

**DISCLAIMER**

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**Tuesday 23 June 2020**

**DAY 6**

**9:10am**

**I. Mr SPEAKER - OBITUARY SPEECH**

Mr Speaker announced the passing away of Former Member of Parliament Gafa loelu Elisara who was a Member from the constituency of Satupaitea; The former Member of Parliament took his oath on 29 November 1996 (succeeded through by-election) and was a Former Minister for Samoa Post and Telecommunications in 1999; Minister for Customs and Public Service Commission in 2000-2001. Mr Speaker conveyed sympathies to the grieving families and constituency on behalf of Parliament.

*A minute of silence was observed to pay respect to the deceased.*

**II. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY – Reading of Bills**

- 1. SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL No.3 2020; and APPROPRIATION BILL 2020/2021 – debate on second reading cont.**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSES cont.**

**1. LOAU Solamalemalo Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture**

The Hon Minister addressed Samoa in her honorific salutations; acknowledged Le Ao o le Malo, Council of Deputies, Executive, Judiciary and Legislative Branch of Government,. The Hon Minister recalled the past 5 years and commended the Ministry. He stated that few Members raised matters pertaining to his portfolio which he will address in due time.

Hon Minister highlighted the Mission, Vision and principles which guided the operations of the Ministry. Hon Minister noted that in 2013-2017 there were inadequacies in the services of the Ministry which the Ministry has made all effort to rectify these flaws. Hon LOAU stated that the Ministry in its attempt to rectify the issues, prepared the guidelines and aim for the Ministry in the next five years ahead. Hon Minister reaffirmed the Mission of the Ministry “For all children to have access to Education” which the One-Government-Grant (OGG) provides funding to ensure the overall Mission is achieved. On the issue of Early

Childhood Education (ECE) the Hon Minister noted that capacity building initiatives have been implemented to upskill service providers of ECE as 'a solid foundation is essential'.

Hon Minister mentioned the importance of Distance and flexible learning due to Covid19 restrictions and asserted that good leaders are adaptable. In regards to SchoolNet, the Minister iterated the importance of this initiative especially in times of the SOE lockdown where school hours have been reduced to protect children from the disease. Furthermore, the Hon Minister asserted that it is important to be proactive in light of a potential outbreak.

Hon Minister stated that there are 4 years of college studies (years 9, 10, 12 and 13). He addressed the Member for Lefaga and Faleaseela on the issue to place emphasis on Technical Vocational Schools (TVET) and stated that Government has noted this. The Hon Minister elaborated that it is envisaged that the introduction of technical vocational subjects in schools for the following year (2021). Introduce technical vocational subjects in schools for students who are not interested in academic studies, but would pursue other options available to them in vocational studies and to reduce the rate of students dropout. Hon Minister commented on the measures in place by Government to address the aforementioned TVET schools.

#### **FAUMUINA Faaolatane Tiatia Liuga – Member for Palauli le Falefa**

Hon Member conveyed support and gratitude for placing emphasis on TVET and proceeded to convey acknowledgment to the Minister and the Ministry for the initiative.

#### **LEALAILEPULE Rimoni Aiafi – Member for Faleata West**

The Member placed emphasis on vocational studies (trades) and advised the inclusive of such courses in year 10. Furthermore, LEALAILEPULE advised the Minister to reassess the merge between NUS and IOT and consider its separation to ensure effectiveness of operations.

#### **LEAANA Ronnie Posini – Member for Safata West**

The Member acknowledged the Minister for taking initiative and backed claims by the Member for Faleata; He queried the possibility of separating of the two institutions (IOT and NUS) to place specific and more emphasis on both.

#### **LOAU Solamalemalo Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture (cont.)**

In regards to Degrees as raised by the Member for Safata, stating that NUS and APTC degrees/qualifications are not accredited; Hon Minister further elaborated that there were teachers whom were successful with the NZ quota and have been employed in New Zealand

utilising their local degrees. He stated that in terms of accreditation, the Samoa Qualification Authority (SQA) is on top of it. Hon Minister proceeded to state Degrees which are in the process for International Accreditation; Certificate of Agriculture, Bachelor of Medicine et al. The Hon Minister stated that the one government grant for Mission Schools is responsible for 60% of the salary for teachers of Mission Schools.

**FAAULUSAU Rosa Duffy Stowers - Member for Gagaifomauga No.3**

The Member clarified that her perspective was for the fund to be withheld by the Ministry and be the administrator for teacher salaries of Mission Schools.

