

[Edited]



Eleventh Parliament

Sixth Meeting

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

Monday, 26 June 2023

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

(Subject to Revision)

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NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**Monday, 26 June 2023**

The Speaker, Mr Patteson John Oti, took the Chair at 09:51.

Prayers.

Business of the House

ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources, Minister for Commerce Industries Labour and Immigration, Minister for Finance and Treasury, Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, Minister for Traditional Governance Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs, Minister for Forestry and Research, Minister for Culture and Tourism, Minister for Justice and Legal Affairs, Minister for Health and Medical Services and the Member for North/West Guadalcanal, East Honiara, Small Malaita, East Are Are, East Makira, North Guadalcanal, West Makira, Ulawa/Ugi, Temotu/Nende, Ranogga/Simbo, New Georgia/Vona Vona and West Honiara.

Questions and Answers

ANTHONY SARU BUILDING STRUCTURE AND SAFETY

#143 **Hon MATTHEW WALE** (*Aoke/Langalanga*)—*Leader of Opposition* (9 :56) to the Deputy Prime Minister: Can the Minister inform the House on the structural safety of the Anthony Saru Building?

Hon. MANASSEH MAELANGA (*East Malaita—Minister for Infrastructure Development*) (9 :52): Thank you Mr speaker and I thank you Leader of Opposition for asking that question.

As we know about the situation of the Anthony Saru after the earthquake, a private firm from Fiji, which is known as Fiji NRW McMann Fiji Limited, assessed the building structure. As we know from the assessment, the walkways and stairways are damaged and the lift. According to the report that I received, the entire structure of the main building is intact and safe. That is the report of the assessment of that building.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Thank you Sir. So there is no truth – I am not sure how widespread it is- but there is rumor going around that the foundation is dropped a little bit. Is there not mentioned of such thing in the assessment by the team?
Thank you.

Hon. MANASSEH MAELANGA: No! We have not receive any report of that.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: Thank you Mr Speaker. Just a supplementary question, which relates to buildings. Just a concerning of the Town Ground Plaza. Some of the constituencies are renting there. Are you aware of any technical assessment report which is done on the building? This is because in my layman point of view to building engineering, I see that the building is quite risky. Can the Minister responsible inform the House of the status of that particular building as well?

Hon. MANASSEH MAELANGA: On that question, I have not receive any report. Thank you.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: The obvious thing of course is the new Building Code that the Ministry is working on to take into account the earthquake risks and of course the enforcement of compliance, which is a global problem. Many other parts of the world that are prone to earthquake, Turkey being a recent one. The compliance are not really good and so the earthquake really devastated them. We also have a huge problem with compliance. Town Council plan to enforce their building regulations, people does not really pay attention to it and the. The enforcement is weak. Those are issues, not only the building code work but the compliance and enforcement capability of the planning divisions throughout the country to make sure that buildings can structurally withstand the strongest earthquakes. With those comments I do thank the Deputy Prime Minister for his responses thank you.

STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Bills

THE CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) BILL 2023

THE HONIARA CITY (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 2023

First Reading

The SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. Honourable Members, on Friday 23rd June 2023 my Office received the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023, and it was put on notice on that same date accordingly. Under Standing Order 44(1)(a) the First Reading of the Bill ought to take place three clear days after it has been put on notice. However, I understand that the government wishes to waiver the three days notice and therefore I am asking the Minister responsible to take the necessary steps, and in this instance, it is the Minister for Home Affairs.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Mr. Speaker I seek your consent to move the suspension of Standing Order 44(1)(a) in accordance with Standing Order 81.

The SPEAKER: Thank you Minister. Leave is granted.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I move that Standing Order 44(1)(a) be suspended in accordance with Standing Order 81 to permit the First Reading of the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023 to be carried out today.

Mr. Speaker, the reason, as you have heard, Parliament will suspend today and we will not have those three days. So we will have to come back and pass this when Parliament resumes on the 19th of July. The 2nd Reading will be done on the 19th. That is the only reason.

The SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. Honourable Members it is proposed that standing order (1)(a) be suspended in accordance with Standing Order 81 to permit the 1st Reading of the Honiara City (Amendment)(No.2) Bill 2023 to be carried out today.

Does any member wish to comment on this Motion before I put a question?

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Given that the government would like to send up many Bills in the eleventh hour of this house, it is a busy year ahead and we are going to be running into these types of problems or these issues in the final few months of the Parliament, it would be good for those managing government business to be schedule the submissions to Parliament and of course allow for First Reading.

Of course this particular restriction of the First Reading is not really a big deal, but when it comes to Second Reading, it would be good to observe the number of days so that Members are given the opportunity to read Bills, Committee Reports and prepare.

First Reading is not really a big deal. Just the point of better coordination in planning on the government side to make sure that Bills come in time then allow the process to take its course without us having to resort to suspending Standing Orders. We cannot say much, if it does come to such we will have to suspend, but the ideal situation is that we do not do that.

With that, I understand the reasoning and urgency on this particular Bill. So, we have no problem with it.

Question put and agreed to

Motions

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE (*East Choiseul—Prime Minister*) (10:02): I beg to move that at its adjournment on Monday, June 26, 2023, Parliament shall adjourn to Wednesday, July 19, 2023. At this time, Parliament should distribute the soft copy of the TRC Report. I understand the Ministry has lodged that the copies are with

Parliament, and they should be distributed to Members of Parliament for reference when that matter is placed before Parliament and Parliament resumes.

We take note of the comment raised by the Leader of the Opposition. A number of Bills are with Ministries and AG Chambers, and today the STC and SPM will meet with the Ministries to see where the status of the Bills are. Ideally, when we recess, these Bills must come up, and the Bills Committee will need more time to look into the Bills. These are the SEZ Bill, the Mines, Forestry, Electricity Bill, the Building Code, and the amendment to the Pacific Games Act, the Education Bill and the Petroleum Bill. These are Bills that the government is pushing forward to Parliament. So we need time for the Ministries to look into them and put them before Parliament.

Also, we receive notice from the Speaker that next week this chamber will be occupied. The Speaker has a program here with regional Clerks and Presiding officers. So the whole of next week we cannot meet as well.

Yes, next weekend as well, a government delegation will go to China for a visit. So we should be back here by the 17th of July. After a day's rest then we will start on the 19th of July. Those are the reasons to support this request for a Special Adjournment to July 19, 2023. I beg you to move.

Hon MATTHEW WALE (*Aoke/Langalanga—Leader of Opposition*) (10:06): Thank you and I appreciate the sentiments the Prime Minister made, especially with regards to making sure that the Bills that are coming, a number of them, and we have a short time to cover and give adequate time for Bills Committee to undertake its own process to clear those Bills for Parliament to be able to deal with them. Of course, I join him also in congratulating you and the Clerk for hosting the Regional Presiding Officers Conference, which will happen using our facilities here at the Chamber and at the Paul Tovua Complex. We want to wish you well in those interactions and of course whenever possible we can come and eat with you.

Just two issues that I wanted to raise for government's attention. One is with regards to the situation on the medicines. I know, we had some exchanges in question and answer during the supplementary. It would be good to have perhaps a written statement to Parliament maybe delivered in the Pigeon Holes to inform us of what steps, the Ministry or government has taken or is taking and the imminence of us overcoming the shortage of medicines.

For National Referral Hospital, I have just checked at the weekend because I had to run somebody to emergency, still short on chemical reagents at the lab for analysis. There is none. They sent people the International Medical at Maromaro. they also have none. Doctors are having to postpone operations because they cannot get tests done. Although the Minister said that we are 85 percent stock but given the situation

at the No.9, I am not sure about Gizo, Kilu'ufi, Lata and so forth. This matter seems not really clear, and it would be good to have a written statement so that we know that these matters are being addressed substantively and not just Ministers being defensive and so forth.

The other is with regards with to cash flow of the government. And I link this and of course, the governments is the largest player in our economy and when the cash flow of the government is tight, the whole economy feels it. A lot of our people feel this, taxi drivers and bus drivers, people who do marketing are also are affected. There is no flow of money and cost of living is high, but in the short term of course, relief for cost of living does not look possible during the remaining life of this House and the Executive Government. However, it would useful to hear government plans in terms of its own borrowing because it seems that the cash flow situation is the result of maybe government borrowing is not doing well.

Government, at least, continuous to function as normal and continuous to grease the economy in terms of legitimate expenditures throughout the year. We do not get a clear sense on this at present. What we do here and what we do see is cash flow is really tight but it need not be so because the budget documents do not show that there should be a tight cash situation. Also, the borrowing appropriations or approvals that Parliament already gave enables the government to be able to make sure that this year go as normal. Perhaps also a written statement on that so that we see the figures that are involved to give us some handle on where the government is at and that interaction with economic activities.

Those are the two issues that I would like to raise for attention of the government. I do wish to support the Motion.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU (*West Are Are*) (10:10): I would also like to thank the honorable Prime Minister for the Motion of the Special Adjournment and the reasons given. I subscribe to the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition placed under the Special Adjournment. As the chair of the Bill and Legislation Committee, I thank the government that they have taken serious to also consider the needs of the Ministries and stakeholders so that they have good, ample and quality time to really look through and prepare the Bills and also the Bills and Legislation Committee. A number of years the Prime Minister has mentioned that it is good for us to achieve the Bills amendments. However, I want to register and keep ample and appropriate time to the piece of legislation so that when we deal with it, it is of quality. Therefore, if there is a need for us to put some for the next meeting, I think we need to consider it so that we do a good job, particularly the Bills and Legislation Committee, when it also has responsibilities to do its job very properly as a Committee.

With that, I also support the Motion.

Question put and agreed to

(Motion is passed)

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: I beg to move that Parliament do now adjourn.

Parliament is adjourned at 10.13

[Edited]



Eleventh Parliament

Sixth Meeting

**NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF
SOLOMON ISLANDS**

Wednesday, 19 July 2023

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

(Subject to Revision)

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**Wednesday, 19 July 2023**

The Speaker, Mr Patteson John Oti, took the Chair at 09:48.

Prayers.

Business of the House

ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Minister for Forestry and Research, Minister for Justice and Legal Affairs, Minister for Public Service, Minister for Home Affairs and Members of Parliament for North West Guadalcanal, Rennell Bellona, East Are Are, North Guadalcanal, West Makira, Ulawa/Ugi, South New Georgia Rendova/Tetepare, Rannoga/Simbo and West Honiara.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

- Report on the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023 (National Parliament Paper No.19 of 2023)

Questions and Answers

POLICE COOPERATION AGREEMENT WITH THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA

149 **Hon MATTHEW WALE** (*Aoke/Langalanga*)—*Leader of Opposition* (9 :49): To the Minister of Police, National Security and Correctional Services: Can the Minister explain the recently signed police cooperation agreement with the People's Republic of China and how this is different from the first policing agreement and the security agreement?

Hon ANTHONY VEKE (*West Guadalcanal—Minister for Police, National Security and Correctional Services*) (9 :50): Thank you Mr. Speaker and thank you Member for Parliament for Aoke/Langalanga and Leader of the Opposition for that question.

As highlighted in the government's public statement, this police arrangement is solely to help to the RSIPF and to complement the work that other police partners are doing within the RSIPF, including those of our traditional partners.

Let me make it clear that it is not a new police pact and not another shady security agreement, as stated by many media coverages, that we have seen in the last few days.

This signed police cooperation is simply the implementation plan of the overarching policing agreement. The police to police cooperation is a standard practice done everywhere to support respective police forces to build strength and courage cooperation and harness partnership. There is nothing sinister or disruptive about the police to police cooperation. We have it with other countries and we signed with PRC.

In fact the idea that we are signing a new police pact is misleading. And the sad thing about it is that what we do to build our police force was used regionally as a tactic to fuel geopolitical literature, in which Solomon Islands has no intention in it.

Since our initial PRC police partnership, we have received a lot of support from them. However, all those assistance were done with no formal provisions, but through spontaneous arrangements. Hence, the signing of the implementation plan provides that formality to cooperate and discuss issues under a guided arrangement. There is nothing more to it, but simply an action plan of a partnership that was establish between two sovereign police forces. We also have implementation plans with other police partners and this is similar to that aspect.

To those who view the other side PF as too small to cater for many partners, please allow me to remind everyone that in 40 years we have struggled to build our police force to an acceptable standard but we have failed. Therefore the need to improve our police force will never be small and the gaps will always be there. Hence, it is the interest of this country's safety that we improve our police force, and one that is built on the interest of Solomon Islands.

Be rest assured that there is no strategic or sinister interest against anyone, but with the pure intention to develop the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I just want to know and if the Minister would inform the house on which countries and partners have we signed similar police agreements with so far?

Hon ANTHONY VEKE: Currently we have one with the PRC, one with AFP, one with the New Zealand Police and another one with PNG.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Just for clarification.

