



June
2020

PARLIAMENTARY SITTING SUMMARY

DISCLAIMER

This Report provides a brief of the Proceedings of Parliament on **Thursday 25 June 2020**. While all efforts have been made to provide an informative brief, this information must not be relied upon as an alternative to the official Hansard record of proceedings of Parliament. If you have any specific questions about Proceedings of Parliament on **Thursday 25 June 2020**, you should consult the official Hansard or seek assistance from the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

Thursday 25 June 2020

DAY 8

9:10am

Pursuant to Standing Order 18, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair and presided over proceedings of the Legislative Assembly in the absence of Mr Speaker.

I. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY – Reading of Bills

- 1. SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL No.3 2019/2020; and APPROPRIATION BILL 2020/2021**

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES cont.

1. Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Iemaima Stowers, Minister for Health and Member for Gagaifomauga No.3

The Hon Minister addressed the Clergy, Executive, and conveyed well wishes for the Deputy Speaker who is acting in the absence of the Speaker. She acknowledged the Leader of the House, Cabinet, Associate Ministers, Chairpersons for respective Parliamentary Committees and all Members of Parliament. Also greeted all CEO's and acknowledged their efforts in serving the nation; Greeted the Clerk and the OCLA for their service in supporting Parliament. Acknowledged the Chief Justice and the Judiciary (and conveyed well wishes for the NEW CJ). Hon FAIMALOTOA commended the continuous prayers from different denominations for the better future of Samoa. Commended the Carmelite Order at Vailima tasked with a life of solitude, sacrifice & prayer; as well as all of Samoa around the globe.

The Hon Minister acknowledged the Almighty for instilling a sense of strength and courage in all of Samoa, especially for keeping Samoa covid19 free. In regards to the Merge (NHS & MOH) which commenced in February 2019 and cited the emphasis on Public Health as the main driver for the merge. Hon Minister stated that 4 months into her new ministerial portfolio and the measles outbreak occurred.

Hon Minister briefly touched upon matters raised by my Members. She also acknowledged the upskilling of district hospitals with assigning doctors to be stationed at these health centres/hospitals to cater for the populace residing in rural areas. She commented on the excellent border control resulting in no outbreak of Covid19 in Samoa. The Hon Minister addressed the public and stated that the Ministry needs no acknowledgement, rather conveyed all acknowledgement to the Almighty. The Hon Minister called for the House and the Public to continue prayers for the Creator's Blessings upon Samoa.

Hon Minister conveyed gratitude for the Council of Churches & Members of the Public for their support in adhering to social distancing, etc (referred to NEOC restrictions). The Hon Minister reiterated to the House that to date, no vaccine has been formulated and stated that there is no better Healer than the Creator. Hon FAIMALOTOA acknowledged the Hon PM, Cabinet & NEOC on efforts to ensure covid19 does not enter Samoa as well as prioritising the Ministry of Health as reflected in the appropriation of the Budget.

Hon Minister touched upon the Sub-Centres/District Hospitals and posting for Medical Officers to operate these district hospitals. The Hon Minister noted that the rationale is to decentralise Medical Centres which will inadvertently stem the congestion at the Main Hospital. Moreover, save money in transportation costs & to emphasize health care accessibility for ALL of Samoa.

OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai, Member for Salega East

The Member firstly commended the Hon Minister for her well presented speech in regards to policies and guidelines put forth by the Ministry to prevent diseases from coming into our country such as Covid19. In regards to Medical Officers posted to respective district hospitals; the Member queried whether the Medical Officers have the necessary experience as they are quite young (implied medical officers are young and inexperienced)

MR SPEAKER - POINT OF ORDER

MR speaker clarified that if the matter was not raised in the Members speech then he cannot raise a new issue while the Minister is speaking.

ALAIASA Moefaauo Sepulona- Member for Anoamaa East

The Member stated that the Medical officer posted at their District Hospital is although youthful, adequate to cater to the needs of the constituency.

Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Iemaima Stowers, Minister for Health and Member for Gagaifomauga No.3 (Cont.)