**AUMUA Isaia Lameko – Member for Falealili East**

The Member called to utilise the OGG to purchase appropriate resources for schools, such as tv's.

**Hon LOAU Solamalemalo Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture (cont.)**

The Hon Minister stated that, the problem is that these teachers are employed under Mission schools which means they are supported by their respected churches, and it is expected that these Churches have the means to pay them.

**Hon Prime Minister - Clarification**

The Hon PM clarified that the Government deliberated on a policy to assist private mission schools and asserted that the OGG has increased its appropriation to 18million to factor the developments needed in schools and the developments needed for the ECE and overall improvements to the teaching profession (salaries for teachers). Hon PM noted that improvements to education services is crucial thus the increase of funding. Hon PM asserted that the OGG is also inclusive of an appropriation for Mission Schools. Furthermore, the Hon PM stated that calls by the Member for Gagaifomauga No.3 can be implemented, however to ensure fairness District Schools which have been privatised should also be incorporated into the Ministry's salaries. The Hon PM recounted past sentiments by opposition members downplaying HRPP's education efforts and is quoted as stating "50,000 is not enough"

**Hon LOAU Solamalemalo Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture (cont.)**

The Hon Minister touched upon the quality of teachers and stated that this is indeed an emphasis for the Ministry. In regards to the quality of school buildings, the Hon Minister stated a letter of request should be provided in order for the Ministry to help with the development of new school buildings for the constituencies.

**TAFUA Maluelue Tafua – Member for Aleipata Itupa i Lalo**

Member clarified that his comments about the Hon Ministers political aspirations hanging on the construction of his school as a "passing comment". The Member acknowledged the Minister and stated that he will proceed to forward documents to the Minister (supporting letter).

**FUIMAONO Samuelu Teo – Member for Falealili East**

acknowledged the Minister and called for his support for funding of a certain school in his district.

**NAMULAUULU Sami Leota – Member for Faasaleleaga No.2**

The Member called for an increase in grant for a secondary school and justified it by citing the rise in residents in his area.

**Hon Prime Minister - Clarification**

Hon PM stated that overseas donors (Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand) - stated that Japan's response rate is better than all the others aforementioned are. The Hon PM stated that the high education rate of Japan correlates with the lack of natural resources available at their disposal. Furthermore, the Hon PM stated that Japanese invest in their people via education then commented on the interdependence of the Japanese Economy. Hon PM further iterated that Japan's excellent response rate is due to their understanding of the importance of education; Hon PM elaborated on the process for acquiring aid and stated that although China being a major donor for Samoa, the process for Aid Acquisition is complex and thus slower. Hon PM further iterated to lodge requests to Japan as they have a more favourable response rate.

**Hon LOAU Solamalemalo Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture (Cont.)**

In terms of scholarships, the Hon Minister clarified that TVET programmes have scholarships set aside. Called for a quick application & higher marks. In regards to the SNBH & School Net raised by the Member for Salega East and commended efforts by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology as this greatly assists in delivering online education programs to students.

**Hon AFAMASAGA Lepuiai Rico Tupai – Minister for Communications and Information Technology**

The Hon Minister clarified that Vodafone is experiencing slow signal as they are in the process of upgrading their equipment.

**PESETA Vaifou Tevagaena – Member for Faasaleleaga No.4**

The Member stated he stood to clarify and refute claims about the tenders process in regards to clearing the airport strip. Member proceeded to clarify that there is more than meets the eye (the foundation runs deep).

MCIT Minister

elaborated that the phrase "big cable small usage" simply means that small usage compares to our small country; however, he further stated that he also mentioned in his response yesterday that there are already plans outlined for the purpose of installing such big cables for the development of our country. Digicel and Vodafone were using the Cable for free during the early stages of the state of emergency.

**Mr Speaker**

Mr Speaker reiterated to the Members the importance of being a visionary; Plan developments that will benefit the future generations (long-term plans).

**Hon Prime Minister - Clarification**

The Hon PM stated that Government implements projects with the vision of it being utilised for future generations. The PM reiterated that Government projects are long term with the hope of future generation reaping the benefits. Hon PM stated that these are usually what critics say about Governments plans and reiterated the aim for the Government is long-term benefits.

**Hon LOAU Solamalemalo Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture (Cont.)**

The Minister stated that the importance of the cable is to help students access learning sites faster for educational purposes, furthermore the Minister noted development plans for a new school building at Tafaigata area. Hon LOAU informed the House of Government plans to further develop this area, with the construction of a secondary school and a technical vocational school to cater for the growing population nearby Tafaigata (Falelauniu, Aleisa, etc)

**LEALAILEPULE Rimoni Aiafi – Member for Faleata West**

The Member called for an experienced IT to be employed to effectively manage and upgrade the equipment.

