



March
2021

PARLIAMENTARY SITTING SUMMARY

DISCLAIMER

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PART B

Day 30
6:18pm

Monday 1st March 2021

I. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY

1. SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL (NO.1) 2020/2021- second reading & Debate on the Bill (cont.)

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

i. Hon AFAMASAGA Lepuiai Rico Tupai - Minister for Communication & Information Technology and Member for Aana Alofi No.3.

The Hon Minister commenced by conveying condolences to the families of the two deceased Members of Parliament from the 16th Parliamentary Term who have passed on to the after-life, Afioga PA'U Sefo Pa'u and Afioga VAAFUSUAGA Toleafoa Ken Poutoa. He then greeted the House and Samoa in all her honorific salutations. He also acknowledged the Governor of American Samoa; addressed le Ao o le Malo and Masiifo, Council of Deputies, Mr Speaker and Members of Parliament. Greeted the LTC President and Judges, CJ and MJCA. He addressed the Hon PM and Cabinet Ministers & their respective Associate Ministers. The Hon Minister also expressed gratitude to his constituency of Aana Alofi No.3 and sought their support as he presented their contribution to the 16th Parliament of Samoa; noting that it had been 31 years since a Ministerial post was afforded to the constituency of Aana Alofi No.3.

The Hon Minister then spoke on the developments and achievements of the Ministry for Communication & Information Technology. The Hon Member compared the practices in the olden times in comparison to current developments, and noted that developments have provided convenience, ease of access and cost and time saving and has generally improved life.

In 2015, the Telecommunication Act was passed and the Hon Minister noted that Digicel opened its Samoa operations in October 2006 (Samoa was the first in the region to open Digicel). In regards to spectrum license issued, the Hon Minister noted that 3 license were distributed; 1- Samoa Tel, 2- Telecom Cellular, 3- Digicel and CSL. The Hon Minister noted that Government continues to improve and enhance technology and communication services as evidenced in Samoa 2040 strategies. Furthermore, in regards to the Tui Samoa cable owned by Samoa, Hon Minister asserted that this cable runs through Fiji, Wallis and Futuna. The Hon Minister noted the increased usage of advanced technology and telecommunication services in these unprecedented times caused from covid19.

In regards to the cost of data/internet bundles, the Hon Minister was pleased to note the decrease of 80% for the cost of internet services; Telecommunication companies work towards data bundles to provide affordable deals for internet usage for employment, education and households.

- **Afioga OLO Afoa Vaai, Member for Salega East**

The Member queried whether BitCoin was legalised in Samoa, as notices spread throughout the country states otherwise, yet the Minister has mentioned this investment scheme.

- **Afioga ALAIASA Moefaaouou Sepulona Moananu, Member for Anoamaa East**

The Member asserted that BitCoin has been proven a genuine form of investment.

Hon PRIME MINISTER – Clarification:

The Hon Prime Minister mentioned the pyramid schemes and its cons on low income families; these schemes are luring families to gamble their income. The Hon PM urged Members that it is safest and most guaranteed to save your monies/income in the banks rather than investing in pyramid schemes as there is no guarantee.

Hon AFAMASAGA Toeolesulusulu Rico Tupai, Minister for Communication and Information Technology

The Hon Minister noted that these 3 wires are able to connect us to other Pacific Islands in terms of communications, furthermore the cables allow Samoa to gain access to 16 countries in the Pacific region. The Hon Minister noted that consultations are carried out with stakeholders to consider the establishment of a data centre. The Hon Minister mentioned that the network pole was placed at Malie which only covered 56% service to Samoa. Hon Minister mentioned that Vodafone has a coverage connectivity of 96% and a few months prior they launched their 100th tower while

Digicel at 95%. Hon Minister expressed and acknowledged the work of Faamausili Andrew Ah Liki and Samoa Digital Limited Company for the well-developed digital network that has covered the whole of Samoa with a variety of channels. He then highlighted that FM radio has a coverage of 85% of Samoa.

In regards to the Samoa Cyber security, the Hon Minister noted that the Ministry has established the Emergency Response Team to protect Samoa especially those who are affected by cyber bullying, and effectively monitor these activities and websites to ensure Samoa's digital environment is healthy and safe for the children of children. The Hon Minister mentioned plans in the pipeline for the UN Global Lab to be established in Samoa, will provide employment opportunities for the youth who possess the knowledge and skills as data scientists to provide information and data analysis for the development of Samoa and other Pacific islands. There was also mention of the 'Samoa Knowledge Society'. Other projects include the Samoa Digital Transformation Authority for information storage. He further noted the different apps available to provide convenience to the people. Hon Minister mentioned the assistance of zoom and its teleconferencing facilities to ensure meetings were conducted.

