



Monday 16th November 2020
MEMBERS PRE-SITTING BRIEFING

There was a good turn out from Members of Parliament for their usual Pre-Sitting Briefing this morning. A total of 40 Members convened at the Conference Room of Maota Tofilau Eti Alesana (MTEA), Mulinu'u to consider the 2 Bills administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, these are:

1. *Meteorology, Geo-Science and Ozone Services Bill 2020*; and
2. *Land and Titles Registration Amendment Bill 2020*.

The Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment together with the Divisional Heads for Meteorology and Land Management presented on the background of the Bills.

(1) METEOROLOGY, GEO-SCIENCE AND OZONE SERVICES BILL 2020

Presenter: *Tagaloa Shirley Tuagalu - Acting Chief Executive Officer (MNRE)*
Fuimaono Lameko Talia - Principal Scientific Officer for Geoscience

The Acting Chief Executive Officer for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment explained that the Bill ultimately provides the regulation and management of the meteorology, geoscience and ozone services in Samoa. Additionally, the Bill also provides for the establishment of the Multi Hazard Early Warning System to ensure timely dissemination of meaningful information and warnings to the public, thus reducing the risk of harming lives and damaging the environment.

Tagaloa provided a brief background of the Meteorology Office, she explained that the Office was originally under the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries since 1980, however during the government's major reform in 2003 the Meteorology Office was then placed under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (where it has been to this day). Tagaloa noted that the establishment of a Bill which independently governs and regulates meteorology, geoscience and ozone services is a milestone achievement for the Meteorology Office and the Ministry as a whole.

Fuimaono delved into the specifics of the Bill and explained that the Office provides various services, not only in meteorology which comprises of forecasts and climate, but also geoscience services which include the study and investigation of the earth's minerals, soil, water and energy resources. Fuimaono explained further that the ozone services is also part of the Office's functions, all of which are addressed by the Bill; specifically in ensuring Samoa adheres to its obligations under international agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol which aims to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Fuimaono also explained that in addition to the various services provided by the Meteorology Office, they are also tasked with the issuing of alert and warning to the public in the event of a natural disaster; as the Bill provides for the establishment of the Multi-Hazard Early Warning System.

Issues and concerns raised by Members:

- Afioga Tafua Maluelue Tafua acknowledged the Ministry for the Bill and noted his concern with the current warning system in place. He recalled the recent earthquake which occurred last week and stated that he called the emergency number 911 for an update but was told that the Meteorology Office has yet to provide a status report to the emergency operators.

Fuimaono clarified that the current process for issuing warnings is that if the magnitude is above 7.5, this warrants a warning to evacuate and move to higher grounds. While any magnitude between 6.5 - 7.4 warrants an advise for fishing vessels to come back to shore and any activity along the coastal area to be stopped.

- Afioga Aliimalemanu Alofa Tuuau queried whether the overarching aim of the Bill is to provide regulation and management of the Meteorology Office and all its various functions. Furthermore she queried whether the Bill will make any improvement to the ongoing functions currently carried out by the Office.
- The Hon PM suggested that the Ministry should consider issuing public warning or public notice through 2AP as this is a 24hour broadcasting service.
- Afioga Faaulusau Rosa Stowers suggested that the Meteorology Services utilise the mobile networks to send out an SMS text message to all mobile numbers in an emergency event as this is a much faster option to warn the public as the majority of Samoans have access to mobile phones.
- Tofa Nafaitoa Talaimanu Ketu recommended more public awareness to be carried out by the Meteorology office to better inform the public about what to do in times of natural disasters.
- Afioga Aumua Isaia Lameko suggested to have better measurements and scales in place to ensure accurate measurements of earthquake magnitudes and so fourth, as he noted discrepancies between the measurements provided by the local Authorities and New Zealand. The Meteorology Office recorded the earthquake at 6.5 while New Zealand reported 5.9; the overall detection and measurement systems should be improved.

- The Hon PM informed Members that a specific siren was procured for the purpose of effective warning for the whole country, the siren has never been used to this day as there was no need to utilise it. The Hon PM queried whether there was a trial-run for this siren to test whether it is operational.
- Afioga Lealailepule Rimoni Aiafi stated that the Office plays an important function for the safety of Samoa, therefore it should be made separate and independent from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.
- The Hon PM in response to the suggestion made by Lealailepule asserted that the Cabinet is currently considering which Ministries to forego and which to be made into a separate Ministry (noting that there will be 2 additional Ministers in the next parliamentary term).
- Afioga Sulamanaia Fetaiai Tauiliili Tuivasa recommended that a separate Meteorology Office be established as a backup facility for the Office.

Fuimaono explained that since the Tsunami in 2009, the Meteorology Office has procured 6 new machines used to measure the different natural disasters; these 6 scales are located in Asau, Apiu, Vaiaata, Afulilo, Apia and Afiamalu. Furthermore, the Office has also prepared for unexpected times when a cyclone may hit its headquarters in Mulinuu, thus a space has been assigned in the NEOC Building at Faleata which has mirrored the office at Mulinuu with all the relevant equipment and machinery needed to carry out the services of the meteorology office.

2) LAND TITLES REGISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL 2020

Presenter: *Tagaloa Shirley Tuagalu - Acting Chief Executive Officer (MNRE)*
Manumaleuga Filisita Heather - ACEO Land Management

The Acting CEO explained that the Bill amends section 18 of the *Land Titles Registration Act 2008*, to extend the commencement of the expiration of cautions. Currently, in section 18 the period is 12 years from the commencement of the Act. The period of 12 years expires in March 2021. Due to the need to defer the expiration period, the Bill seeks to amend section 12 to add a further five (5) years to the expiration period. The new expiration period will therefore lapse in 2026.

Issues and concerns raised by Members:

- Afioga Faumuina Tiatia Liuga recommended that the Title of the Bill be properly addressed to specify that the Bill provides for the registration of 'Freehold Land' only so as to avoid confusion from the public.
- Afioga Lealailepule Rimoni Aiafi explained that land is always a sensitive issue; he then noted an article in today's edition of Samoa Observer and stated that the Ministry should continue informing the public on their services.
- Afioga Namulauulu Sami Leota queried whether all books and records of the Land Registry was available in e-copies to ensure records are made available throughout generations to come; to which the ACEO Land Management responded that all records have been scanned and safely stored to ensure availability to the relevant public.

The Acting CEO acknowledged the Members for their time and concluded their presentation.

The Hon. Speaker concluded with a Prayer and the Briefing was adjourned at 12pm.