**FAUMUINA Faaolatane Liuga – Member for Palauli le Falefa**

In regards to development of sports fields for all schools in Samoa; the Member clarified his statements about the appropriation of land for development of fields to counter the dropout rate of students from school (to place emphasis on sports as other means of a well future).

**Hon Prime Minister - Clarification**

The Hon PM noted that the two go hand in hand; physical development and mental development. He asserted that while matters raised are vital, all developments are implemented within the limited funds available.

**Hon AFAMASAGA Lepuai Rico Tupai – Minister for Communications and Information Technology**

The Hon Minister in response to the issue raised by the Member for Faleata West, asserted that there are qualified individuals with expertise to man these equipments.

**SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tuivasa Tauiliili – Member for Vaimauga East**

The Member sought approval from the Minister to permit the utilisation of part of the Fagalii Airstrip as sports field for the Fagalii Primary School.

**Hon LOAU Solamalemalo Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture (Cont.)**

The Hon Minister noted the request by Vaimauga and called for the Member for Vaimauga to place emphasis on development of Golf as a sport. The Hon Minister concluded his response by acknowledging his constituency and expressed gratitude for their support.

**Proceedings were set aside at 10:47am;  
and resumed at 11:46am.**

## 2. Hon SILLI Epa Tuiofi, Minister of Finance

The Hon Minister acknowledged the House and conveyed thanks to all for efforts in developing Samoa. Hon SILLI stated that Samoa's economy is the eldest in the region (58years). The Hon Minister listed the Indicators of Growth for Samoa's economy:

1. The membership of Samoa in international Forums/Organisations/Institutions in United Nations, Asia Development Bank, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and ACP-EU.
2. Samoa's elevation to Developing Country status
3. Rise in GDP per Capita from 2,500 to 11,950 to date.
4. Hosting of various meetings, sport events and Samoa's reputation of living up to the hype.
5. National University of Samoa – Samoa's own University which has also introduced other Universities as well as medical schools
6. Upgrading of the Airport (State of the Art) Samoa has an airline (Samoa Airways) and has contributed to our form of trading.
7. Being the Host Country to regional organisations (establish offices for commissions/ambassadors such as NZ, Australia, British; SPREP, ADB offices, World Bank)
8. Construction of State of the Art Sports Facilities and the hosting of the All Black's game and Commonwealth Youth Games; Hon Minister asserted that Samoa's host of events has been reputable worldwide.
9. Upgrading of the government buildings for the development of the country and also to ensure that these buildings will not easily be at risk towards climate change impacts.
10. Upgrading of bridges (Vaisigano and Maliolio); Seawalls (Ability to upgrade their developments) Maliolio was established and funded through our partnerships with our other neighbouring countries.

Hon Minister stated that the gist of the facts aforementioned are to illustrate the excellent governance and unprecedented growth under the HRPP regime. Hon Minister noted the imminent threat of Climate Change and called for Samoa to take initiative to build climate resilient infrastructure. Furthermore, the Hon Minister touched upon Economic Target of the Ministry of Finance:

Samoa 2040 – the Plan consists of 7 thematic areas as noted by the Hon Minister:

1. Boosting agriculture
2. improve tourism/lifting tourist numbers and spending
3. Enhance Digital Development
4. Greater Labour Mobility
5. Resilient Development
6. Effective investment in Human Capital
7. Safe and Secure Samoa

The Hon Minister emphasized budget support from donors is reflective of Samoa's excellent financial management and dispelled erroneous claims about Samoa's economical state.

The Hon Minister noted that the projected figure of 589 million tala in revenue can be acquired through;

- 1) collecting taxes from VAGST and businesses using Tax information management systems;
- 2) x-ray at the wharf;
- 3) implementation of projects for next FY which will create employment
- 4) Samoa is not affected by covid19

Hon Minister noted that it is projected that Samoa's economic state will be reduced by 10% in revenue due to the Covid-19. In regards to remarks on Samoa's economy as deficit; The Hon Minister clarified that the figures presented are estimate/ budget. Hon SILL reiterated that these are mere projections.

The Hon Minister stated that the following years projected deficits and provided figures on projected deficit and actuals.

