

DISCLAIMER

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Wednesday 23 January 2019

7:15pm

[PART B]

I. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY

1. SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL (No.1) 2018/2019

Debate on second reading continued

(vi) TOOMATA Aki Tuipea – Member for Salega West

The Member commended the Minister of Finance for implementing the salary increase for public servants. He mentioned the unstable nature of inflation and therefore recommended to lease 100 acres as an industrial zone for his constituency as to foster more job opportunities.

He acknowledged the Minister of Works, Transport and Infrastructure for development work currently in progress for an access road in his constituency; the Member raised the need for repair works for the roads in Fogatuli as it will increase accessibility to plantations, churches and a water catchment area (Tanks) for the village.

In regards to the Accident Compensation Corporation the Member acknowledged its works and suggested that there be more transparency between the corporation and the employees to better inform members of their contributions to the corporation each year. The member valued the contribution of the Corporation in the purchase of ambulance to cater for emergency cases.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION - Minister for MPE/MCIL, Hon LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell

The Hon Minister clarified that the Corporation does not use the fund to invest in other projects; all outputs are in accordance with requirements and provisions stipulated in the legislation. The Corporation collects each individual's ACC contribution with the intention to feed individual accounts to cater for unforeseen circumstances. The Minister elaborated that the funds go into meeting the purpose of the corporation, (to compensate accidents); he then mentioned certain projects were achieved because of the ACC funds such as the purchase of Ambulance cars, CT Scan, medical treatment costs, etc.

CLARIFICATION – The Hon Prime Minister, TUILAEPA Lupesoliai Neioti Dr. Sailele Malielegaoi

The Hon PM clarified that the ACC fund is different to that of the NPF, whereby the ACC covers accidental cases of injuries to the contributor. He furthered the sentiments made by the Minister of MCIL whereby the CT scan was purchased from the ACC fund; although expensive it was important especially to ensure proper health assessments were made for the people.

The PM iterated that the fund is equivalent to an Insurance plan, whereby contributors are only entitled to the fund in times of accidental injuries (except for self-injuries).

TOOMATA Aki Tuipea – Member for Salega West

The Member concluded by requesting the Government to look into amending the ACC legislation with the following:

- (i) To provide a register to record all employees contribution to ACC for each financial year so that all are aware of its total contribution.
- (ii) Propose of an additional 2% on the current contribution.
- (iii) No guarantors permitted on the individual's contribution.
- (iv) The contribution to be used when the contributor is deceased (for funeral costs).

(vii) FONOTOE Nuafesili Pierre Laufo – Member for Anoamaa West

The Member greeted Samoa in all her honorific salutations and conveyed sympathies to the widow and family of the late Pa'u Sefo Pa'u.

He commended the government for the extension of the roads from the town areas to the Faleolo international Airport. FONOTOE acknowledged the raise on the pension from \$135 to \$145. In regards to the National Kidney Foundation, the Member advised the Minister for another facility to relocate the foundation due to limited space in the current facility.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION - Minister of Health, Hon TUITAMA Talalelei Tuitama

The Hon Minister clarified that plans have already been made to relocate the NKF to a more spacious facility.

FONOTOE Nuafesili Pierre Laufo, Member for Anoamaa West

The Member further called for more seats at the outpatients' area for the Tuasivi Hospital; emphasised the importance of prevention over treatment. In regards to the merge of the National Health Services and the Ministry of Health, noting that he was of the opinion that there were redundant employees and requested clarification as to how the merge would be implemented.

The Member commended the Ministry for lowering the overall debt for the Development Bank of Samoa. He then urged Government to look at the possibility of reviving the Medcen hospital and to be run by Government. The member expressed concerns on the rising number of murder offences and stated that in his opinion there is a correlation between this and the rise in the use of prohibited drugs, such as methamphetamine (ice). A suggestion was then given to government to review whether Police are performing its duty and whether the Ministry is in need of any assistance to be more effective.

The Member for Anoamaa West emphasised there being severe mental implications for drug users, thus calling for heavier/harsher punishment for offenders. FONOTOE called for a special block in the new prison to be allocated to drug addicts focusing on rehabilitation and recovery (age group 20- 30 years)

In regards to the Ministry of Public Enterprise, the Member suggested a bigger aircraft to alleviate flight delay issues, despite operation costs and other terms of expenses.