The Hon Minister asserted that the Medical Officers are well trained & possess the necessary experience to cater to the Medical needs of the Constituency. The Hon Minister informed the House that funds have been acquired by the World Bank to source the construction of a District Hospital at Saanapu and Samatau. Hon Minister explained that the plans are with the Tenders Board and will progress through usual procedures before implementation at respective constituencies.

ALAIASA Moefaaouuo Sepulona Moananu, Member for Anoamaa East

Commended the Minister of Health for noting his calls for the Lufilufi Hospital to be upgraded. Also to look at upgrading the road towards the hospital.

TAEFU LEMI TAEFU, Member for Falelatai & Samatau

The Member commended the Minister and stated that there is land at Siufaga for the construction of the New Hospital.

LEAANA Ronnie Posini, Member for Safata West

The Member acknowledged the Minister for the proposed implementation of a new district Hospital.

MULIPOLA Leiataua Laki, Member for Aiga i le Tai

Member queried the status of the request for a District Hospital for Manono Tai.

Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Iemaima Stowers, Minister for Health and Member for Gagaifomauga No.3 (Cont.)

The Hon Minister stated that their acknowledgment is noted. Hon FAIMALOTOA reiterated the importance of upskilling of the Public. The Hon Minister proceeded to stress the importance of a healthy life. The Minister stated that concerns are executed based on priorities and the urgency of concerns at the time. (We cannot build 20 hospitals in one time). Hon FAIMALOTOA emphasised that the Ministry is unable to tend to all work required by the Ministry; however, clarified that the implements projects based on prioritising essential areas for the Hospital such as medications, equipments and etc.

FUIMAONO Teo Samuelu Teo, Member for Falealili East

The Member reiterated that he requested for a sub-centre for his constituency and queried whether his constituency was included in the proposed hospitals upgrading next FY.

Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Iemaima Stowers, Minister for Health and Member for Gagaifomauga No.3 (Cont.)

The Minister pointed out that all these sub-centres and hospital developments are in the 2016 plan of developments and further noted that she will look at the documents from 2016 and plan a visitation at the Subcenter at the Member's constituency.

TAFUA Maluelue Tafua, Member for Aleipata itupa i Lalo

The Member clarified that Lalomanu Hospital does not need upgrading rather it needs a better housing facility for the medical officer posted there.

Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Iemaima Stowers, Minister for Health and Member for Gagaifomauga No.3 (Cont.)

Hon Minister continued and stated that there are funds from the WB and Government will commence visitations and inspections to identify which hospitals/sub-centres require better housing for Medical Officer and district hospitals which requires renovations. In regards to Ambulances; the Hon Minister stated that Japan has declared 7 to 8 ambulances for Samoa. The Hon Minister stated that the allocation of these Ambulances will be priority based on the need of each hospital and the population being served at respective district hospitals.

In regards to Members calling to waiver the Quarantine process for Members from NZ and have them home Quarantine instead; the Hon Minister clarified that there has been a rise in cases in NZ which rules out this option. The Hon Minister cautioned against the aforementioned and noted that it is indeed essential for the safety of the Public. In response to the Member who called for all Hotels to have a turn at hosting quarantined guests: The Hon Minister clarified that this is indeed the practice however, there are conditions/requirements which Hotels must meet before it is included in the list of Hotels fit for quarantine.

In regards to Border, the Hon Minister stated that due diligence to ensure Samoa's usual travel routes are Covid Free before opening the borders.

HON PRIME MINISTER - CLARIFICATION

The Hon PM wished to clarify on the issue of borders opening/repatriation; those whom are stranded overseas calling to return home, there are others requesting to keep these individuals overseas until a vaccine is procured.

The Hon PM elaborated on the detrimental effects if borders are reopened. The Frontline are the first to be exposed and at risk for catching and transmitting the disease. The Hon PM stated that it is a difficult decision to close borders however, the needs of the many must take precedence over the needs of the few. The Hon PM reiterated that if there is a Covid outbreak; Samoa will have to manage the outbreak independently without assistance from our overseas partners.

The Hon PM stated that individuals stranded overseas have the capacity to lie about their conditions to waiver the Covid quarantine. Then he recalled sentiments by his predecessor, barring himself from being a sort of travel agent as those who he assists end up overstaying. The Hon PM called on Australia and New Zealand to be patient.

Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Iemaima Stowers, Minister for Health and Member for Gagaifomauga No.3 (Cont.)

The Hon Minister acknowledged the PM for accentuating her sentiments echoed earlier. She recalled the verbal abuse incurred by the Ministry on the commencement of the Emergency Orders. The Hon Minister reiterated on the importance of heeding the Emergency Orders. In regards to a scheme for Frontline workers as mentioned by the Member for Anoamaa West; The Hon Minister conveyed support for the matter raised. The Hon Minister commented on the risk faced by the frontliners (first hand exposure to the virus). The Hon Minister stated that Government has taken note of this.

In regards to the Nursing Community training centre, the Minister noted that they will also look into this and commended the Member for raising such a good initiative to ensure effective provision of health service for the public. On the issue of Beautification Committees to assist with the Nursing Community, the Hon Minister acknowledged this initiative and conveyed support and thanks to the Minister for MWCSO for recognising this. The Hon Minister commended the MWCSO for collaboration during the Measles epidemic and noted the importance of having beautification committee involved with the district hospitals in all villages to make sure that a good personal hygiene is practised within and also to ensure a clean environment and learning/practicing basic health/hygiene habits.

Hon FAIMALOTOA also acknowledged the Minister for elaborating on the importance of forming anti-bodies. In response to overseas referrals, the Hon Minister informed the House that all medical referrals overseas have been closed to date, due to the border restrictions regardless of Emergencies.

SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tauilili Tuivasa, Member for Vaimauga East

The Member requested the removal of statements made by the Member for Faleata West.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr Speaker ruled to remove remarks by the member for Faleata West from Hansard on a request made by the member from Vaimauga East.

HON PRIME MINISTER - CLARIFICATION

Hon PM commented on the symptoms of stress and its detrimental effects on the physiology. Hon PM elaborated the process post natural calamities - Mental trauma is also examined closely. He elaborated that this was also the state those affected by the tsunami of 2009 experienced and stated that this was a problem. The Hon PM stated that no one is immune from stress (Stress does not discriminate); in contrast to immunity disease, stress is a silent killer.

The Hon PM simply commented to the importance of mental disease; and informed the House that a natural cure for panic attacks induced by stress is meditation.

LAAULI Leuatea Polataivao Fosi Schmidt, Member for Gagaifomauga No.3

The Member stated that he was stress free and acknowledged the Minister & her Ministry then reminded the Minister about overdue allowances of hospital workers.

**Proceedings were set aside at 10:45am;
and resumed at 11:31am.**

AFOA AMITUANAI Mauli- Member for PALAULI WEST

The Member conveyed apologies to the Minister and Ministry in statements made before and again stated that the virus was a hoax.

Hon TUITAMA Talalelei Leao Tuitama, Minister of Women, Community and Social Development and Member fore Aana Alofi No.1

The Hon Minister refuted and rejected the conspiracy theorists presented to the House by the Member of Palauli. He asserted that Coronavirus has eclectic strains and has been found in cats. The Hon Minister proceeded to elaborate that Leukaemia stems from a strain of Coronavirus found in cats. The Hon MINISTER accentuated that Samoa's best hope for survival is to prevent an outbreak. Furthermore, the Member stated that to ensure no casualties, a vaccine is imperative. Hon TUITAMA stated that the Corona virus then found with cats is far different from this COVID-19 and this is why the vaccine then will not be utilized at this stage.

The Hon Minister quoted media reports stating 1000 casualties daily in trying to emphasize the destructive nature of the Pandemic. The Hon Minister reiterated the severity of the matter and stated that it is not a laughing matter.

NAMULAULU Sami Leota, Member for Faasaleleaga No.2

The Member conveyed gratitude for the massive improvements in service for the Tuasivi Hospital. Acknowledged senior surgeon Aleki Fuimaono & Junior Posini and stated to the House that surgeries can now be conducted at the Main Hospital in Savaii.

Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Iemaima Stowers, Minister for Health and Member for Gagaifomauga No.3 (Cont.)

Hon Minister called for the Public not to panic. In regards to Overtime as raised by Gagaifomauga No.3; the Hon Minister noted that overtime has been disbursed. She then called those whom have not received overtimes to notify the Management. Hon Minister reiterated that her main concerns is that the sentiments issued by the Member of Palauli has the potential to discredit efforts of all who have worked tirelessly to ensure the pandemic does not reach our shores and it also has the potential to undo all the preventative measures imposed by the Government (via misinformation).