- **Susuga Hon LAAULI Polataivao Leuatea - Member for Gagaifomauga No.3**

The Hon Member sought clarification on the progress of cybersecurity and gateway for Samoa.

Hon AFAMASAGA Toeolesulusulu Rico Tupai, Minister for Communication and Information Technology

The Hon Minister responded that there was a cybersecurity strategy in place and that the Ministry continues to collaborate with Australia, NZ and USA internet service providers on the matter of cybersecurity and creating a safe and healthy platform for the users.

- **Susuga Hon LAAULI Polataivao Leuatea - Member for Gagaifomauga No.3**

The Member reminded the Minister that the Gateway is not secure as it goes through several nations, such as the cable which goes through Fiji and Wallis and Futuna and asserted that Samoa's information should be safeguarded from foreign nations.

Hon AFAMASAGA Toeolesulusulu Rico Tupai, Minister for Communication and Information Technology (cont.)

The Hon Minister asserted that the Government would not go through an arrangement unless it was certain that its information was safe and secure. Hon Minister then mentioned the Samoa

Information Technology Association (SITA) training to hone the skills of IT specialists. Furthermore, the Regulator is responsible for controlling the cost of the internet.

The Hon Minister spoke on the SAMOA Post Office and noted its services for Samoa, he further noted that the Office is currently negotiating the move to a private-public partnership as advised by its Board of Directors.

- **Afioga FUIMAONO Teo Samuelu Teo - Member for Falealili East**

The Member noted that he queried the status of ISP – Internet Service Providers and cable filters and sought clarification whether there was a fixed cost for ISP's.

Hon Prime Minister – Clarification

The Hon PM asserted that the public have the opinion that the internet cost is too expensive, then spoke on the University of Medicine in Samoa, OUM where foreign students can apply. The PM noted that OUM accepts applicants from overseas and students are also afforded the opportunity to conduct practical experiences.

Hon AFAMASAGA Toeolesulusulu Rico Tupai, Minister for Communication and Information Technology (cont.)

The Hon Minister noted that the cost of internet has been reduced by more than 80%, and that ISP have made data bundles affordable for the public, noting that data bundles can be purchased for as low as \$1, \$2 and \$3. Furthermore, the Minister mentioned that the Samoa Submarine Cable paid 8million for the cable, and advised the member for Falealili East to be patient.

Hon Prime Minister – Clarification

The Hon PM mentioned that 80% decrease is the good side of internet; furthermore noted that Samoa is the first nation in the region to create a digital library.

- **Afioga ALIIMALEMANU Alofa Tuuau - Member for Alataua West**

The Committee Chair clarified on the reduced cost for data bundles and explained that before the cables were laid, 1GB was worth \$10, however today the user can purchase 10GB for \$10. However, the misunderstanding is on the purchasing of data bundles, and encouraged the ISP's to continue awareness for the older population who use their telecommunication services on how to purchase data bundles which not only provides data, but also free call and text messaging services.

- **Afioga Hon LOPAOO Natanielu Mua - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries & Member for Vaisigano No.1**

The Hon Member sought clarification as to the process or consequences for those who use the social media as a means of defaming and making derogatory statements towards another.

Hon AFAMASAGA Toeolesulusulu Rico Tupai, Minister for Communication and Information Technology (cont.)

Hon AFAMASAGA noted the improvements of data bundles and usage over the years due to high speed of internet. He then acknowledged Samoa's overseas partners, and noted the cost of communication from Vodafone to Digicel has decreased to 5 cents. The Hon Minister acknowledged the work of ICT companies in Samoa. He also acknowledged the work of his Associate Minister, Afioga LEALAILEPULE Rimoni Aiafi for his unwavering support over the parliamentary term. He also commended the Hon Tuitama and all the other Members who will not be coming back next Parliamentary Term, he acknowledged their work and their services to this Parliament. He then addressed Mr speaker and noted how fortunate he was to be part of the time where Mr Speaker has Chaired parliamentary proceedings; acknowledged the Hon Mr Speaker for his patience and forbearance over the years. The Hon Minister acknowledged all the CEO's ACEO's, Clerk and D. Clerk, Office of the Legislative for the hard work during this Parliamentary term and acknowledged his constituency for their support and addressed his constituency in all honorific salutation.