China is our new friend, and so we do not really know their system, but the Ministry of Public Security, I assume that is the counterpart Ministry to our Ministry of Police, we see in Australia it would be AFP, which is the Federal Police, which does bilateral with Police Organizations Internationally, and I assume in China there will be those who that deal with Internal Policing, on their issues, and those that deal with security and intelligence and counter Intelligence. So maybe the Minister can

enlighten the House, maybe just a brief description of the Ministry of Public Security and co-work that they will do with the RSIPF.

Hon ANTHONY VEKE: Yes, we understand that with other Co-operations, it deals with the force or Police to Police cooperation. We know that China has a different system and the Ministry of Public Security is the responsible Ministry that looks after the Police Force in China and therefore the Ministry is responsible for undertaking any cooperation for that matter.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I want to thank the Minister for his elaborations on the questions. On this matter of training, I am assuming a very important component of this new agreement is the training for our police officers. So I am wondering if the Minister could inform the House; is police training part of this other agreements that was mentioned we have signed with these other countries? Any police training on those? For example, I think he mentioned AFP.

Hon ANTHONY VEKE: Yes, the we do have training with other partners as well.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Just from the media reports, issues of interoperability between the various partners, two international partners that work with our police. Is there is a mechanism that harmonizes this aspect of the various partnerships that we have, so that there is both the training and implementation of that training, there is cohesion and harmony to it?

Hon ANTHONY VEKE: That is what was said, that there will be issues of interoperability of the forces. I think this is not an issue. The training is similar to some aspects; for example, when you talk about public order management, the training is similar. So most of the things that the police are doing are similar. It is about the force that they will engage with. The level of investment of supporting the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force is totally different.

So, in terms of interoperability of the different system, it does not have any effect to the extent that it will disrupt the police force and that it warrants us to develop a system that enhances working the together of the different partners. In terms of the operation of police and the work of the police, they can operate as far as the Ministry and the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force is concerned.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): Just for clarity around the actual signing of these agreements. I think you have mentioned a few. What is signed by Ministers, between Ministers or between operational levels, with regards to the different agreements that are being signed? For example, this one was signed by the Ministers; I do not know whether it is yourself or another Minister, and then the other one is for Australia and who signed on that one, and you also mentioned Papua New Guinea, and which level of government signed that?

Hon ANTHONY VEKE: There are MOUs that are signed between different Royal Solomon Islands Police Forces and the force at different levels. So the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force and PNG were done by the Commissioner. So police to police. So at the different levels, operational and top level. So it is not the same for this one. As I have said earlier on, we signed it, and it is important for us to note that it is a different country and different countries require and see things differently. So we have that signing. Maybe the Minister of Foreign Affairs can help, because some of these MOUs and collaborations go through Foreign Affairs before the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force signs them. So perhaps Foreign Affairs can contribute to that one.

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE: Yes, there are MOUs that are signed by Ministers, others are signed by senior officials, especially if they are technical in nature. Where a line Ministry Minister is not available, normally the Minister of Foreign Affairs signs on their behalf and I do sign those with Cabinet's mandate or authority.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): I think it is interesting to note the different levels of the signings. That denotes to me that there is different importance, perhaps, given to this.

I would like to ask in terms of our diplomatic relations already established. One would have thought that it is the signings are done on an operational level, given that there is already relationships established diplomatically. I am aware, perhaps, that is where Papua New Guinea signed at the Commissioner level. That is all and well and good, think.

I just want to ask on why we need another high level ministerial policing agreement still when we already have diplomatic relations and I am aware that there were already equipment that were sent earlier without any of this in place but we were already receiving support? Why does this has to be done again on top of that one?

Hon ANTHONY VEKE: I think I have made it clear in my statement during my reply, which I had put earlier on. The training is an implementation plan and why it is important that we signed that implementation plan is that it helps or guide us on what we would request from PRC. What are our needs and under what guidelines or framework do we put that on? I think this is why it is important that we do those signings.

The MOU we have with PRC, in terms of policing, is an overarching MOU. It does not come to a specific mention of specific areas that the we have identified the gaps. With this implementation plan, we actually identify the areas that the PRC will support RSIPF in.

I think, for me, that is good. We do not want to allow ourselves not to be guided by an area that our partners just come to influence us. We have an MOU that guides us in terms of supporting the RSIPF and we do not leave it open where they come at anywhere at anytime. I think that is something that we should thank the government for coming to that arrangement. I think it is very important that we are guided.

Answering your question honourable MP, I think that is the importance of it to have that arrangement and to sign that implementation plan because it guides us. When we do requests, it guides us on what we request. When they support us in terms of training, what areas would they support us in.

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: I think to be more specific on the question of the Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee. I think he asked as to why there is signing at the Minister's level. We do not see any difference. Whether you sign at the official level or at the Minister's level, it does not make any difference, unless there are issues that the Opposition side sees that if we sign at the ministerial level, the implications will be like this. If there are specific fears that you, then you need to tells us here so that we can answer that.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): I think in terms of international relations, there are differences when you sign at the level of the Minister, there is a certain hierarchy in terms of obligations, in terms of the meaning of the signing. When we sign an operational MOU, it is more operational. That means that there is no political considerations, really, when you sign at the MOU level, whereas when you sign at the ministerial levels, there are issues of full power that comes into play and the Minister of Foreign Affairs knows this well. There is a difference here in terms of the hierarchy given to treaties or agreements. There is a different between agreements and MOUs as well.

I heard that the Minister said that there is an MOU or an agreement between Papua New Guinea, but it is on an operational level with the police. This one is between the Ministers, which connotes some political considerations, and not just purely technical. That is why it is important, at least for myself, to understand what kind of documents are we signing, what are the obligations that are signed for us, what are the repercussion, perhaps.

The idea on the follow-up question here is that, in this case, given that the Ministers are signing this, what sort of an implementation kind of a guideline, as we heard. Are we expecting other signing later between the technical people, given that this one seems to be a guidance one and then as you request, are you going to individually sign between that operational level? That is what I would like to know. Just in case we hear about some more signings and stories later.

I want to hear whether that would be the way going forward with this particular agreements, or if this already covers everything and you will just write letters. Although the Ministers have signed and it is political, and our technical do not get really involved. I just want to know whether there would be additional signings between operational levels.

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE: The international relations is there and of course international practice also differs, depends on a country to country level as well. Some of these MOUs or Agreements, when officials discuss, the other side for example, will ask for who will do the signing, and that is discussed. If it is at the ministerial level, then it is at the Ministerial level.

Most of our MOUs, a good number of MOUs that we have with PRC are at the ministerial level. There are specific activities, for example, under that MOU. This could require some details and often at that stage, that is where the Permanent Secretary or the Commissioner, for example, would sign those detailed activities.

The overall memorandum of understanding or agreement generally between us and PRC so far is at the ministerial level. International practice also differs from country to country, although general international relations, as you know it, is also there. The level of signing could indicate the level of importance or even the level of commitment and trust that countries have for each other as well. These factors do come into consideration.

The Police Cooperation with Papua New Guinea, at the technical level, is signed by the Commissioner, but I signed an understanding with the Foreign Affairs Minister on the same subject matter.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): I just wanted to thank the Minister for that clarification. I just want to touch a bit on the technical and operational side in terms of things like rules of engagement. This is very technical and operational. What will guide a specific activity? That is quite a standard practice around the world. When another force comes into another country, there is going to be rules of engagements, what will guide it, and how will the different forces act in our country. Is that going to be a new agreement or is it covered under this one? That is my question, which is follow up on the initial one. Because I would have thought that, that is a very technical operational one, where the police itself knows how to coordinate with foreign forces when they come.

So it is very detail and even leads to things like prosecution. When something happens, how do a foreign police prosecute it? Are they going to do it here or refer it back to their country and prosecute it in their courts? These sort of things are quite detailed. Is it covered in this agreement or do we need a different one for that?

Hon ANTHONY VEKE: In terms of the rules of engagement, the MOU and implementation plan for PRC partnership, it covers under the MOU and implementation plan.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: I wish to thank the honorable Minister for Police for his responses. It sheds a lot of light for us to understand much more what is involved in this bilateral agreements governing relationship and security. The more information that is out there, I think the more useful for all of us that puts everybody at ease, so that we do not think of any shadows behind these things.

It is unfortunate, but it is what it is . A greater transparency will be helpful all round. So again, I would like to thank the honorable Minister.

The SPEAKER: Thank you honorable Leader, the next question is also under your name, so you may ask it now.

DIPLOMATIC SWITCH AGREEMENTS WITH THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

150 **Hon MATTHEW WALE** (*Aoke/Langalanga*)—*Leader of Opposition* (10:15) to the Prime Minister and/or the Minister for Foreign Affairs provide Parliament with a list of agreements, memorandums of understanding and Memorandums of Agreement signed with the People Republics of China since the switch of diplomatic recognition in 2019 up to the present?

This is just so that we can have an updated understanding on the various agreement that have been signed at the various levels.

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE (*East Choiseul—Prime Minister*) (10:16): Thank you Mr Speaker. I will provide a list as requested. The first one on the list here is the joint communique on the establishment of diplomatic relations between Solomon Islands and People's Republic Of China. The purpose of that is the establishment of a relationship between us. The lead Solomon Islands government Ministry is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade. This was signed in September 2019.

The Second one on the list is the MOU on promoting friendly relations between the government of Guangdong Province and People's Republic of China and Solomon Islands. The purpose of that is the relation between Solomon Islands in things like exchange in visits, trade and investment, livelihood projects, agriculture and people to people exchange. The lead Ministry is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade. This was signed in October 2019. The third one on the list is MOU on strengthening cooperation between Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Solomon Islands. The purpose of this MOU is to strengthen the cooperation between Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's

Republic of China. This MOU provides for the two Ministry's to maintain contacts with one another, strengthening exchanges and cooperation, enhancing policy communication and coordination regarding a range of issues, such as climate change and maritime affairs. It also provides for establishment of embassies and facilitating people to people exchange. The lead Ministry as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade. We also signed this in 2019.

The next one is the MOU on economic and technical cooperation between the government of the Solomon Islands and People's Republic of China. The purpose and objectives of that MOU is to further develop friendly relations and economic and technical cooperation. The Peoples Republic of China provided a grant of \$3 billion RMB for covering the funding that we need for the 2023 Pacific Games, the stadium projects and the SINU dormitories, three of them are about to be completed soon. The lead Ministry is the Ministry of Finance and Treasury. This was also signed in 2019.

The next one is MOU and cooperation within the framework of Silk Road Economic Belt and Road Initiative in 21st century maritime silk Road Initiative between PRC and Solomon Islands government. This MOU provides for the cooperation within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. The objective there are for the two parties, the Solomon Islands government and the People's republic of China to realize the goal of common development, it translates mutual complimentary strength into advantages, strength in cooperation and it also promotes regional connectivity. It provide for the areas of cooperation, such as cooperation through policy coordination, facilitating connectivity unimpeded trade, financial integration and people to people bond, and it also provides for the mode of cooperation.

The next one is the MOU in the field of education between Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development in Solomon Islands and the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. This MOU is purposely to deepen the cooperation and exchanges in the field of education. It provides for forms of cooperation, such as students mobility, where the two parties agree to facilitating students applications to go for studies in each other's universities. The Chinese can come here and we can go to their universities, and to do with scholarships that are offered. It also provides for cooperation through exchange of teachers, researchers and academics, language teaching and the basic and tertiary education.

The next one is MOU between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Solomon Islands on strengthening cooperation. This MOU is between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Solomon Islands and the People's Republic of China to manage the relationships between the two countries. The lead Ministry is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade.

The next one is the MOU between the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development of Solomon Islands and the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China in the field of education. This one is more specific on student scholarships and teachers engagement in language training, basic education, and tertiary education support, and we signed that in October 2019.

The other one is a MOU on promoting friendly exchanges between Guangdong Province, the PRC, and the Solomon Islands Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. This MOU is to promote friendly cooperation and exchanges in cooperation between Guangdong Province, China, and the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. As parties to this MOU, we agree to strengthen the organization in the following areas: the exchange of delegation visits, trade and investment, livelihood projects, agriculture and fisheries, people-to-people exchange, communication, and coordination mechanisms. We know that Guangdong Province is the sister province of Guadalcanal Province, and through this MOU as well, we are trying to encourage the sister relationship between other provinces, which is progressing very well.

The other one is the MOU on police cooperation between the People's Republic of China and Solomon Islands; this one was signed in 2022 and provides for Police cooperation to achieve the goal of preventing, discovering, and combating crimes. The object is to allow the competent authorities, and in our case, the Ministry of Police and National Security and the Ministry of Public Security of the People's Republic of China to submit requests for assistance upon which the authorities can execute their request in accordance with their specific domestic laws and regulations and international obligation. That agreement covers areas like that.