Acknowledged the Chief Surgeon Aleki Fuimaono for procuring the necessary medical instruments to conduct surgeries. The Hon Minister wished to emphasize the importance of vaccinations to ensure that Samoa does not face any serious disease outbreak in the future. Hon Minister noted that Polio, Hepatitis B, Typhoid, Rheumatic Disease, and other vaccination be enforced so Samoa can avert another major epidemic.

The Minister noted that in order to be on the safe side, she quoted that "Prevention is better than cure" and this is to encourage vaccination before you are affected. The Minister cited the following aggravating factors which contributed to the Measles outbreak; low

vaccination coverage; beliefs in traditional medicine; the freedom to choose whether to vaccinate or not, and others. The Hon Minister stated in 2017- vaccination was at 74% coverage.

The Hon Minister stated that upon enforcement of Vaccinations: there was massive distrust amongst the Public. There was an investigation in the matter in Safotu Hospital, and this investigation was to determine what went wrong, whether it was the wrong vaccine, or it was carelessness, this was conducted, however the two nurses admitted their wrongdoing.

OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai, Member for Salega East

Noted that he does not side with sentiments Vaccination was optional and stated that during his time, Beautification Committee's enforced vaccinations.

Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Iemaima Stowers, Minister for Health and Member for Gagaifomauga No.3 (Cont.)

Hon Minister clarified that she is recalling a timeline of events for clarification purposes. The Minister singled out the correlation of vaccination rates with calamities. Furthermore, Hon FAIMALOTOA noted the challenges in addressing erroneous scientific knowledge posed by those anti-vaccinations. In response to calls for a commission of inquiry, the Hon Minister stated that there had been 2 prior commission's implemented, thus another commission is unnecessary.

HON PRIME MINISTER - Clarification

The Hon PM queried the Minister whether the enforcing of vaccinations stemmed the measles outbreak. Furthermore, the Hon PM stated that there were families whom resided next to the hospital whom have not been vaccinated. Furthermore, Hon PM noted that right after the Vaccination program which went out to villages, they found out there were still people and children whom did not take the vaccine, they still did not believe in vaccines and resorted to Taulasea. Therefore he posed the question to the Minister of Health; have the Public been receptive or not to vaccines since then?

Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Iemaima Stowers, Minister for Health and Member for Gagaifomauga No.3 (Cont.)

The Hon Minister stated that there were still members of the Public whom have rejected vaccines and urged the public to prioritise vaccination for the safety and wellbeing of children.

MR SPEAKER – Point of Order

Mr Speaker reminded the Member for Gagaifomauga No.3 that during parliamentary proceedings, it is important to adhere to provisions of the Standing Order, and expressed disappointment as the Member was a former Speaker and should be aware of the Standing Orders, that no Member is permitted to speak unless called upon by the Speaker.

Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Iemaima Stowers, Minister for Health and Member for Gagaifomauga No.3 (Cont.)

The Hon Minister in response to the Gagaifomauga No.3 Member's request for a Commission of Inquiry; the cause of this has already been identified and plans have been formulated to address this. Furthermore the Hon Minister explained that the Ministry has also provided a report on the 'Measles Outbreak' to Committee. However, Hon FAIMALOTOA asserted that the reason it is being mentioned in her response is that it correlates with the future work plans for the Ministry.

The Hon Minister reiterated the need for vaccinations for the aforementioned diseases. The Hon Minister stated that Samoa is part of the 12 countries which are Covid free. She then conveyed acknowledgment for Health Workers; Council of Churches, Executive. She also acknowledged the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the NEOC for their tireless efforts and support. She urged the public to be proactive so as to ensure that Samoa will never face any other outbreaks in the future. The Hon Minister cited the shortage of Doctors and stated that this was evident upon the measles outbreak. Hon FAIMALOTOA commented on referrals and stated that it is feasible and more cost effective to bring in an overseas specialist to conduct surgeries in Samoa as well as having the opportunity to have kinaesthetic learning for our doctors (this can up-skill locals and avert sending patients overseas for operations).