Proceedings were set aside at 7:56pm

Proceedings resumed at 8:46pm.

Afioga Hon TUILAIPA Lupesoliai Neioti

The Hon Prime Minister noted that Parliament has its Standing Order to guide the procedures of the Assembly, and the authority of Parliament is vested with the Speaker, noting Mr Speaker's discretion and authority to make rulings accordingly and Mr Speaker's decision is 'final'. The Hon PM mentioned that there are certain Members making public statements that the Speaker is mostly biased with his rulings and reminded Members of the Oath they took upon swearing in as Members of Parliament.

The Hon PM noted the importance of upholding the dignity of Parliament, and asserted that absence from Parliamentary proceedings is not something that can be ruled by another man, however the oath taken during a Members' swearing in should not be taken lightly. Hon PM asserted that at the end of his address, he will move a motion to establish a commission of inquiry to review and analyse the defamatory statements made on different channels and

different media platforms which has mislead most people from the rational intention of the current government. He then advised the people of Samoa to be vigilant and strengthen their faith in the Lord as the devil is always around to tempt and test the people of God.

The Hon PM emphasised that Parliament is the supreme law making body, while the Judicial Service (Courts) is the supreme body to interpret laws, while the Executive branch is the body which implements and enforces the laws. Hon PM noted that the roles and functions of the 3 Branches are straightforward and do not intertwine, unless when it is being checked/scrutinized. The Hon PM noted that in order to balance out power – power is utilised to check the other (noting that the 3 powers oversee/scrutinize each other).

Hon PM explained that the abuse of power creates destruction, as evidence during the Hitler regime. Furthermore, Hon PM explained that the British system is more relaxed which allows for the 'fusion of powers' in comparative to the US who has a more strict/defined separation of powers. Further mentioned the powers of the Parliamentary arm which allows the legislative branch to terminate the Chief Justice or the President of LTC

The Hon PM noted the importance of understanding the history of the separation of powers, to clarify misleading statements made by members stating, that HRPP has full authority of Parliament, the Government can influence the Courts, and that Cabinet and the public servants are dysfunctional – Hon PM asserted that such statements reflects the lack of understanding and knowledge of these certain Members on the systems of power. Hon PM noted the development of the nation is determined by the state of its financials 'revenues and expenditures'. And touched upon his role as the Minister for the Office of the Legislative Assembly and explained that this is to account for the budgets afforded by Government and provides ease of operations between the Assembly and Cabinet (this in itself is fusion of powers).

Hon PM spoke on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and explained that this Ministry is Samoa's door way the world, especially in terms of collaboration and correspondences between Samoa and foreign nations; the Ministry is also responsible for overseeing offices and embassies for Samoa in foreign nations.

He then spoke on the Ministry for Natural Resources and Environment and explained that in 1989-1991 it was referred to as the Ministry of Land Survey, then soon after merged with the Environment, therefore referring to the Ministry as MNRE. The Hon PM noted the global impacts of climate change and explained that Samoa together with all other nations of the world are working towards reducing the temperature, in doing so, Samoa also contributes to efforts of protecting the marine ecosystem. The Hon PM noted that the Ministry is mandated by 19 Acts, 25 Regulations, and 4 Working Committees and are currently dealing with 20 development projects. Furthermore, the PM noted that the Ministry is also responsible for protecting customary lands and all developments on such lands, including the leasing of

customary lands for development. The Ministry is also responsible to clarify, elaborate and respond on issues pertaining to customary lands with assistance from the Attorney General.

The Hon PM noted the total land mass of Samoa is 702,000 acres; to which 568,000 acres amounts for customary lands. Hon PM asserted that 1.5% of 568,000 acres of customary lands are leased out for development purposes. The PM noted the 4 most common developments which are carried out on customary lands, these include:

- i. shops and small businesses
- ii. Churches
- iii. Hotel (investment)
- iv. Installation of Digicel network telecommunication post

The Hon PM spoke on the importance of carbonate trading to eliminate harmful gases in the atmosphere, to counter gas emissions, the Ministry initiated the replanting of trees, furthermore, MNRE are encouraging eco-friendly developments such as generating electricity from the sun (solar energy), water (hydropower) and wind (windmill farm). Hon PM noted that there was a question put forth on the time zone change (daylight saving) and accentuated the benefits to businesses and households. Hon PM further noted that daylight saving changes every 6 months. The PM iterated the importance of climate change adaptation strategies and developments, recalling the tragedies of 2009 (tsunami) and cyclones. Hon PM mentioned the Tongan trench and noted that earthquakes are cause by the movement of tectonic plates beneath the earth.