The next one is the security pact agreement between the People's Republic of China and Solomon Islands it is to strengthen security corporation on the basis of mutual respect for sovereignty, equality and mutual benefit of the two countries and in fact this security pact is very well debated and discussed in the media for a long time now.

The next one is the agreement of mutual visa exemption for diplomatic officials or service and public affairs passport holders. This MOU is visa exemption and it allows officials from both countries to travel freely without having to apply for visa and this is saving time and cost and such and it makes travelling quickly. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade was signed in 2022.

The next one is the MOU on health corporation between the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Health and Medical Services of Solomon Islands. This MOU will oversee the implementation and construction of this comprehensive medical center in Solomon Islands, which

we will see at some point in time that work will soon start on that medical center. This MOU will also enable long and short term study visits and human resources development of medical teams of both parties. It also enhances human resources capacity and capability of Solomon Islands medical staff. Actually, this medical center is now staffed by Chinese medical practitioners who are actually stationed here in Solomon Islands and giving good services to our people. If you want acupuncture, you can go there now, at the National Referral Hospital.

The next one is MOU on deepening blue economy cooperation between the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration of Solomon Islands. This is an MOU over arching framework that targets the marine sector. It is commercial in nature and it aims to foster development and economic investment. It is tied very closely to the blue continent strategy of the Pacific Island countries. And there is a big difference between issues that we have recently when they want to suck us into this Indo Pacific strategy and we did not agree to that. If countries would like to help us on the implementation of the blue economy, then they need to come and help us implement our strategy. But this one is more specific to us.

The other one is the MOU between the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology of Solomon Islands and the Ministry of Emergency Management of the People's Republic of China on cooperation in the area of disaster risk reduction and emergency responses. This MOU will cover emergency supplies system and the contingency plans between Solomon Islands and People's Republic of China. It also provides for disaster monitoring, and touches on early warning system. The MOU that we signed lately also covers those areas and elaborate more on those areas. The early warning system, remote sensing cooperation and search and rescue capacity building is covered. It also provides for training and reciprocal receipt between both parties and also the implementation of strengthened coordination between Solomon Islands and People's Republic of China. The lead Ministry is the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology.

The other one is the MOU on Strengthening Development Cooperation and Promoting the Implementation of Global Development Initiative. This is one of the initiatives that we commend the leadership of the People's Republic of China. It looks at actively assisting small island states to try and cope with the demands of the Sustainable Development Goals, which we really lag behind. It is in keeping with this 'leaving no one behind', an obligation that developed countries have to kick small island countries up and small island states to be able to cope with the demands of the sustainable development goals. More specifically, it strengthens the development cooperation and promoting the implementation of global development initiative by the leadership of that great country in Solomon Islands.

The next one is the MOU between the Civil Aviation Authority of Solomon Islands and the Civil Aviation Administration of China relating to civil, air transport and air services. For this one, we look at operating international air services. We are looking at some point in time for direct flights straight from China to Solomon Islands and it needs of course the extensions of the airport so that we can accommodate wide body aircrafts. The Ministry of Communication and Aviation is the lead Ministry.

The next one is the MOU on Joint Chinese Language Education Program in Solomon Islands between the Ministry of Education of People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development of Solomon Islands. This MOU oversees the development of Chinese language education program in Solomon Islands. It provides for the carrying out of Chinese language education program in primary and secondary schools in Solomon Islands and also in higher education and vocational education. It obligates the Ministry of Education of China to provide Chinese language teaching staff, resources and other support and it obligates the Ministry of Education and Human Resources to organize or coordinate relevant local schools to offer Chinese language courses and support local student to learn the Chinese language and other obligations.

The next one is the MOU between the China Meteorology Administration and the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology of Solomon Islands. The purpose of this MOU is to promote develop and support exchanges and collaborative activity between the national meteorological services in meteorological science and technology. It is very specific on those areas. It outlines the possible areas of cooperation and forms of cooperation, such as the exchange of visit of experts and also meteorological instruments and data management and other forms of cooperation, maybe exchanges of information that can also happen within this MOU, and of course subject to our laws.

The next MOU is between Solomon Islands Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade with China Council for promotion of external trade. This MOU recognizes the shared commitment for creating more opportunities of trading and investment in order to further deepen the economic and trade relations between the two countries. It aims to achieve this by further recognizing and establishing friendly and cooperative relations, establishing the mechanisms of any working committees and set up information and exchange and sharing mechanisms as well as through other means. The lead Ministry here is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade. By the way, with the implementation of this, we have just signed this when we went there recently, but the work on the implementation of this trade agreement, we actually have a preferential treatment to access Chinese market and quite a big list of commodities

that can go into China on a 98 percent duty free. They really open up their markets and there is a huge opportunity for our people.

The other one is of course the agreement on the protocol of sanitary and phytosanitary requirements for export of copra oil cake from Solomon Islands to People's Republic of China. It seems that the way things will happen here is that this is the first one we signed an MOU specifically for this one, but there is 85 other products that can enter Chinese markets but they require the sanitary and phytosanitary obligations that we have to meet.

So there are questions that will come back and forth to technical or Ministries responsible to answer these questions.

Our Ambassador designated to the People's Republic of China is a trade officer himself and this is the area that he wants to really pursue for trade between us. So there is a big opportunity for a long list of products, our commodities to be sent to china, as long as we satisfy the sanitary phytosanitary requirements, which we are working very hard on it. The first one that we sign is the coconut oil cake, which can no now go into the Chinses markets.

The other one is the agreement on economic and technical cooperation between the government of the People's Republic of China and the government of Solomon Islands. This agreement aims to further develop friendly relations and economic and technical cooperation between the lead Ministry, which is the Ministry of Finance and Treasury and the governments of the People's of Republic Of China which will provide the government with a grant of 150 Million RMB for projects being implemented under the projects that we discussed with them.

The other one is the implementation agreement on sports and technical assistance project to Solomon Islands 2023 Pacific Games. This agreements provide for the implementation for the sports technical assistance project to Solomon Islands. It provides for us to send 80 athletes from Solomon Islands to China. They will stay there for 90 days or three months, in seven sports. All of them by this time already there and camp and training in the seven sports. It also provides for a dispatch of nine member Chinese coaching team. It also provides for relevant training, as well as providing training equipment as well. The lead organization is the National Hosting Authority of the Pacific Games.

The other MOU is on the 2023 Rural Sustainable Development program between China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Rural Development of Solomon Islands. This MOU provides for the implementation for the rural development program of Solomon Islands for the year 2023. China International Development Cooperation Agency of PRC will provide the Ministry of Rural Development with USD\$10

million in direct budgetary task assistance to implement this rural development program in all the 50 constituencies . The Embassy of PRC and MRD will supervise it and inspect the use of this money to ensure proper usage. They will also jointly inspect and evaluate the projects.

The other one, and I think the last one I have on the list here, is the implementation plan, which talked about this morning, of the police cooperation between the Ministry of Public Security of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services of Solomon Islands. This will be for 3 years, from 2023 to 2025. As we already heard, this implementation plan is to further facilitate cooperation between our two countries, enhancing capacity building of Royal Solomon Islands Police Force and maintain social stability of Solomon Islands. It provides for extensive training on police skills. Aid, such as policing equipment, vehicles and other assistances, a lot of them already arrived, as we are talking here. Those facilities are already on the ground with the Ministry of Police.

In terms of the question, as is worded there, those are the agreements and memorandum of understandings that we have signed with People's Republic of China.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: I appreciate the list that Prime Minister read to us. I am not sure whether I have heard it from some other places or whether it is not covered by agreements. This is on relocation due to the sea level rise; whether we have any understanding in that area, whether they can support us. They are one of the, maybe the largest emitter. So they do have international obligations and I am sure they would be very happy to support. The area on relocation. Mitigation and adaptation is a normal language, but the relocation is one that we are struggling with. Have there been any discussions or anything signed to cover this?

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: That is a very important question. I would like to believe that it is covered within the spirit of those agreement on climate change issues that we have signed with them. On the way they work, we will really need to put up costed projects. We have submitted some list and they came back to us and said that we must cost it out properly. We brought a list with us to request for help, and the President was very accommodative, and the Premier. They said that we need to cost it out properly.

So I believe that issue is in the spirit of the general MOUs and agreements that we have signed. It can be developed further on specific issues. That is one issue I believe and I fully agree with the Leader of Opposition that we must put to them as a project.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): Thank you Prime Minister for that quite a comprehensive list of the MOUs already signed since 2019- so it is quite a lot- in terms of our relations with our new friend. The Idea and I would like to ask as a supplementary, is big investments, such as the stadium. Where does it fit in? I think we have a list of 25, I think, if I am not wrong, in terms of the list that the Prime Minister read. Where does the stadium infrastructure fit in and under which MOU or agreement?

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: This is on the implementation agreement on sports technical projects to Solomon Islands 2023 Pacific Games. That is for sports technical assistance. On the first one, MOU on economic and technical cooperation between the governments of the Peoples Republic of China is \$3 billion RMB. This agreement is between the Lead Ministry, which is the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, and we signed this in 2019. This is the first thing that we actually put when we switched relations. These are some of the things that we have put during the first time because we want a smooth transition. We put our request and they agreed to give us \$3 billion RMD.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: How much SBD is that?

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: 3 billion, we need to find out the conversion for this. I think it is something around \$1 billion US dollar, but we will find the equivalent of that but it is 3 billion RMB and it covers the big developments, like the sports stadiums and other sport infrastructures.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: It is a long list, and if we keep on asking, we will have a whole day of questions. Just in terms of education and scholarships. I am sure that in terms of the MOU, it will not lock down in numbers. We expect some growth. What kind of numbers are we looking for in terms of the training for our people in China, but also the possibility that, perhaps, they can support us with scholarships at SINU? That is the first question.

Second, they are a technologically advanced country and whether they are able to partner with us on the TVET subsector.

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: In terms of numbers, I will rely very heavily on the Ministry of Education for that; unless the Minister for Foreign Affairs would like to chip in there. I do not have this information with me in terms of locking it on a certain number. Maybe there is information with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But yes, there is scope to extend TVET and areas like that. There are specific areas that can be picked up from the general MOU that we signed. The Minister for Foreign Affairs may want to step in there.

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE: In terms of numbers, I do not have the specific numbers with me, but there are more than 100 students currently studying in China. I think it is between 120 and 130, but we can get the specific number. I also take note of the possibility for them to look at SINU, sponsoring students at SINU. That is an idea that we did discuss with them previously, but we will take that up again with them, as well as the possibility for TVET training. We will explore those areas as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): I just wanted to ask a supplementary question with regards to the MOUs, I have here in terms of how I listened to the Prime Minister, there are about 25. Out of those, which ones do we take the initiative to sign? How does it work? Do we approach them or they are the ones doing it for us and we just sign? Is there anyone in here that we take the initiatives in terms of seeking an MOU to do something together?

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: It works both ways. We have diplomatic relations with them. Meetings were held with our Ministries and a long of request was sent and we managed to pull some in. So most of it works. I would like to believe that all of the agreements have subject matters that we directly need, and they came and saw that. So it works both ways.

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE: Just to supplement the response by the honorable Prime Minister to this supplementary question raised by colleague for East Are'Are and Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. Most of these arrangements are mostly initiated by our line ministries and we the officials they take time to sit down with the Embassy Officials to look at these. So, it is not something that we just sign over night. There is a process in place, submissions for those initiatives comes our respective line ministries and some of these arrangements or some of these initiatives are based on our national development strategy. That is how the ministries have come up with those in terms of the arrangements that we now have with PRC.

As we can appreciate, the relation has grown from strength to strength,. It is rich and it is deep as you can hear from the number of MOUs that we have signed with PRC. We will continue to work with them and explore other opportunities using the National Geo Strategy as a overall framework and of course priorities of the government of the day.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: . I do wish to thank both the honourable Prime Minister and the honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs for giving comprehensive responses to all the questions. It seems as though that we will need an unit to deal with PRC itself. The signing of all these things is good but then it comes and the ministries are not doing their work. It is us that will slow ourselves. It would be

good to have a more proactive capability that will take this to the next level in terms of securing support, funding support and all that. They maybe able to help us with that too to meet their own standards and requirements to do proposals and all that.

We have struggled with this for a very long time. There are all sorts of funds available like those climate funds, we are really struggling to access that because our unit here and capacity is very thin. I think, we have some opportunities to really do something and build a robust capacity to be able to do that. This must include of course, some Chinese language capability to write proposals in the way that they met it. We are writing or fishing like we are doing must be done professional so that those people can feel sad for us and approve it. So that is important.

The other is, now that you have explained it, I am not seeing so much of the controversies surrounding a lot of these agreements. So, I think transparency is the key really, the more information you put out and here in Parliament, I think if these agreements-it is a valid argument that the Prime Minister had mentioned a while back on why it is only PRC that you are worried about and the agreements with all others you are not worried about? It is a valid point, because it is a new partner and because it just happens in terms of geo politics and that attracts all these controversy but it need not be. We do need to chart our own course, so that is right.