The member noted his support for the increase in salary for public servants. He expressed sentiments echoed by the PM stating that the raise, all depends on the interdependent relationship between the private and public sector. Furthermore, the member reaffirmed the importance in the role of the Salary Tribunal to maintain the balance in the gap between the public and private sector. The Member also called for a 5% salary raise for Parliamentarians and jested that the nature of the job is unpredictable and they might lose their seat with only 2% in their pockets.

(viii) NAFOITOA Talaimanu Keti – Member of Gagaemauga No.3

The Member conveyed sympathies to the family of the late Member Pa'u Sefo Pa'u.

The Member raised issues pertaining to the Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2018/2019. He acknowledged the efforts of the Ministry of Finance to follow through the theme of the budget "the right path". NAFOITOA raised the issue of overdue rent payments of the Office of the Legislative Assembly to the Samoa Sports Facilities Authority.

CLARIFICATION – The Hon Prime Minister, TUILAEPA Lupesoliai Neioti Dr. Sailele Malielegaoi

The Hon Prime Minister clarified that the rent is usual process, and noted that the introduction of new legislation such as the taxation of pastors was for the purpose of

generating more revenue to assist with the development of the nation.

NAFOITOA Talaimanu Ketu – Member of Gagaemauga No.3 (cont.)

The Member asserted that the Corporation is in need of a new ferry given that the current Ferries have been used for quite some time and have experienced the usual wear and tear. He raised the issue of maintenance for ferries as these are utilised by the public for transportation to and from Savaii. NAFOITOA then called for all people travelling to Savaii to adhere to safety instructions by seafarers for individual safety.

In regards to road repairs needed in his constituency, the Member requested the Minister of Works to please look into the dire situation of the roads in Savaii, especially the access roads to primary schools.

For the Ministry of Education, the Member acknowledged the development of a Sports field for the Avao primary school. The issue of maintaining a healthy marine life was also mentioned by the Member and requested the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment to assist with the removal of algae in the reefs.

(ix) LEALAIPEULE Rimoni Aiafi – Associate Minister of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology.

The Member commented on the importance of being given the opportunity to speak in Parliament, noting the significant role of Parliament and the prestige bestowed on Members from their constituents. The following issues were raised by the Associate Minister in his speech.

To the Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure; he acknowledged the appropriation of \$25,000 for the developments in the village of Vaigaga and urged for road quality to be up to standard; furthermore, the Samoa Water Authority should maintain the roads in which they dug to access pipelines; The Member noted that Aleisa roads need an upgrade. He further noted that there are an increasing number of taxis parked randomly on the road and called for proper headquarters to be based at their stands. Generally roads need to be upgraded.

CLARIFICATION – The Hon Minister, PAPALIITELE Niko Lee Hang

The Minister stated that the individual whom is requesting water maintenance will be liable for charges incurred.

LEALAIPEULE Rimoni Aiafi – Associate Minister of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, Member for Faleata West

The Member continued his speech voicing issues with the following Ministries:

To the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Member raised concerns in regards to street vendors whom sell products in front of the plaza and called for these individuals to utilize the markets that Government created for the safety of the seller and the public at large.

In regards to the Ministry of Police, the Associate Minister called for blood-testing to ensure those smuggling drugs, dealing drugs or consuming drugs are easily identified and therefore impose heavier punishments on such individuals.

Street vendors (specifically children) are becoming problematic as they behave and act inappropriately (rude) which calls for the Ministry of Police to effectively enforce and monitor curfew times. He further, commended the Ministry with the move to create a Returning Offenders legislation.

To the Ministry of Justice, Courts and Administration, called to utilize retired judges to serve and make-up the Court of Appeal

To the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, the Member commented on the sector plan, and expressed concern at the alarming rate of failure in subjects such as English, Math, and others. He called for SQA to extend their jurisdiction and place emphasis on Early Childhood Education. LEALAILEPULE believes that the Authority should prioritize primary and secondary school and therefore suggested for SQA to be called Samoa Quality Education Authority (SQEA).