In regards to the Public Service Commission, the Hon PM highlighted that the Commission deals with recruitment and selection process for all public servants, termination and retirement. Hon PM elaborated on the reason to propose contractual positions in 1991 for 2 years and was amended to 3 years as to date (to give the opportunity for people to apply given the high number of graduates). He then clarified and emphasised that a decision is not done by one person but collectively based on the unanimous/majority recommendation of Cabinet. Further noted that the PSC also holds the Remuneration Tribunal and elaborated on the functions of the tribunal to review the salary scale.

The Hon PM spoke on the role of the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) and noted that the FESA continues to improve its services, and have also increased awareness and hands on training in terms of handling fire extinguishers in respective Offices.

In regards to the Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (MPMC) the Hon PM explained that the Ministry deals with Immigration services and granting of citizenship. The Ministry can be perceived as the core sector for Government as it deals with the administration of Cabinet affairs. Generally the Ministry ensures the smooth progress and flow of Cabinet workload.

Hon PM touched upon the services of the 2AP and Savali Newspaper in broadcasting and advertising Parliamentary matters to ensure the public is well informed and reiterated that prolonging the parliamentary proceedings was to allow sufficient time for the government to respond and clarify on accusations made by certain Members.

MOTION:

The Hon PM then moved a motion to progress through the consideration in detail stage of the Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No.1) 2020/2021.

Mr Speaker put forth the question for the Bill to progress through its consideration in detail stage; seconded and approved.

2. SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL (NO.1) 2020/2021 - Consideration in Detail.

Schedule 1: Additional to Program Expenditures.

MAF	\$826,995;	approved
MCIL	\$63,798;	approved
MESC	\$2,784,092;	approved
MOF	\$13,337,461;	approved
MOH	\$3,000,000;	approved
MJCA	\$382,333;	approved
Ombudsman	\$56,291;	approved
PSC	\$71,468;	approved
MOPP	\$2,722,264;	approved
MPMC	\$110,248;	approved
MPE	\$51,700;	approved
MWTI	\$4,084,247;	approved
LTA	\$5,847,647;	approved
NUS	\$1,751,492;	approved
SROS	\$680,797;	approved.
SSFA	\$103,910;	approved
TOTAL =	\$35,874,743;	Approved

Schedule 2: Reduction in Program Expenditures

MAF	(\$1,542,121);	approved
MCIL	(\$153,065);	approved
MCIT	(\$91,362);	approved

MESC	(\$187,954);	approved
MOF	(\$539, 988);	approved
MFAT	(\$744,532);	approved
MOH	(\$332,357);	approved
MJCA	(\$327,960);	approved
MNRE	(\$259, 970);	approved
MOP	\$79,150);	approved
MPCS	(\$58,714);	approved
MPMC	(\$417,039);	approved
MPE	(\$83, 148);	approved
MCR	(\$261,050);	approved
MWCSD	(\$138,024):	approved
MWTI	(\$92,369):	approved
SBS	(\$36,653):	approved
AUDITOR	(\$199,642) -	Approved
SLRC	(\$12,351):	approved
OCLA	(\$200,000):	approved
OMBUDSMAN	(\$22,080):	Approved
PSC	(89,574)	Approved
LTA	(996,615):	Approved
TOTAL REDUCTIONS OVERALL EXPENDITURES 2020-2021: (\$6,865,718) – Approved		

Clause 3: *Approved*
 Clause 2: *Approved*
 Clause 1 and Short Title: *Approved*

Mr Speaker noted that the Bill progressed without any amendments.

2. SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL (NO.1) 2020/2021- third reading

The Hon Minister for Finance, Afioga Hon SILI Epa Tuiofi moved the third reading of the Bill; motion seconded and approved

The Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No.1) 2020/2021 progressed through the Assembly and passed the Legislative Assembly.

Proceedings were adjourned at 10:42pm
Proceedings will reconvene at 9am on Tuesday 2nd March 2021