But I think transparency in these agreements. Put out from all others as well to be fair. All the agreements that we struck with all others must be put out so that we can all see to say there is nothing out of the ordinary that anybody should be scared of or being fearful or so. At the end of the day, it is our people who need to be comfortable that you are making as Executive government choices that are good for all of us. That is what is important.

Of course, there are our traditional partners and on that, I would want to just counsel respectfully the Prime Minister that we need to keep them in toe and perhaps some of the rhetoric might be a little- that creates unnecessary negativity in their terms. Like they are misjudging what the government is trying to achieve, so I think both greater transparency and sensitive to where they are at would also be very helpful to us. We certainly do not want to be in the middle of that tussle, so transparency would help us with that.

With those comments, I do thank the Prime Minister.

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: Before I read the statement of government business, I appreciate the closing remarks of the Leader of Opposition. The government is actually accountable to the people of this country. That is why we do transparency on this floor of Parliament. Our Ministers are answerable directly to Parliament and we appreciate that comment.

So far the request for transparency, since I arrived here, is not by the people of this country. It is the foreign governments that want us to transparent with our agreements with the People's Republic of China. I have a problem with that. I am answerable to this government and answerable to the people of this country and on the floor of this Parliament. We note the closing remarks by the Leader of the Opposition.

STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Bills

THE CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) BILL 2023

Second Reading

Hon CHRIS LAORE (*Shortlands—Minister for Home Affairs*) (11:00): Thank you Mr Speaker, I moved that the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023 be now read a second time.

I am honored and privileged to present to this House "The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023 on behalf of this Democratic Coalition Government for Advancement. These Bill represents a major step forward towards implement our policies and mandate on behalf of the people of this nation.

These amendment Bill is consistent with the government's policy to review the Citizenship Act 2018 to allow social, economic and family benefits to person's who obtain rights to move freely between their country of original and country of residence. It allows capacity and confidence to pursue employment and business opportunities in either countries and to allow a more mobile Solomon Islands diasporas living in other countries.

This amendment Bill rectifies the deficiencies identified in the Citizenship Act of 2018, which adversely affect innocent children under 18 years of birth citizens. This amendment Bill provides expressed provisions in support of the principals of law applied in the case of the Peter Kenilorea Junior vs Attorney General (Civil Case No. 286 of 2021). In accordance to Section 22 of the National Constitution of Solomon Islands, children under the age of 18 years of birth citizens are citizens mandatorily once their citizenship have never been lost or relinquished.

This government's policy initiative has been widely consulted as the best practice and warmly welcomed by citizens of this country. The current practice where children of birth citizens under the age of 18 years having to formally apply through the Solomon Islands Citizenship Commission is something of the past and must cease to exist. Children of both citizens under the age of 18 now do not have to go through hefty litigations as in the past.

The amendment Bill further indirectly emphasizes that the use of term 'indigenous citizens' and/or naturalized citizens' has now terminology of the past. Now the right term used in our current citizenship law is 'birth citizens'. The appropriate technical definition used in the citizenship legislation pave the way forward for citizenship generally in Solomon Islands.

The of the Citizenship Act 2018 was conducted by the review team established to look into the propose amendment to be inserted into the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023.

The members comprised of senior officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce Industry And Labor and Immigration. It produced a draft consultation Bill for consideration by stakeholders and citizens.

The review team undertook meetings and consultation in Honiara to ensure that the proposed Bill is appropriate and demonstrates best practices. The meeting consultation provided a valuable opportunity for officers to meet and obtain the views and advices of implementing the provisions of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023.

This Bill amends Section 14(2a) of the Citizen Act 2018 so that additional requirements, such as a valid driving license, a valid passport and birth certificates are included. This is specifically aimed at strengthening the existing provision of the Citizen Act 2018.

This Bill amends and repeals Section 14(c) of the Citizenship Act and replaces it new section that provides a helpful list of evidence, which an applicant for citizenships can bring forward to support their intention to reside in Solomon Islands or to maintain a close and continuing relations with Solomon Islands. Such evidence includes evidence of economic stability, of capital properties and of receipt of past financial contributions to the economy of Solomon Islands.

It further provides children under 18 years of a parent or parents who are birth citizens are eligible and automatically entitled to be citizens of Solomon Islands and therefore need not apply through the Solomon Islands Citizenship Commission.

The Bill amends Section 16 of the Citizenship Act of 2018 and replaces it with a new subsection that provides that the person have to be ordinary in Solomon Islands for a total period of 10 years immediately before the day that person applies for citizenship. It furthers makes it very clear that the 10 years residence requirement does not apply to a person who was born in Solomon Islands or a child of a parent or parents who are birth citizens.

The government has identified dual citizenship as a major policy priority. The Ministry has demonstrated its commitment to implementing the government policy in the proposed amended legislation by including appropriate provision to provide for the fair and non discriminatory citizenship law in respect of children under 18 years of birth citizens as the way forward in the future.

The policy to allow dual citizenship has benefits, including:

- social and economic and family benefits to person who obtain the right to move freely between their country of origin and their country of residence,
- the capacity and confidence to pursue employment and business opportunity in the country,
- improves rights to social benefits to own land and inherit assets,
- the entitlement to convey nationality to their children,
- to provide its country with experiences and knowledge from the people who have worked and studies overseas and can bring their expertise back to benefit the local community,
- to provide leaders who have lived and worked overseas are able to attract more foreign investment to the country,
- to increase global integration to reverse or minimize brain-drain as work mobility and opportunities increased and a larger more mobile Solomon Island diaspora living in other countries
- to increase the international exposure of Solomon Island products and culture, creating business export and tourism opportunities. There is a world trend towards the acceptance of dual citizenship, integration globalization of industry and out charging of jobs have made this a practical necessity to fully participate in global markets. Ease of communication, transport and the internets are bringing the world closer together and the socio-political dynamics are demanding that we integrate, cooperate and share the worlds human economic and natural resources. The smooth granting of dual citizenship to eligible citizens is a significant step towards better integration and participation in the global economy.

The government should be rightfully proud of this Bill and the contribution it makes to the betterment of the nation. It will make a real difference to the lives of many current and former citizens and their families. It will make a difference to our local communities as we encourage skill and dedicated people to return to Solomon Islands.

The Solomon Islands diaspora has been waiting for the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023 to materialize and have high expectations that this government will continue and support them in their struggle to reconnect with their homeland.

This Democratic for Coalition Government for Advancement has exceeded the high expectations of our people. We have delivered on our promise to our people and to our nation.

With this remarks, I beg to move.

The SPEAKER: Thank Honourable Minister. Honourable Members it is proposed that the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023 be read a second time. According to Standing Order 48(5b) debate on the question is now adjourn.

Bills

THE HONIARA CITY (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 2023

Second Reading

Hon CHRIS LAORE (*Shortlands—Minister for Home Affairs*) (11:10): Thank you Mr. Speaker. It is with greatest respect and honor that I rise once again to move that the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023 be now read the second time.

I am also equally honored and privileged to present to this house the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023 on behalf of this Democratic Coalition Government for Advancement.

From the outset it is important that we know that the DCGAs vision is that Honiara will become a beautiful city, bustling with trade and economic activities, all occurring in a clean safe and welcoming environment.

This Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023 represents a major and decisive step forward towards implementing our vision, policies and mandate on behalf of the people of this nation; in particular when our beloved country is poised to host the biggest event in our country's 45 years history, the Pacific Games 2023.

Come November 19 2023, Honiara, the capital City of Solomon Islands will become the home for at least 10,000 visitors amongst 5,000 athletes and officials from 24 participating nations, including Australia and New Zealand to the 2023 Pacific Games.

As a host nation, we must prepare to welcome our guest to a clean and safe capital city for the period of the Pacific Games from 19th November 2023 to 2nd December. 2022. However, all athletes and officials will arrive before the opening ceremony on the 19th of November and many will depart after the closing ceremony on the 2nd of December 2023.

It is no secret that the government is doing all it can to ensure that the capital city is clean and safe. The public awareness supported by a weekly clean up campaign and citizens of Honiara helping to clean up our city our national capital is starting

to look much cleaner. But we have a long way to go. We need to clean all the drains, Mataniko river and all areas that will provide breeding sites for mosquitoes. To ensure that government achieve its objectives of a clean and safe Honiara, in the lead up to and during the Pacific Games 2023 the Prime Minister, the Honorable Manasseh Sogavare from the launch of the safe and green games strategy for 2023 Pacific Games and keep Honiara clean campaign in collaborations with the Honiara City Council on the 3rd of March 2023.

Several existing Honiara City Council ordinances were identified and stake holders consultation were successfully conducted on 8th March 2023 on how effective the implement this existing ordinances of the Honiara City Council. There is a general consensus that are effective implementation of the Honiara City Council ordinances is a priority for the purpose of cleanliness, beautification and green of Honiara City. Mr Speaker, we must admit that Honiara City Council as the whole city is handicapped in terms of enforcing its relevant bylaws. The hard working law enforcement office whilst carrying out the duties, faced a number of shortfalls and weaknesses with regards to the implementation of their duties. This has been the case since the insertion of the Honiara City Act since 1999. These shortfalls include the inability for law enforcement officers to carry out or impose fines or penalties on offenders.

That is why I present to this House the Honiara City Amendment No 2 Bill 2023 the bill and it is the duty of this house to provide the Honiara City Council Law Enforcement Officers the tool they require to carry out their duties in ensuring that our capital city is kept clean beautiful and safe.

The Bill is designed to enable effective enforcement of the act and ordinances made under the act. The bill does this by:

(A) enabling the issue of infringement notices to person allegedly commit offences under ordinances for the payment of fixed penalties instead of being charged and persecuted for the offence and the penalty that may be imposed on conviction be imposed on those persons.

(B) Providing for the appointment function and powers of law enforcement officers

(C) Enabling the City Council to detain the person.

At the outset, the bill is a step forward to addressing the issues of enforcing the Honiara city bylaws when passed, this bill will provide further

(a) the appointment function and powers of the law enforcement officers

(b) manner of enforcement of this act and ordinances

- (c) prosecution of offences under this act or an ordinance
- (d) enforcement by law enforcement officers
- (e) issuance of an infringement notice that is on the spot fine to a person for allegedly committing a prescribe offense
- (f) prosecution of an alleged prescribe offense
- (g) protection of law enforcement officers when carrying out their duties.

Mr Speaker, this is the first time that we will be embarking on this enforcement mechanism

It is the start for us to ensure that we can hold offenders accountable for their actions and in doing so, help us to keep our city clean and beautiful. It is the decision that is taken for the good of our beloved country. It is my hope that all Provincial Governments also adopt this mechanism.

Under the Bill, the Minister acting on the advice of the Honiara City Council, will be the appointing authority for any Honiara City Council Law Enforcement Officer. To be appointed as a law enforcement officer, a person must be trained and must, as a pre-requisite, complete an appropriate training course and is awarded a pass in the course. That is on the following: The Honiara City Council Act, Honiara City Council Ordinances, Law Enforcement and the treatment of detained person.

On the infringement notices, what do we mean by infringement notice? An infringement notice is a formal written notice issued by the Honiara City Council Law Enforcement to inform an individual or organization that they have committed an offence under an Ordinance of the Honiara City Council. Infringement Notice is typically require payment of the fine or penalty within a certain period, in this case before 12pm on the day or the following day, or they may require a recipient to appear in Court to contest the offence.

Further, the Bill also provides for prescribed form and content of that infringement notices. More importantly, the law enforcement officer will also be cloaked with the following powers:

- (a) the power to arrest a person suspected of breaching the Honiara City Council Ordinance,
- (b) the power to search bicycle, motor cycles, vehicles, sea crafts and vessels, premises and properties,
- (9) powers to detain a person in custody whilst waiting instant payment of an on-the-spot fine or

(d) powers to seize goods suspected to have connections to the breaches of the Honiara City Council Ordinances,

(e) powers to seize goods in connection to the breaches of the Honiara City Council Ordinance and

(f) powers to lay charges on the following breaches of the provision, that is of the Honiara City Council Ordinance: that is any person, any in-cooperate business entity, owners of the premises, properties or under business undertaking, owners of goods and services providers.

These powers are critical in ensuring that the law enforcement officers are able to carry out their duties more effectively and efficiently. Having provided the powers to the law enforcement officer, the Bill will also provide mechanism for monitoring of the conduct of the Honiara City Council Law Enforcement Officers. These mechanisms include:

(a) a law enforcement Officer must for each day he is on duty makes a written report to the City Clerk on the performance of the law enforcement officers function during the day exercise of the law enforcement officers power in the course of duty,

(b) law enforcement Officer must when performing his or her function and duties have on his or her persons evidence of a person's appointment as a law enforcement officer and the person's identity,

(c) To write in criminal offence of bribery, both receiving and procuring bribes for person by being an or enforcement officer procuring bribes.