- In 2015/2016 projected deficit was 4.7%; Actuals was 4%
- In 2016/2017 projected deficit was 3.5%; Actuals was 1.1%
- 2017/2018 projected deficit was 3.5%; Actuals was 2.0%
- 2018/2019 estimated deficit was 3.5%; however from the past 5 years this was the first year whereby a **Surplus of 2.7%** was recorded

Hon Minister reiterated to the House that figures presented are Projections and not set in stone, he then re-emphasized that Samoa is of excellent financial standing. In regards to Unspent Funds, the Hon Minister stated that these funds are re-appropriated for developments in the next FY. Hon SILL rejected the erroneous and false claims that Government is bankrupt. He asserted that total Assets net worth, 987 million, factoring in liabilities this equates to more than 2.1 billion. Hon Minister stated that Samoa's Financials are well managed and implemented, asserting that if this was not the case overseas partners and donors will not be so willing to assist with Samoa.

In regards to Samoa's debt Hon SILL informed the House that there are no new loans (as Government does not look forward to loans unless it is absolutely needed). The existing amount of debt is 11.4 million loan. He rejected claims Samoa is no longer eligible for credit made by certain Members. Furthermore, the Hon Minister stated that 10% or 11 cents of a tala is appropriated for our debts. The remaining 89 cents is appropriated for the mobilisation of the economy.

It is Government's paramount objective to plan for future benefits, and touched upon the themes for the Budget for this parliamentary term:

In 2016/2017, the Vision was "*Strengthening the Foundations, Building for Tomorrow*"

In 2017/2018, "Equity and Fairness" and

In 2018/2019 "The Right Path" which was the same FY which incurred 2.7% surplus

In 2019/2020 "A shared vision for prosperity" which has brought the nation to its current theme for 2020/2021 "Weaving a prosperous and secure future for Samoa together"

The Hon Minister reemphasized that the Government operates with the theme of a brighter and better future for all Samoans and made note of Samoa 2040 Long-Term Plan. In regards to matters raised by Members:

- In regards to the 35million appropriation for the SNPF, Hon SILI stated that the distribution, percentage and conditions of this will be made known to contributors at the end of the week.
- On the issue of paying electoral voters transportation costs to and from Savaii is currently under consideration between the Ministry, Office of the Electoral Commission and the SNPF to identify whether an allocation can be obtained to fund this process as well as identifying the best way to effectively implement this.
- The hon Minister refuted claims made by the Member for Palauli West that only overseas businesses are eligible for investment loans.

#### **AFOA Amituanai Faleulu Maui, Member for Palauli West**

The Member remained adamant that he was presenting facts and stated that there was 5.7 million on cash credit to an Asian Business, whereas locals are not afforded this amount.

#### **Hon SILI Epa Tuioti, Minister of Finance (cont.)**

The statement that only overseas individuals are afforded loans is incorrect. The Hon Minister exclaimed that this statement is wrong and can not be substantiated. Hon SILI stated that certain factors such as credit history and risks are taken into account. In regards to the member insinuating that Asian Members are given special treatment, the Hon Minister stated these Individuals are citizens of Samoa.

#### **HON PRIME MINISTER - Clarification**

The Hon PM stated that he is appalled at the Member for Palauli West for making erroneous claims even though he has read the records. The PM advised the Member to thoroughly read reports from SNPF before making unsubstantiated statements in the House. Hon TUILAEPA further clarified the process of approving loans; i.e Due Diligence of the applicants' credit history is assessed. Hon PM called the Member to carefully read the details provided in the reports and guidelines for loans in place.

#### **Hon SILI Epa Tuioti, Minister of Finance (Cont.)**

Hon Minsiter advised the Member for Palauli to closely examine guidelines in approval of loans. The Hon Minister touched upon the raise in Pension from \$145 to \$160 (an increase of \$15) with an additional (one-off) \$100 for the month of July only. Another pay-out is the \$50 for individuals who register with the National ID; the Hon Minister stated that there is collaboration between MWCSO, MOF, Stats etc. The Hon Minister elaborated that the

justification of payment is a means of fostering compliance and willingness to take part in the Census.

**LEALAILEPULE Rimoni Aiafi, Member for Faleata West**

The Member called to waiver payback of the NPF percentage dividend afforded to contributors in July 2020.

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

The Member acknowledged the Minister for clarifying the means in place to acquire the amount as stated in the Budget Projections. In regards to the GDP per capita, the Member stood to clarify to individuals listening in from the rural areas, in case of differing interpretations that the amount 11,500 stated by the Minister per capita is applied if it is evenly distributed.

