm;
and resume at 2pm**