This is to ensure that these powers are not abused in any ways whatsoever.

In the nutshell, the above is what Bill seeks to achieve.

In conclusion, we must do everything in our capabilities to ensure that Honiara is a clean city. We must do everything in our capabilities to ensure that Honiara is a clean city. The 2023 Pacific Games will only be here for two weeks but Honiara will be ours forever. The governments will come and go but the city will remain. Our current generation must leave behind a legacy of clean city for the future generation. Our national capital is situated on Guadalcanal. Let us there for show respect to the traditional owners of Honiara by keeping it safe and clean as a sign that we value the sacrifice of providing their land to be our capital city. Hence, it is our collective duties to keep Honiara clean and safe.

I am happy that the Pacific Games 2023 has provided us the opportunity that unifies us one people with one common agenda to make our country proud, hence get a start by keeping our city clean and safe for our guests. All residence of Honiara City

and citizens of Solomon Islands that visit Honiara, this is our capital city. Let us take pride in our capital city. Let us show our friends that come to visit us that Honiara is and will always be clean and safe city in the Pacific. The passage of the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023 will help us achieve our objectives to keep our capital city safe and clean.

With those remarks I beg to move.

The SPEAKER: Honorable Members it is proposed that the Honiara City (Amendment) No.2 Bill 2023 be read a second time.

According to Standing Order 48(5)(b), debate on the question is now adjourned.

Question put and agreed to

(Debate on the Bill adjourned)

Motions

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: I move that Parliament do now adjourn.

Question put and agreed to

(Parliament adjourned at 11.25)

[Edited]



Eleventh Parliament

Sixth Meeting

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

Thursday, 20 July 2023

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

(Subject to Revision)

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NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**Thursday, 20 July 2023**

The Speaker, Mr Patteson John Oti, took the Chair at 09:40.

Prayers.

Business of the House

ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Minister for Education and Human Resource Development, Minister for Infrastructure Development, Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, North Guadalcanal, West Makira, Ulawa/Ugi, Ranongga/Simbo, West New Georgia/Vona Vona, North West Guadalcanal, Malaita Outer Islands, North New Georgia, East Makira.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The SPEAKER: Before we proceed, honorable members, let me also acknowledge in the public gallery, form two students from St. Joseph Tenaru National Secondary School who are here to observe this morning's parliament sitting. Please welcome them.

Questions and Answers

REUNITING SOLOMON ISLANDS FATHER WITH CHILDREN IN PNG

Hon MATTHEW WALE (*Aoke/Langalanga*)—*Leader of Opposition* (09:42) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs: A little bit of background on the case. I think it was reported in the media and we are aware of the situation. One of our citizens, a doctor, married to a Papua New Guinean. The wife returned to Papua New Guinea with the children. She passed away and the children remain with the stepfather and it has raised a number of issues.

The question reads: What steps has the government taken in the case of the Solomon Islands father who seeks to be reunited with his children who are in Papua New Guinea?

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE (*Hograno/Kia/Havulei*)—*Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade*) (09:43): Thank you Mr, Speaker. Let me thank my good friend the leader of opposition and MP for Aoke/Langalanga for the important question that he has raised.

My Ministry remains seized of the matter. The two children of our national are minors and still with the family members of the late mother, and not with the step dad's family, but the family of the late mother of the two children in Papua New Guinea. Our High Commission in Moresby is in touch with the family of the two children in Papua New Guinea, that is the late mother's family.

I can confirm to this honourable House that the information we have from our High Commission in Port Moresby is that the two young children are well looked after by the family. The children's step dad has been in touch with the High Commission in Port Moresby to also clarify certain issues. Our High Commissioner in Papua New Guinea, in Port Moresby, has also been in touch with our national here, the biological father of the two children.

The complexity of the issue is dealing with families of all sides and bringing them together. The matter has caused much public debate in the past and family members have also been hurt. The Ministry is confident that an amicable solution can be found, where the two children can return happily to the Solomon Islands, while also maintaining a strong relationship with their Mother's Family and their step dad in Papua New Guinea.

The Ministry, through our High Commission, we are exploring avenues for bringing this matter to a close as soon as possible, and we are also exploring approaches that involve our Melanesia way of sorting out such matters, including through our Christian values and approaches by reaching out to the family, including the biological father, who is here in Honiara.

As I have said, our High Commissioner in Papua New Guinea is maintaining that contact and trying to find the way forward both with the late mother's family as well as the biological father, who is here and, of course, the stepdad.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: In a normal situation, initially, of course, the media reporting was perhaps erroneous because they reported it as if the stepfather kidnapped these children from their biological father, who is a Solomon Islander. But they are with the parents of their late mother. So it is not so bad. But in terms of the law, their biological father would have the primary right to their custody.

So I am wondering whether, if that is an option, the Ministry might look at the possibility that if an amicable solution was not found, the Ministry would assist the father in asserting his maternal rights to his children, or whether, in the Minister's view, the reconciliation effort is bearing fruit and we should persist with it to the end.

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE: We are leaning towards this option through our Melanesian reconciliation approaches and ways and also through Christian churches. So that is the approach that the High Commissioner is taking right now.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: Just a supplementary question. I was pondering on this matter, and what if the stepfather tries to make things complicated, and then he comes up with a bill for how many years he was looking after these children? Is that an area that the Minister is also looking at, or culturally, are you pursuing such issues to be reconciled?

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE: As far as the advice and information that we have received from the High Commission in Papua New Guinea, the stepfather has been cooperative. He has been to the High Commission to clarify certain issues, and he has also supported the two children through the family of their late mother. Thank you

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Can the Minister confirm the age of the children?

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE: The minors are between the ages of 7 and 10 years old.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): In terms of all the effort that you have been making, we appreciate hearing that the High Commission has been leading these efforts. I just wanted to ask, at the Minister's level, whether you have the opportunity to approach this matter with your counterpart in Papua New Guinea?

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE: This is a matter that has been dealt with not only by the High Commissioner in Papua New Guinea but also our Permanent Secretary and Deputy Secretary. Directly, I have not been requested to be involved. I have every trust and confidence that the officials are pursuing this with a lot of effort and commitment.

The Papua New Guinea government is also willing to facilitate, for example; the renewal of the permits of the two children as soon as their passports are expired, and the Immigration Department here is looking into that. So as soon as the family arrangements are sorted out, then will proceed to pursue the renewal of their passports as well as their permits in Papua New Guinea, but the PNG government is with us on this matter.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I just want to know if the Minister and the Ministry is aware of any communications directly between the families concerned both in PNG and here in Solomon Islands.

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE: As I have said, our High Commissioner in Papua New Guinea has been working, coordinating communications between the families; that

is the family of the late mother of the two children, the step dad as well as our national, the biological father of the two children here in Honiara.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: I just want to say thank you to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I am extremely pleased that the Ministry and the High Commissioner is doing this important work. We must have compassion for this family situation.

DEPLOYMENT OF US PEACE CORPS TO SOLOMON ISLANDS

148 **Hon MATTHEW WALE** (*Aoke/Langalanga*)—*Leader of Opposition* (09:52) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs: Can the Minister update the House on the deployment of the United States Peace Corps to Solomon Islands?

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE (*Hogranol/Kia/Havulei*—*Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade*) (09:53): Let me first of all provide a brief back ground of the US Peace Corps to the Solomon Islands. As you aware, the US started sending Peace Corp volunteers to Solomon Islands in 1972. This was after we signed an agreement the US Peace Corps in 1971. Revised agreement between United States and Solomon Islands was signed in 1993. The agreement was then revised and signed again in 1998. Unfortunately, the ethnic tension in the late 1990s led to the scale down and eventual suspension of the Solomon Islands Peace Corps program in year 2000. From 1971 to the year 2000, there were about 742 US Peace Corp Volunteers that served in the Solomon Islands. On the 18th October 2019, almost 20 years after departing Solomon Islands, the Peace Corps announced the re-establishment of its operations back in our country. Since 2020, our officials begun discussing with the US Peace Corps team. Meetings were held virtually through zoom due to the COVID-29 outbreak as well as border restrictions. Officials could not, at that time, meet face to face or in person. However, we were determined to conclude negotiations and finalized the agreement for signing, of course after Cabinet's deliberations, as soon as both countries agreed to the text of the agreement.

In August 2022, the peace corps dispatched a team and conducted a security and medical assessment in view of the resumption of the program. The assessment was in response to the new requirements and reforms initiated by peace corps following the COVID-19 outbreak and the November riots in Honiara.

Based on the assessment team's feedback, Solomon Islands remains a feasible destination for peace corps. However, there has been some challenges in terms of finding common grounds on some of the provisions in the agreement. The most contentious issue is Article 4(1)(c) in the draft agreement, which makes reference to the recognition of peace corps staff and family status, that is equivalent to administration and technical staff of diplomatic missions or as a diplomat. It is important to note that staff of the US peace corps, to be given diplomatic status, must come under the State Department by reporting to the US Embassy in Honiara

and be issued with diplomatic passports. So this has been the area of contention between them and us over the last almost two years going backwards and forwards.

But just to clarify, we are talking about staff of the Peace Corp Office that manage the volunteers. All Peace Corps volunteers that serve in Solomon Islands will carry ordinary United States passports.

After two years of negotiations, the US Embassy with the US Peace Corps have confirmed that the US Peace Corps staff managing the Office will come under the embassy so that we can accord them the appropriate privileges under the Vienna Convention. So that arrangement or agreement is now finally reached.

This new agreement will be brought back to Cabinet to look at and to consider it before we sign the agreement. We have missed out on the peace corps deployment for this year's financial year. Once the agreement is signed, and once Cabinet endorses it, we are looking at their deployment in the next US Financial year, which is May or June next year to the following May. So that is where we are at the moment.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: I am happy to note that process is brought to conclusion. Do we, under that agreement, made the request on the areas that we need volunteers on? Like in the past, some came and taught science, math and English in our schools. Do we get to have a say in the areas of expertise that we need?

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE: Yes, we do. In our consultations with them, we do indicate to them the priority areas and sector that we need them to come and help us with, like education, fisheries and teaching, for example. Those sectors have been identified to them.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Just for further clarification. You now need to go to Cabinet for blessing or signing of the document. You are confident that we will hit it before May or whatever their budget cycle is.

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE: May to June!

Hon MATTHEW WALE: May to June! We are a little bit in front, so we can see some deployment in the next financial year.

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE: Yes, I am confident that once Cabinet endorses the agreement, we will work closely with them to prepare for their deployment.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I was just wondering whether the Minister can inform the House, I think he mentioned a number of issues where our government and the US tried to agree on. He mentioned article 4(1)(c), the one that we never agreed on and finally, I think, there is an agreement on it. I was just wondering whether we

have agreed on the other, I do not know how many we have disagreed on in this new agreement.

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE: We have agreed on the other areas but this was the most that contentious one and finally we have found common ground on that, and so we should be able to move forward.

Just for the information of the honourable colleague. This is to do with some privileges and immunities that they requested from us. The US Peace Corps, they have a separate office from the US Department. Their boss is the Director. So with that current arrangement, we cannot accord certain privileges, unless they work through the Embassy. I mean those officers managing the Peace Corps Program. Now that they have agreed that the staff that will be here, the Peace Corps Staff will come under the Embassy, they will manage their Peace Corps Program, and it is those staff that we will accord them the appropriate privileges. These are things like tax exemption, for example. These are some of the privileges that they will be accorded to. These matters have been sorted out.

As I have said, once Cabinet endorse the agreement. We are just basically waiting to submit the agreement to Cabinet then will move forward in terms of the actual program or deployment schedules, hopefully, next financial year.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Another supplementary question. I would like to know whether we have a policy in terms of these government agencies, like for the US, Peace Corps, UK is VSO and Australia has a name for it, whether we have a policy on how we consider when these foreign governments approach us to establish office so that we consider requests such as these and such a policy if there is one.

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE: We are guided by the Vienna Conventions on diplomatic relations when we consider request to grant privileges or immunities. That is the overall framework that we are guided by. Of course, some countries sometimes tend to ask more than what should be provided under the Vienna Convention. But the Vienna Convention that is administered by our Protocol Section thus guides us in terms of addressing requests for privileges and immunities.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: I do wish to thank the honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs for updating us on this work. I am happy to note that we hope by next deployment cycle, we start to see some teachers and engineers helping us throughout our villages and organizations. It happens in the past and it was a very good program. They build water supplies and taught in schools throughout the country. Thank you all the same.

*Bills***THE CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) BILL 2023***Second Reading*

The SPEAKER: I understand the government wishes to commence the debate today on this bill.

Normally under Standing Order 48(5)(b) following the Second Reading speech, the debate shall be adjourned without any question for three clear days. Today is just one day after the Second Reading speech by the Minister.