Hon Minister acknowledged the Minister of Finance for the tabled Budget and for prioritising the Health sector. She concluded with acknowledgment of her Constituency and the 3 arms of Government.

Hon LOPAOO Natanielu Mu'a, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and Member for Vaisigano No.1

The Member conveyed acknowledgment for the SROS and conveyed well wishes from the two Ministries under his portfolio to the all Parliamentarians. He acknowledged the Executive, Judiciary and his constituency. Hon LOPAOO commended all in his Ministry. He also commended the United Nations for procuring a machine which enables the Ministry to identify pigs who have caught the swine fever thus eliminating possible risks/threats of this affecting Samoa. Hon Minister acknowledged the UN in Samoa for pledging 2000 testing kits for Covid19 and a further 2000 for Swine Fever testing. He acknowledged his fellow Ministers of Finance & Communication for assisting with procuring the aforementioned items.

Hon Minister commended Samoa's Government and pointed out that Hunger was not an issue as seen around the globe by the Covid19- induced Financial Crunch. In response to matters raised by 11 Members. He firstly explained the development of SROS and addressed matters raised by Members on the SROS. The Hon Minister stated that adding value to Local Products is imperative as overseas partners are placing emphasis on their local famers. He noted that this was the rationale behind the establishment of SROS; to house our graduates whom have the specific knowledge and expertise of scientific procedures. The Government encouraged this project to be in place so that Samoa can utilize its labour force who were educated overseas in this specific area, also to utilize the resources that the nation has in our environment to produce locally developed products that leads to development of the economy.

The Hon Minister proceeded to list products by SROS: Taro Whiskey, Breadfruit Flour, Eucalyptus Oil, and Rum from Sugar Cane, Bourbon from Vi Fruit, butter from avocado, scent oil from lemon grass, mosooi and other plants. The Hon Minister stated the main hindrance of SROS potential is the absence of a production line. Furthermore, the taro whiskey has been to an exhibition in Shanghai and the feedback with positive feedback. The Hon Minister cited another challenge is attracting investors into these local products. The Hon Minister called for Samoa to be proactive and take initiative in order to be the first in producing local whiskeys.

Furthermore, the Hon Minister noted that Taro and breadfruit can be frozen for 12 months while keeping its condition according to the research and findings conducted by the SROS. Noted the following products: the ethanol can be extracted from Taro. Banana Skin produced Paper and Coconut and Avocado oil; Avocado Butter- Cocoa Butter .Eclectic scents from local produce. These are the products of SROS and many others.

Type 1 & Type 2 Diabetes: Currently SROS is looking into 200 local plants with components that can eliminate Diabetes. They are also working on a medicine to heal cuts and wounds that cannot be cured by antibiotics. Furthermore, the Hon Minister noted that there were 50 marine animal spices gathered to conduct studies and research for a cure for cancer. The Hon Minister commended the patriotism of those employed by SROS and not taking lucrative offers elsewhere.

The Hon Minister then spoke on the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and stated that there is an initiative executed within communities to eradicate this rhinoceros beetle pest and stated that current efforts can match the reproduction rate of this pest. The Hon Minister pointed out that there is 500,000 set aside with the aim of eradication of this unwanted pest. Hon LOPAOO also acknowledged the donation of two chainsaws targeting the eradication of the rhinoceros beetle.

ALAIASA Moefaaouou Sepulona Moananu, Member for Anoamaa East

The Member noted on the pros and cons of eradication of the rhinoceros beetle given that people are now competing to getting more beetles for more money. Therefore, he asked

whether there was a chemical which can eradicate this pest as opposed to cutting down the coconuts. He called on the SROS to develop a chemical to eliminate the pest.

TAFUA Maluelue Tafua, Member for Aleipata Itupa i Lalo

Member refuted claims by the Minister that they assisted in the eradication process and queried whether they can trade rhinoceros beetles for taro (ti'apula).

LEALAILEPULE Rimoni Aiafi, Member for Faleata West

Member queried about a pest control carrier the Ministry released and stated that in his observation this pest control has exceeded that of the pest.

**Proceedings adjourned at 1:10pm;
and will reconvene at 9am on Friday 26 June 2020**