(ix) ALAIASA Moefaaouou Sepulona Moananu – Associate Minister of Education, Sports and Culture, Member for Anoamaa East

The Member acknowledged the Minister of Finance for the Supplementary Bill. Then commented on the importance of the public servants to Parliament and agreed that they be rewarded accordingly via a pay rise. ALAIASA requested funding to maintain roads; especially the Cross Island Road then raised the following issues:

To the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, the Member acknowledged the works carried out by the Ministry to develop the education sector; ALAIASA addressed the Ministry becoming the scapegoat for the failure rates. The Member quoted remarks made by certain members of the public such as “shortage of teachers causing students to fail” however, the Member believes that parents/legal guardians have equal input (if not more so) in the failure of a student.

He asserted that parents are equally responsible for the success and failure of their children as their roles are crucial in the academic development process. The Member further stated that having the right support, discipline, and encouragement contributes to the development of a child. Parents/guardians should monitor their children especially with more students owning mobile phones and the rapid growth of technology which

bring both positive and negative impacts on a student's life.

The Member concluded by reminding his fellow Parliamentarians that the development of the nation is a collective responsibility.

Proceedings were set aside at 8:58pm and resumed at 9:48pm

(x) Chairperson for Finance and Expenditure Committee, ALIIMALEMANU Alofa Tuuau, Member for Alataua West

The Chairperson was pleased to note the positive direction the economy was heading based on the findings from the report. Another gain reported was the overall \$4.1 million in dividends paid by State Owned Enterprises to Government. In regards to the timely repayment of debts owed to Government, the Committee recommends proper policies formulated to ensure the debts are collected. Another issue raised by the Chairperson was the amount of \$92.7million not included in the Auditors Report. The Committee therefore recommended that a tribunal be established to deal with issues of outstanding debts (dating back 20 years).

In regards to the Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure, the Chairperson acknowledged the construction works done on the Neiafu road. She then urged the Minister to look into mowing contractors and requested that the contracts be awarded to residents of the area.

INTERJECTION – Ministry of Works Transport and Infrastructure

- Hon PAPALIITELE Niko Lee Hang stated that the Land Transport Authority was in the process of conducting surveys in the rural areas to identify whether the village people had the capacity to implement and honour the mowing contracts.

ALIIMALEMANU Alofa Tuuau, Member for Alataua West (cont.)

In regards to Access Roads, the Member suggested to formulate contracts between the Village Council and Government to ensure that access roads constructed by government are maintained by the village men to ensure it serves its purpose, to allow villagers to access plantations and transport crops from inner village to sell at the market or along the roadside.

INTERJECTION – Hon Prime Minister

- The PM commended the member on suggesting the aforementioned idea of villagers being tasked with the maintenance of access roads and asserted that the key lies with the village mayor (Pulenuu), as it was practiced in the past that government cleared the access roads and then appropriated additional funds to maintain the access roads which was unnecessary – as it encouraged the villagers to be lazy and dependant. The Hon PM noted that village mayors should be selected based on service so as to ensure government developments in the villages are looked after and maintained effectively by the council (which is supposedly led by the mayor).

ALIIMALEMANU Alofa Tuuau, Member for Alataua West (cont.)

In terms of acquiring services – the Member noted that there have been certain unnecessary criteria which the donor nations cannot meet thus disqualifying their eligibility to be donors to our nation. She therefore called to create eligibility requirements which can be flexible to encourage wealth distribution in Samoa.

The Member continued by acknowledging Government efforts to establish Samoa Airways, noting the importance of their contribution to the development and growth of the economy. The Member for Alataua West noted the importance of purchasing a second and third airplane to account for losses caused by delayed flights or limited seats for potential flyers, and to service another route.

She acknowledged the importance of seasonal employment schemes in the development of households and the economy at large (providing employment opportunities for the people)

The Member for Alataua West conveyed support for the interchanging of CEO's within Ministries and suggested the Public Service Commission to consider this practice so as to avoid collusion. ALIIMALEMANU suggested there being a board for all CEO's who have finished their contractual terms and are not employed elsewhere in the government to provide consultancy or mentoring practices to the public servants, given the wealth of knowledge and expertise with these individuals.