Hence I will call on the Minister of Home Affairs to take the necessary steps.

MOTION TO SUSPEND STANDING ORDER 48(5)(B)

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I seek your consent to move a suspension of Standing Order 48(5)(b) in accordance with Standing Order 81.

The SPEAKER: Thank you Minister, leave is granted.

Hon CHRIS LAORE (*Shortlands—Minister for Home Affairs*) (10:06): I move, that Standing Order 48(5)(b) be suspended in accordance with Standing Order 81 to permit the debate on the Second Reading of the Citizenship(Amendment) Bill 2023 to resume today.

The reason is that since this is a short Amendment Bill we need to complete it today and concentrate on other Bills that will come up to Parliament when Parliament resumes next week.

I think the other one is the Honiara City Council (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023.

Hon MATTHEW WALE (*Aoke/Langalanga—Leader of Opposition*) (10:07): In the past, this matter had come and the Minister asks for the same things and so because he asked for the same thing, I want to repeat the same answer to him.

This is a matter that requires a little bit of forward planning and it is good that maybe the Second Reading when the minister moves it, should come much sooner, so that we allow period between few days to be matured properly.

Previously, the urgency of that particular amendment of the City Council Act for synchronized elections. That was the reason and now the reason is because this is just a short Bill. In the next Bill, I do not know what will be the other reason the Minister will come up with it. Just a bit of forward planning would be very helpful. However, with that, I have no objection to the request.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I take note of the comment of the Leader of Opposition. However, the Bill, when I requested for the suspension of Standing Orders, it was on the First Reading, because Parliament adjourned at that time until today. This is for clarification to the Leader of Opposition.

Question put and agreed to

(Motion passed)

Hon MATTHEW WALE (*Aoke/Langalanga—Leader of Opposition*) (10:10): Just a few thoughts that I would like to share on the Bill. As we have seen, the Bill has three objects. Firstly, it seeks to clarify; that citizenship is automatically the right of children of birth citizens under 18 years of age. Secondly, seeks to prescribe additional evidence to support an application for citizenship, and thirdly, it increases the number of years to qualify as an ordinary resident from the current five out of 10 years to 10 years, as was in the old legislation.

As to the first object, it needs to be noted that this is already settled law. In the Kenilorea case, which my colleague took, and was cited by the Minister when he moved this Bill during the Second Reading yesterday. The Court of Appeal ruled that Section 22 of our Constituency already provides for this. So it would appear that we are making law for what is already settled law on this first object.

The Minister said that this amendment will remove any doubts about whether children under 18 years of age of birth citizens are automatically citizens. Well, the Court of Appeals has already removed that doubt in its ruling.

Further, this Bill, to the extent that it mirrors the Principal Act in the use of the term 'Birth Citizen', which is a new term, seems to imply a narrowing of the reading of the word 'citizen used in Section 22 of the Constitution. This was also a matter ventilated in the case took up by our colleague. So I will let him explain more about that if he decides to speak.

As to the second object, this is to meet the request by the Citizenship Commission to ensure more evidence is submitted in support of an application for citizenship. This is straightforward. However, perhaps in this matter, the Minister's regulations making powers should be expanded to include requiring the kind and quality of additional evidence to be submitted in support of an application.

This would give the Commission flexibility from time to time to properly deal with situations posed by certain applications in a timely manner, rather than having to await further amendments to the Principal Act, such as this amendment,

Further, it needs to be stated that the Commission is not bound to accept any or all applications that meet the evidentiary criteria. Even if these applications meet all

the criteria, the discretion still remains with the Commission, and it must exercise a duty of care in its consideration of applications. Of course, we hope that in the exercise of its powers, the Commission will be reasonable when it rejects applications and that it is careful when it accepts others. The government should be able to give general policy directions to guide the Commission in its duty from time to time, and any such directions must not be to push a specific case or cases, but to enable to the Commission to see priority policy consideration that should help guide their decision making. This is a matter that is currently absent in the regulatory framework.

The third object is to increase the number of years an applicant will need to be ordinarily resident before being eligible to apply for citizenship from the current five out of 10 years to 10 years as it was in the beginning, as in the old law. I wish only to make the observation that Citizenship and Immigration policies and reforms are needed as an essential support to socio-economic policy. However, such reforms must be the result of a carefully thought out migration policy. These Amendments are mere reactions to challenges encountered by the Commission and unfortunately are not a result of a broader migration policy.

Our country needs migrants. The economy needs quality migrants. Migration is an avenue to meet some of our own human resource capacity shortages. We must not be afraid of migration, nor must we adopt a racist policy. Good migration policy will consider what the essential needs in our society and economy are over the mid to long term and offer mechanisms to incentivize such migration in a disciplined and control manner. In the absence of such a broader migration policy, the Commission is left to decide applications almost solely on applicants meeting the stated criteria.

The Commission complained that many of the applicants are shop keepers and may not be a candidate for citizenship that is desirable. In such cases one would expect that the Commission will reject such applications. However in the absence of a robust migration policy the Commission really has no guidance as to how it should exercise its discretion and therefore runs the risk that it may look to be arbitrary and ad hoc in the use of its discretion. This is a defect that must be fixed.

If there was a robust broad migration policy, then the increase to 10 years residence is way too long and rigid. It would be a dis-incentive for the kind of quality migrants that our country needs to attract. The justification used for the increase to 10 years residency is that five years is too short and cheapens our citizenship. I beg to defer. Solomon Islands citizenship is cheapened by decisions that grant to candidates who are not worthy of it. Those making such decisions have an onerous responsibility in making those decisions. Further, as is noted in the Bills Committee Report, our immigration regulatory framework is out of date and inflexible. There is need to

bring our legislative framework up-to-date with modern challenges or to meet modern challenges and needs. The number of classes of immigrant visas are too low, simple, and simply quite restrictive.

Further, there is need to create a permanent residence class with its own obligations and benefits. A permanent residence class of visas may remove the burden on some applicants who would otherwise be quite happy to merely retain the benefits of travelling in and out of the country without the need for additional paperwork and may not take it further to citizenship. For those applying for citizenship, permanent residence could become the gate. Their conduct and contribution as permanent residences would weigh heavily in the consideration of their application for citizenship.

I cannot see why this matter has not been addressed to date. Of course, this is a matter to do with the immigration regulatory framework, but it does have important connections with the matters being dealt with by this Bill.

Let me conclude. This Bill seeks to amend the Citizenship Act 2018 to create additional evidentiary requirements in support of applications for citizenship and to raise the residency requirement from five to ten years. The Bill would have benefited from a carefully thought out robust migration policy. The government must give some urgency to formulating such a policy as an important part of its socio-economic policy.

I am aware of the proposal that has gone before Cabinet and from the briefings given to us by the SPM that government is considering this citizenship by investment scheme. Again, that proposal would benefit from a more broader migration policy we do not want to do one thing and then do another thing and they seem isolated when they really are connected. And so I would say that Parliament should therefore expect more substantive reforms as a result of such a migration policy when it is formulated.

As to the object of clarity on the right to automatic citizenship of children under 18 years of birth citizens, the law is settled. And as I noted, this term 'birth citizen' maybe problematic in light of this ruling of Section 22 of the Constitution.

On the object of creating additional evidentiary requirement in support of an application, this has my support. Perhaps, a more flexible option would be to enable the Minister by way of regulations to update the requirements from time to time without having to come to Parliament for amendments like this and perhaps the Minister may just get the concurrence of the Cabinet before he can put up such regulations.

As to the object of increasing the residency requirement from five to ten years, as I have said earlier, you will note that I am a little conflicted. I prefer that quality candidates are incentivized through a flexible system. We compete for quality migrants with other countries in the region and we should make it as attractive as possible. The Bill imposes an inflexible hurdle that I think is unnecessary. It is one size fits all. That is, I think unnecessary.

So, I am afraid and because of the reactionary nature of this Bill, it would appear to me to have fallen short of the needs that it ought to address, but those needs would be better dealt with in that broader migration policy to better inform further government reforms affecting citizenship in the future.

Those are my few thoughts, and because the Minister really wants us to pass it, so let us pass it. Thank you.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU (*West Are Are*) (10:26): Thank you for giving the opportunity for me to also contribute very briefly to this Motion which is moved by the Minister of Home Affairs on this Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023.

First of all, I would like to thank the Minister and the government for this Bill, which came before the House, and my Committee the Bills and Legislation Committee had the opportunity to work on it. It is an important Bill. I subscribe to the contribution and ideas of the Leader of Opposition on the importance of this Bill and the deficiencies and limitations which the Principle Act, the Citizenship Act 2018 has, where this amendment is set to address.

Let me also thank my Committee Members. It will not be right if I do not thank them. They have worked hard to sit down. On that note. I would also like to thank the Parliamentary Secretariat who supported my Committee. Also, to the PS of Home Affairs and the staff who put together this Bill and also the AG Chambers. I would also like to sincerely thank all the stakeholders who came before the Bills and Legislation Committee for the inquiry consultation.

I will speak briefly in addition to what the Leader of Opposition and also Member of the Bills and Legislation Committee had already mentioned.

The Bill, as we had already known, is a good Bill, which tries to address the areas where we need to see and to improve in terms of the goal and objective for us to try and give citizenship to applicants. The principle Act falls short a bit on the facilitations as the inquiry had found and also the objective of the Bill.

The report by the Bills and Legislation Committee is before the House and there are seven recommendations, which try to support this Bill and also point out the areas where the Bill need to consider for us to come up with a good Bill or a piece of legislation for our country. The recommendations by the Committee are quite

important for the host Ministry and the government to take note of it. They are in the report. There are seven recommendations. I wish to, again, reiterate the recommendations and highlight what the Committee finds in the Bill, hence the recommendations.

Firstly, is for the government to create permanent resident status. This is quite important. The Committee sees it and that was already highlighted by the Leader of Opposition. We need a midway, a status that recognizes the good people that we want to grant citizenship. Rather than jumping to this 10 years requirement, we need to look at Permanent Residence, to grant to people.

It is also important for us to look at it because residence, which we have, these people are important to our country and as well to our community and so the Committee, in its first recommendation, recommended the permanent residence, a PR status .

Secondly, the eligibility of the non-citizens who are applying, and in here it highlighted the marriage, legal marriage and as well as custom marriage. This is common. A lot us came through custom marriage. But then, when we look at citizen, which of these are we seeing? Is it the law and our customs? Should our custom be also recognized as law, because it involves bride price and feasting. In here, it simply stated that on citizenship, custom marriage must also apply. It is very fitting because in our custom, like the Are'Are custom, when a man marries, he takes the wife to his village. If you are from a foreign country, you go to your foreign country. That is custom. It recognizes that when a man marries, he take his wife to his tribe and his place of birth. However, in this modern society, it needed for the people who are married. Therefore, those who married to us, we need to deal with them. If it is a custom marriage, I think we need them, as submitted by the Leader of the Opposition, like doctors and teachers because of their technical skills. We need to quickly recognize their marriage if it is custom marriage. Hence, the urge for the consideration of the permanent residency. We need to give those people PR, so that we can benefit from their skills to our country as a growing country.

The third recommendation is to the applicants. They need to provide evidences of tax compliance. I think this is already discussed by the Leader. It is quite important that the citizens that we give to foreigners, what are the criteria? Those who are in business, we need them ad spend a of money for business people to come and invest in our country. We give them citizenship. As the Leader of Opposition already submitted, we do not have to wait for ten years. If they are contributing to our economy, we can consider two or three years. The people that we need, and we spend money to promote and ask them to come and invest here, this is an incentive, as already alluded to by the Leader. Let us give them the incentive through

citizenship. They are our investors and partners in growing and developing our economy. So Recommendation 3 really supports that.

In terms of businesses, allow them to provide evidence. Otherwise, they are running businesses that are not contributing to the economy of Solomon Islands but just a way for them to stay here. So we need records to support their application for citizenship. I think this is an area that is further clarified in the report that we need substantive evidences so that when we grant them citizenship, it is worthwhile. As indigenous citizens of our country, this is our birth right, and when we give citizenship to our investors, these are important conditions for the Commission to consider when granting of citizenship.

Recommendation 5, for the Citizenship Commission to be further empowered by law. When the Commission deliberated with us, they share with us that there are areas that they are unhappy with because the law does not cater for them to do the good work that they believe they are mandated to do, but they are limited by law. Hence, this amendment will help them. So let us give them, by law, we will empower the Commission to do a good work for us, in terms of consideration of citizenship to applicants.

Recommendation 6, the Law Reform Commission must be part of the taskforce that is looking at migration policy. In terms of my Committee, which I will touch on later, the consultation was poor. When we make inquiries into legislation and the host Ministry and stakeholders that come before the Bills and Legislation Committee, I ask them if they have been consulted, and they say 'no'. They only learned of it when the Committee sent the invitation for the inquiry.