**Hon SILI Epa Tuioti, Minister of Finance (Cont.)**

Minister further clarified comments raised by the Member for Anoamaa West in terms of GDP and stated that this is the usual measure utilised to quantify growth. In regards to the small loans and interest rates for small financial businesses (raised by Members). The Hon Minister stated that Central Bank has indicated that they will look into regulating interest rates of small finance companies.

**FUIMAONO Teo Samuelu Teo, Member for Falealili East**

The Member stressed out a point that he raised during his speech whether the Government is looking at a way to help those who have loans at other small financial institutions, to lower interest rates as part of the stimulus package.

**Hon SILI Epa Tuioti, Minister of Finance (Cont.)**

The Minister emphasized the absence of a legislation that provides what he has pointed out at the moment to be included in the stimulus package however, everyone including those who have loans in other small financial institutions are included in the stimulus package, that includes water bill and electricity deduction. Hon SILI stated that there is assistance afforded to manufacturing companies and hotels. The Government has paid 2% interest on loans to Commercial Banks for these companies. CSSP - there are new development planning for the future under this program. Insurance for police officers

**SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tuivasa Tauilili – Member for Vaimauga East**

In reference to CSSP(Civil Society Support Programme), stated that his constituency had lodged approximately 4 or 5 application but all were rejected. Clarified that the process was too complex and needs improvement.

**Hon SILI Epa Tuioti, Minister of Finance (Cont.)**

The Hon Minister took note of concerns made by certain Members regarding the complex and lengthy process of applying for funds on the CCSP program. On the issue of special insurance for the police officers, prison wardens and firefighters the Hon Minister touched upon the rationale for this. Hon Minister further noted that this is the rationale behind Governments visitations to be on the ground and acquire data on which projects needs to be closed etc.

In regards to the payment of electoral voters, transportation costs to and from Savaii, The Hon Minister stated that Government is looking into this. On the issue of improving the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Minister stated that they are in talks with overseas donors with the aim at strengthening this sector. Hon SILI asserted that the Government is also providing relevant funds for the Ministry of Tourism. The Hon Minister noted the developments implemented in the project, such as the development of the Maliolio Bridge, the new Court house for Salelologa, and the new Office for NPF. Furthermore, EPC and SWA continue efforts to improve water supply and electricity for the whole of Savaii as new developments are in progress.

**OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai, Member for Salega East**

\$13 million USD for agriculture from WB under IFAT: 20 million from IVA: The Member queried where in the budget is the fund provided and queried where this 20 million has been appropriated to.

**LEALAILEPULE Rimoni Aiafi, Member for Faleata West**

The Member requested that the Minister look into more funds to power the Hospitality Sector as Samoa is in good financial stead.

**OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai, Member for Salega East**

The Member queried why the grant was not included in the Budget.

**ALIIMALEMANU Alofa Tuuau, Member for Alataua West and Chairperson for Finance and Expenditure Committee**

The Chairperson queried where the Member for Salega East obtained the amount of 70 million from IDA he is implying should be reflective in the Budget; and clarified that 11 million is the appropriation included in the budget while the remaining funds will be released in future instalments.

**SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tauiliili Tuivasa, Member for Vaimauga East**

The Member queried whether there was an appropriation for individuals with disabilities.

**Hon SILI Epa Tuioti, Minister of Finance (Cont.)**

The Minister clarified that individuals have to be registered with organisations such as ADRA, Mapu-i-Fagalele, SVSG and others in order to be eligible for funding. Furthermore, the Minister explained that after funds have been appropriated to respective organisations, a report is also provided by these organisations justifying the spending of funds.

**Hon PRIME MINISTER – Clarification**

The Hon PM stood to further clarify the issue raised by the Member for Palauli West and informed the House that before the Minister of Finance concludes; he has in his possession the annual report for the National Provident Fund which illustrates the excellent operations of the Fund. Hon PM quoted Pg1 of the Annual Report "Loans are made after due diligence is implemented with the aim of maximum returns for contributors"

The Hon PM proceeded to cite the Annual Report and noted the graphs and figures presented in the Annual Report. Investment Loans-189 million (2018/2019); and 163 million investment loans in (2017/2018). Hon TUILAEPA reiterated that due diligence is to be followed.

**Hon SILI Epa Tuioti, Minister of Finance (cont.)**

The Hon Minister concluded his response and acknowledged the support of his constituency.

**Proceedings adjourned at 1:13pm;  
and will reconvene at 9am on Wednesday 24 June 2020**