In regards to the Ministry of Health, the Member noted the \$10 million expended for overseas referrals for patients and suggested that the village community be up-skilled and empowered to perform the simple health tests such as (taking blood pressure tests and checking for diabetes)

In regards to a query on the allocation of an appropriation of 5.7 million, the Chairperson for the Finance Committee clarified that \$3.7million is allocated for salary and \$2million is allocated for transferring patients overseas for treatments.

The Member concluded her statement by noting that her vision for Samoa in the next 20 years is "equal wealth distribution"

▪ Hon PRIME MINISTER

The Hon Prime Minister acknowledged all Members who spoke on the Supplementary Appropriation Bill, stating that comments made over the last two days has been evidence of Member's expansive knowledge on national issues. The Hon Prime Minister then stated that the Government's role is to clarify which was why the countless interjections and clarifications to ensure Members and the public (listening in) are not strayed from facts and developments which the government has been implementing for the greater good of the nation.

The Hon Prime Minister also acknowledged the Finance and Expenditure Committee on the report presented on the Supplementary Appropriation Bill and informed the House that the Cabinet will attempt to answer queries and address issues raised by Members in their speeches – Cabinet responses will begin with the Minister of Communication and Information Technology.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES

i. Minister of Communications, Information and Technology, Hon AFAMASAGA Lepuiaí Rico Tupai

The Hon Minister noted that few Members raised issues specific to his portfolio which he took to be a positive sign of his Ministry's work. He then informed the House of current development undertaken by the Ministry, which included 101 new telecommunication posts recently installed; 6 months post operations of the Tui Samoa cable has resulted in 5% growth of internet access and quality.

The Minister mentioned the status of developments to shift the television from 'analogue' to 'Digital TV' and noted that Phase 1 will be completed before June 2019. The Hon Minister highlighted the issue in regards to the placement of the telecommunication posts as a challenge and urged people to be of assistance.

In regards to the negative impacts of the internet on children; it is in the opinion of the Minister that parent's role to monitor and limit the time children spend on the phone is crucial, noting that internet with its advantages, also pose great risks and danger to children. On the issue of the community getting involved with enforcing proper usage of social media, the Hon Minister commended the village council for penalising the responsible family for posting insinuating comments on social media.

ii. Minister of Justice Courts and Administration, Hon FAÁOLESA Katopau T. Ainuu

The Hon Minister conveyed condolences to the wife of the late Pa'u Sefo Pa'u. Then he noted that few Members raised issues specific to his portfolio and he will attempt to address these issues. In response to the query about who is eligible to attain a 'temporary order' – the Minister stated that all have an equal right to temporary orders. He further noted that temporary orders serve 2 purposes:

- (i) to cease bestowment of a matai title; and
- (ii) to cease construction on a customary land.

In addition to his statement, the Hon Minister responded in regards to punishment for temporary order, stating that the current punishment is 6 months imprisonment, or \$600 fine. However, the amendment proposes for 1 year imprisonment, or \$1,000. In saying this, the Minister noted that he is of the opinion that the proposed amendment is also not justifiable, it should be more – and proposed for the responsible Committee to reconsider this amendment.

iii. Minister of Education, Sports and Culture, Hon LOAU Sola Keneti Sio

The Hon Minister noted that there were only two issues raised by Members in regards to the Ministry. He emphasised that the education sector comprised of NUS, SQA and MESC.

In response to specific matters raised by Members, the Hon Minister made several comments:

In regards to registration costs for NUS, they have not been raised, however the fee per course has been increased to factor in costs of textbooks and salaries for tutors/lecturers.

In regards to the Vailoa Primary School that was engulfed in flames, the Ministry is currently working to speed up its reconstruction.

With only 30% of the 14 million grant appropriated for teachers' salaries, the Minister stated that the intention is to increase the amount to 50% in due time.

The request noted by the Member for Vaisigano No.2 was implemented by JICA. Furthermore, he assured the Member for Alataua West that her request has been approved by Cabinet – the only issue was securing funds for the development. The Hon Minister asserted that the project was prioritised given the need for a College in the constituency.

Proceedings of the Assembly adjourned at 11pm and will reconvene at 9:00am on Thursday 24 January 2019.