I think this is an important point that when we carry out inquiries into our legislation, our key stakeholders, particularly those who will be implementing our laws, they are important partners in this consultation process and the making of law. I think when the pressure arises, we cannot afford them this opportunity, and it was supported and highlighted to my committee.

So it is good that we recognize the important work and function of the Law Reform Commission, and let us include and involve them in this whole process so that they can help us, including the host Ministries when they formulate our Bills.

Recommendation 7 is an amendment that the Bills and Legislation Committee would like to put in, which is quite important in terms of the documentation. Now that we live in a modern world that is computerized and anything can happen. Even if our documents are not original, it can be tampered with to look like the original. Even our dollar notes, which are currently circulated in the economy, some are fake. But this is an era of computerization and electronics. So it is important that this recommendation be considered and heeded for the certified and authentic original

documentation that the Commission requires. I just want touch on birth citizen and indigenous Solomon Islanders. I think that has already been clarified by the Leader of the Opposition. The Committee has sought clarity on it. What is birth citizen? What is an indigenous Solomon Islander? And what is birth? This is so that our legislation have some clarity on these because they are important in this Bill, which will become an Act for us.

Permanent Residence, as I already touched on, I think the Ministry of Commerce comforted the Committee that they are working on the Immigration and Migration Policy and legislation in the Immigration Act review. That is a comfort to my Committee. This is important so that we look at our investors and then we connect and dovetail it with these legislation of our other line Ministries.

We look forward to this important review by the Ministry of Commerce on the Immigration Act that will try to neatly dovetail the requirements so that the investors, in terms of permanent residence, we look at it and will also look at what timing we give to our important investors under the Ministry of Commerce and the legislation that is before us also needs to support that.

I want to touch on reserve business activities. The citizenship, when we are talking about birth, indigenous Solomon Islanders, birth citizens, the reserve business activities for our people is really confusing. As we know, our law, as long as a Solomon Islander girl or woman marries a foreigner, they can do business under the woman's name. They can also go into the indigenous reserve business activities that are for our own people.

We know that our people are going out of business. They cannot compete with the foreigners inside our own land. This is important for our legislation. Indigenous Solomon Islanders cannot be able to compete, but only a very few. We must protect this interest and our people by way of legislation. It is not that we discriminate but at least they have an avenue through legislations and that we recognize them. They are small, not to be killed or sidelined. Marriage is a grey area and we have difficulty with it, especially the Ministry of Commerce that looks after reserve activities.

So the reserve business activities for indigenous Solomon Islanders is something that we need to continue to recognize and appreciate, that is an opportunity for our own people. Now those activities have been taken up because due to marriage. So let us continue to really define these areas. It needs to be clarified and safeguarded.

I already touched on evidence of tax compliance, but I think it is very important and I want to highlight the submission to the Bills and Legislation Committee that government agencies and authorities must work in cooperation with the line Ministries on the areas. With the Citizenship Commission, it needs the needed support from Customs and Inland Revenue when it comes to compliance and tax

documentations. The commission must get that needed support from the customs and inland revenue when we are talking about compliance of taxed documentation. When they request it, it does not come. Who are you working for? We are working for this country, and we must share responsibilities. Let us make this a priority in our organization for us to facilitate each other in terms of our legislative requirements compliance.

I touch on publication as it is in the Bills and Legislation Committee's report. I think the opportunity to put out to the media avenues is there so that the people who know about those who apply, if he is a person who has a bad character, they will know, and we do not expect those in the citizenship commission to know everything about those who applied. But citizens definitely by residence, we can help because we might break the custom or laws, but he is ready to receive the citizenship from the commission, and so this is an opportunity to make publications of names of applicants at the end of that side that can help us so that those that we have given our birthright to and we share it with them also have good understanding, and our communities are happy with the whole process of citizenship.

Sir, as I have said, I will be brief. The last thing that I want to talk about is the content issue that was submitted in the report on page 16 for the host ministry to have a look at the issues that the committee has put in the report. With that one, again, I want to sincerely thank the stake holders, particularly. We do not have a lot of time, so we gave them copies of the bill, and they received them in one day, and they appeared before us. When they complained, I, as the chairman, did not feel good about the timing that my committee gave them, but time does not wait for the committee as well. Again, it is a reminder to our ministries, minister, that when your bill comes, we must also consider the stakeholder groups so that my committee can also give them ample time to look at the legislation that is affecting their lives and work as stakeholder groups. With that, I resume my seat, and I support the motion.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA (*Small Malaita*) (10:48): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I will talk on five points only, but first of all, I would like to thank the Minister for bringing in these amendments. In fact, I was heartened by the objects of the amendments. I will read it:

The amendment ensures the constitutional rights of children born to citizens are protected.

That is one. The other one is,

The amendments also provide a helpful list of evidence that an applicant for citizenship can bring forward to support their intention to reside in the Solomon Islands.

Then the other is the one that says,

To maintain a close and continuing relationship with Solomon Islands, such evidence of economic stability of capital properties and recent past financial contribution to the economy of Solomon Islands.

This one should address a lot of the things that our people have been complaining about. So that is what makes me happy. But when I see this, I am actually very disappointed that it does not address everything, so that is what I want to talk about. Firstly, that is my first point. I think in the report, the Committee made a recommendation to have a permanent residence category before you become a full citizen. I think it is a good policy. I think it is a good thing to do. I will not repeat what the others have already said, and of course, the report details the arguments for this category.

My second point is on category, as it were, on indigenous Solomon Islanders. In my view, the law is clear on who is an indigenous Solomon Islander. So we should not be confused or should not confuse that one with other citizens, like the birth citizens, naturalized citizen and now dual citizen.

Indigenous Solomon Islander is a different one and we must not be confused with that. This leads me to this, while we need this category, and also as I have seen, if people are still confused, I encourage the Minister to make it so clear that they do not mix it up. Because it goes on to the common complain. A lot of complains from Solomon Islanders on this and it came up in the inquiry as well. It is the complain about the reserve business activities or this reserve business list for indigenous Solomon Islanders. We have to maintain that. I do not see that as discriminatory. I do not believe it is discriminatory. I think it is a good thing but it is the Minister of Commerce that must deal with this one. But you two are working together as one. so work together on this one. You two must work together.

It is very important and I would like to reiterate that because complains have always been coming and I think it is very valid. They are genuine complains coming up, where our indigenous Solomon Islanders are put to the margins and it is very hard to compete with foreign who are married to Solomon Islanders. You cannot compete with them. But this is one way for us to protect them.

So, for myself, I see that there should be no confusion between the different types of citizen. If the law is still not exact on it, I would like to ask the Minister to do this so that we are left with no uncertainties about what is an indigenous Solomon Islander and what are his or her rights, and especially this idea of reserve business activities for indigenous Solomon Islanders. That is the third point which is reserved business activities.

The two groups that came to the Committee, both the Ministry and the Commission, have mentioned that they have problems with implementing the reserve business

issue. It seems that the law is still not very clear to some people on this. So we must make it clear. This is where I say that I am looking forward to make sure that the legislation framework is strengthened to ensure against such things.

This brings me to the other one that the Chairman of the Committee has already talked a bit on it or elaborated on it. This is to do with the requirement for tax compliance by applicants. My point is on what he had said about the Ministries working together on such things. When I read it on the report, that when the Commission requests IRD for tax compliance of a certain person, what they said was that there was no response forthcoming. I see this as unacceptable. I cannot see why another Department cannot work together with another Department on the things we want to secure and protect, not only our people, but this economy.

I want to ask, and I think, it is not just IRD itself, as Chairman of the Bills and Legislation said, but all the Departments. When there is a legislation carried out and administered by another department, all other departments must play. We must be on the same page, otherwise these people will go through the weakness of another Permanent Secretary, Minister or another Ministry. I think this is unacceptable and Ministers should talk with the Permanent Secretaries and everyone in the Ministries. We cannot tolerate this kind of attitude. We must work together on helping another Minister who tries to ensure compliance with the law or legislation that he or she take care of.

This brings me now to the last point that I want to make. I think the Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee, as well the Leader of Opposition have already elaborated on it. This is the question of ensuring we have a policy on migration. This is very important so that it guides us on what we are doing. This is not only to do with citizenship legislations but every other legislations that have anything to do with migration.

I want to encourage the government to have that, if not already, a policy. We need a policy on migration so that other activities and programs like this investment program, which I understand the government is considering or maybe they had already considered, but also the things that are mentioned in the report.

We try to make an assessment on genuine investors. Without a policy, we will not able to tell who is are genuine investor and who is a fly-by-night or someone who truly wants to come and do something. With the current situation, we are discouraging the genuine investors. I want to also warned us on this investors who involve in activities that may facilitate money laundering. There are many of them who are doing this. If we have a migration policy that deals with all these aspects, not only migration but investment, I think we would be better guided when we put legislations together for our country.

Those are the five points that I want to mention. I want to again thank the Minister for bringing this Bill. The next one must not be a piece meal type approach. Bring a good one so that we fill up any loopholes.

With that, in that encouraging sort of mode, I want to thank the Minister and I support this Motion.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr) (*East Are Are*) (10:59): Thank you Mr. Speaker Sir for recognizing the Member for East Are'Are to make a contribution to this important Motion before us.

First of all, I would like to start by thanking the hardworking Minister. I do not say that lightly. He has been very active. As Members of the Bills and Legislation Committee, we have been receiving Bills from his Ministry over the last few months. So we very much appreciate the efforts that he and his Ministry have put into the laws of our country.

Just to add to what has already been said by our colleagues, particularly the Chair of the Bills and Legislation Committee. I would just like to dwell with one particular issue that the Minister himself has raised in terms of Courts of Appeal authority. This is the highest Court in our land that has ruled on this issue, and I think that is final in terms of citizens, Solomon Islanders, who are born, not here in the Solomon's but outside of Solomon Islands.

This has been quite a painful journey for some of us who have been living overseas and having to raise our children who are not born not by their own accord but because of our work in a foreign country. I was working in the USA, in New York, for the United Nations, proudly flying our flag as the only Solomon Islander working in the United Nations secretariat. Since I have left, there are no other Solomon Islanders there.

During my time there, I did not relinquish my passport as a Solomon Islander. I held on to the sharks and crocodiles on our passport. It is just an ordinary green passport. I was not a diplomatic status at the UN. But every time I came back for holiday every year with my children, I would get asked by the Immigration Officers for their return tickets, for my children. This is an embarrassment that I had to face every year when I came back, starting when they were babies, with the threat of having to deport them if we stayed more than a month. I started to think at that time that we are such a cruel government to be doing this to our own people. But I obliged, and sometimes I did not have the ticket with me, and I would ask the officers to allow me to print out the ticket the next day to bring it to them, to show them that we will be returning in two weeks, back to the US again.

I would have thought that upon seeing my green passport, the shark and crocodile one, regardless of my children's passport, they would have known that I am the father coming back to my country and that Section 22 of the Constitution would apply to them.

I saw that as perhaps the officers just not knowing what to do. They do not know their job, but it happens every year, and I witness even other Solomon Islanders coming back with their children. Some not provided this and being threatened to be sent back on the same plan we arrived on. It is just cruel.

When I came back as Permanent Secretary, I traveled out with my family to be halted at the airport with immigration officers saying that we would not be allowed back because my children had overstayed. I was a Permanent Secretary working for the government. It hurt me to be able to go through this embarrassment right at the airport. I had to plea with immigration officers to allow us to go and email our authorities from abroad to allow us back in the country because of my children. It hurt me. I have to admit it, that this is not how we treat our citizens. A visa was given to my children when I was PS. When I resigned to contest, those visas were rescinded. And I was asked to apply for a new for a new category for my children. That is when I decided to take a stand, that it was simply not right to apply for visa for my own children living in their own country. I put that down once again to our officers, hardworking as they are, simply not knowing the law. Just read Section 22 of our National Constitution.

Allow me to read it. Section 22 says;

Every person born on or after Independence Day, whether within or outside Solomon Islands, shall become a citizen of Solomon Islands at the date of his birth if at that date either of his parents is, or would but for his death have been, a citizen of Solomon Islands.

I am not yet dead. I am a citizen of Solomon Islands and I expected our authorities to simply go by Section 22 of the Constitution, clear, black and white, clear as day.

So instead of applying for visa, on the basis of Section 22 I applied for their passports because they were already citizens according to Section 22. I went in to try and explain to them and the reason given to me verbally was that 'we do not want to open the flood gates'. I was wondering what flood gates are they talking about? I am a Solomon Island citizen talking about my children based on Section 22. They said 'we will have to get an advice from the Attorney Generals Office on this matter'. I said this is a simple administrative matter. Just read Section 22 of our Constitution. It is very clear.

No! I got an advice back from the Attorney Generals Office that just really got me really mad. I used to be an officer as well in the Attorney Generals Chambers, together with my colleague brother, the Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs and Traditional Governance. We were there together and the idea to get advice from the Attorney Generals Office was just plain wrong. It got me really angry. I scribbled all over that opinion that came back. I could not sleep that night. It hurt me to see that the authorities of this nation could not read Section 22 as it is. I started to wonder; is this politics or what? Why are you doing this to me? What really is the matter? Upon receiving that I went back and got myself a lawyer. It cost me to pursue this case in the High Court.

At the High Court, it was an empty Court. It was just me and myself and my mother who wanted to come and support her grandchildren sitting in Court listening to arguments. She is not well, but she wanted to come and sit down. We want to make a point. Why are we being treated this way? It was a clear cut case, the High Court ruled in our favour and I may add, quite scathing as well in some of his remarks to the Attorney Generals Office, which saddened, me because I hold that Office in such esteem having worked there myself and did my best to try and represent that office. Such high esteem, having worked there myself and doing my best to try and represent that office. It saddens me to hear the court make some scathing remarks about the advice from the Attorney General's Chambers. I thought that was the end of it; it was clear, but I know it was not. There was a court of appeals filing to appeal the decision of the High Court again. And at the time of the application, the judges of the high court of appeal did not accept the stay; you have to set aside the judgment of the high court before you can appeal. The court of appeals judges did not accept that stay application. For me, I thought that this was clear; the Attorney General should see that there is really no case, which is why they did not allow the High Court to set aside the judgment. It still continued on; we actually ended up in the court of appeals.

The first question that the president of the court of appeal asked was, What happened? What is the effect of the stay that we granted your application? We rejected it. So that means the judgment still stands in the high court. What is the effect to which the attorney general's office replied, that the Kenilorea children have now gotten their passports? The judges asked, "So what are we doing here?" Why are we spending time here in court when the remedy has always been given? I say these things here because they underscore the costs that end up going to the government on issues that do not need to go to court. Issues that can be settled administratively, issues that are clear. It could be that our offices just need to understand better, given the right advice. And we would have avoided all of this, which costs us pain.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, upon the judgments, I received many, many congratulations from the Solomon Islands, who are also in the same position that I was in. I heard of them paying for visas for their own children to come in, visit, and stay. The difficulty that they had to go through if they came back too early was that the kids would say that they were back within six months and they had to go back again. Extra cost to the family, for what?

This is a clear case that I would like to make here of the need for our offices to properly understand their work and the job that they do. And it takes some orientation or some refresher because this is totally avoidable, and it did not need the resources up to the highest court of appeal to look at this issue. It is as clear as day. I think we should be more inclusive as a country. We should not go down the road of being cruel to our own people; it costs money for people. When you start to enforce these unfair and legally wrong decisions on families. Some of us might be able to afford it; others, I do not know; it is a big challenge.

So I appreciate very much the work of the minister in translating what is in the Constitution to the Act or to the Bill that we have before us. what is in the Constitution to the Act or to the Bill that we have before us. At the same time, some of the issues that we already heard by colleagues who spoke earlier might have an impact in terms of the law that we are looking to pass here.

I am talking here about the specific mentioning to birth citizens. As you heard, I read section 22, it talks about citizens of Solomon Islands. There is no qualifying of birth, indigenous, it just says citizens. Once the child is born outside, as long as on parent is citizen, the child is a citizen as well. As long one of the parent is citizen and I think this is important for us not to gloss over very quickly because if you read section 22 of the Constitution, it sets up pre-independence, those of us perhaps many of us who were born independence, that we are effectively not birth citizens of this country. We were born under British Protectorates, we were subjects of the British. Upon Independence Day, section 20 if you read it, indigenous Solomon Islanders shall automatically become citizens of Solomon Islands. That takes care of those who were born before 1978.

Section 22 speaks to those who are born after Independence. Are we now denying those parents whom may have been born before who are not legally speaking birth citizens because they were born under British Protectorate. That is why I think, it is good for us to really look at this perhaps and not try and qualify birth citizen but just leave it as citizen of Solomon Islands. This point has been brought up already by members of the Bills and Legislation Committee. We are putting it here again for consideration because section 22 does not qualify birth citizenship.

And birth citizenship is defined in the Act already. Citizenship is also defined in the Act, that is two separate definitions. So, we maybe narrowing too much and maybe in a few more years when those of us who are born before 1978 have all gone then birth citizenships becomes a real reality for us. Currently, some of us perhaps many of us here are born under the British Protectorate and were legally British subjects until 1978 7th of July when section 20 of the Constitution kicked in and we became on that day Solomon Islands Citizens. On the birth of the nation, rather than our own physical birth.

I think it is important for us when we make laws to try and keep it to what the Constitution says, otherwise, we run the risk of again another challenge when this is already an issue that has some clarity by the Court of Appeal. I think as a country, we should be more kinder to our citizens and our officials who are doing their jobs should know what it is that they should do. The laws should favour our citizens and yes it is our country so we can make laws that favour our own citizens. And as we have heard already, in terms of the interventions and contributions made by other colleagues, there are opportunities for us to do that, even in the business sector. But now there are hundreds of Solomon Islands who are benefiting already from the Court of Appeal ruling, and I think it is also a source of income because they will be seeking passports for their children now, as well as dual citizens. So beyond our workers that are going out to work in Australia, may be this is another source of income, revenue collection, for Solomon Islands citizens whose parents are still Solomon Islands citizens but now that things are being cleared up in the Court of Appeal, they now know fully that they can return home and not be treated as second class citizens.

Once again, I thank the Minister with those caution in terms of the interpretation and what we have currently in the Bill. The reference to birth citizen is perhaps in contradiction to what is in Section 22 of the Constitution, that talks just about citizens. When it comes to indigenous citizens, may be that is something for us to think about. Other countries in the world, once you are indigenous citizen, you can never lose your citizenship, even if you want to relinquished it. Once a Tongan, always a Tongan. Why not we do something similar for indigenous Solomon Islands, that if it can trace back indigenous to Solomon Islands within reason, then you are always a Solomon Islander. These are things that we can help in terms of building up our people and making them a sense of community in their own country. Some of them are willing to contribute back to our nation. Though they may be staying overseas for a long time, the idea is that there is an opportunity for us to embrace our citizens that are living overseas and just looking forward to make a contribution to a nation that they love and still hold dear close to their hearts.

With those few words, I support the Motion and I resume my seat.

Mr CLAUDIUS TE'IFI (*West Kwaio*) (11:23): Thank you Mr. Speaker for giving me the floor of this honorable Chamber the opportunity to contribute to this important Bill, the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023.

I will be brief and short in the contribution, as I believe the work carried out in the revision of the Bill is done by God fearing professionals and technical people who are much more anyone of us in the Chamber. However, as an elected leader representing my good people of West Kwaio Constituency, I am obligated by the mandate to contribute to the legislation that are brought in this Chamber that protect them and improve their livelihood and to enable them to enjoy their homes and life in peace and harmony.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the Minister of Home Affairs for bringing in the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023 to this honorable Chamber to address the shortfalls and limitation experienced in the implementation of Citizenship Act 2018. The Citizenship Act 2018 was gazette around December 2018 and has been in existence for just a period of four years, and then it is brought back to this Chamber for review or amendment.

Sir, I think this is the kind of robust action that is required of us responsible leaders taking proactive measures to amend or correct legislative provisions that are not practical to serve well the intentions or objectives of the act for our people in this country, Solomon Islands. For instance, the current amendment ensures the constitutional rights of children born to citizens are protected, and they are eligible and automatically entitled to be citizens of the Solomon Islands without having to apply through the Solomon Islands Citizenship Commission. I must thank those responsible for this decision and promote action to amend that provision.

In a nutshell, the Citizenship Act should work to protect the interests of indigenous Solomon Islanders and our country from immigrants that take advantage of opportunities and weak administrative systems that is widespread in this country just to exploit our resources or business opportunities that are reserved for indigenous citizens. This Act, if we are not careful, will give them the right and empower them to exploit our resources.

There is a widespread of abuse and exploitation of locals, especially women and girls by immigrants that came through the process under this Act, just to serve their interests or hidden agenda. The Commission must be vigilant to protect our indigenous people, especially women and girls. Human trafficking is prevalent in many logging camps and is done by immigrants.

There should be harsh conditions on citizenship issues for immigrants under this Act. We cannot continue to condemn abuse and exploitation committed by some

immigrants who continue to breach our laws and engage in unethical business practices.

The Citizenship Commission and Board should keep a registrar of all immigrants that have issues with citizen status, and that registrar should be subject to an external audit annually.

As our indigenous citizens claim, there is a widespread of corruption in the east of the country. An annual audit is to express an independent opinion that our practices are true and fair and to rule out such perception from the public.

It is also good governance practice that the list of names of applicants applying for citizenship be published publicly for character checks and so forth as part of the process. This measures are part of the process to protect our country, the people and the Commission itself. With that said, I support the expenses of provisions made in the amendment of Section 14(2A) and section 16(1A) of the Citizen (Amendment) Bill 2023. Substituting 5 years with 10 years is a good test of time to assess the genuineness of immigrants that want to acquire Solomon Islands citizenship under this Act.

Our primary role as elected leaders is to make laws for this nation. I have witnessed, as a new comer in this Honorable Chamber, that we have not done enough for this nation by way of making and reviewing of existing legislations to protect our people and accord the maximum opportunities to benefit from these resources to enable them to participate in the socio-economic development in the country.

I trust and hope that the other Acts of Parliament administered at different government Ministries or Agencies can be brought back for review and amendment in this Chamber at the earliest possible. Some of the laws really kill our people. Nothing happens to bring it back here for amendments. I do not know why. If this Citizen Act can be brought back this quickly, why not the other important legislations? I would like to see many more Bills brought into this Chamber in due cause.

Finally, I would like to thank the Minister for their Leadership and ensuring that these Bills are brought here for our debate. Once again, thank you.

Hon FREDRICK KOLOGETO (*South Vella Lavella—Minister for Commerce, Industries, Labour and Immigration*) (11:33): Thank you Mr. Speaker. I would like to briefly contribute to this Bill in support, here in this Parliament. My contribution will be brief, mainly to give some clarifications to some of those issues raised and also to some of this recommendations.

First of all, I would like to thank the Minister of Home Affairs for taking this very important Bill; the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023 to this House for us to give

blessing to. I am really happy about this Bill. As other speakers have stated, it is very important for us to look at it.

I would like to start by saying that we Members of Parliament are here to amend laws or legislations for our country to be a happy place to live and do things the right way.

First of all, most speakers have raised the issue on recommendation on indigenous Solomon Islanders. As I have addressed a few times here on this honorable Chambers, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration have pursued serious work on the review of this Act. This issue is really serious, as others have mentioned. It is not good to stop them from marrying our locals. We cannot do that to our locals. In saying that, currently the Department Investment is looking at amending the Foreign Investment Act. It looks at how we can manage it properly so that we can be able to control foreigners who marry our locals. If we stop a local woman from marrying a foreigner, the whole tribe of the woman will come to us. That it is a very important point. The Ministry is taking consideration on that.

The second point is the permanent resident option, which is on recommendation 1. A lot of these people are residents of other countries. Some are residents of Australia, New Zealand, US, China and so forth. I agree to these points. I am also a resident of New Zealand. I can go in and out any time I want. I asked the Minister and he said that it is already being considered.

I would like to thank my best friend, the MP for East Are'Are for challenging the case of his children. This is very important. I am also happy that the Court clarifies the issues with this case.

Some of my children are in Australia and New Zealand, because they are not citizens of this country. They are citizens of New Zealand, but I do not cry over spilled milk, because I chose to go and work overseas. I would like to make it clear that there are lots of benefits we can get overseas than Solomon Islands. So the kids chose to be citizens of those countries. I am not sad. I never relinquish my passport, because I am a chief of Vella. I am a chief and I must come back to my throne. It is the same as the MP for Small Malaita.

In the US, I have a brother working there. His child was born there and became a citizen of USA. In New Zealand, that cannot happen. If you are a citizen of Solomon Islands, your children will not be citizens of New Zealand. You must be either a resident or citizen, like myself.

In terms of residence, for New Zealand, only five years and you can become indefinite residence and for Australia, you renew every two years. It is good that

this Bill comes, so that we make it easier to address ourselves, so that we can take control. It gives us guidance to make it easier for our people to come.

Some times, it is when you are young that you enjoy living overseas. When you are old, you will be lonely because no one will be there to visit you. So, it is good to come back to Solomon Islands. It is good for us to amend this Act. People of Solomon Islands, either they are indigenous or they are born from indigenous citizens of Solomon Islands, can come and get their passport.

But as my colleague, the MP for East Are'Are, there are lots of friends who have been talking to me saying that they are very happy. They are living in US, England and even in Russia. They are happy because it will be their first time to take citizenship in Solomon Islands because they have been dreaming of having the passport. This is because the benefit is better in Solomon Islands.

With that, I am very happy with the Minister of Home Affairs. With those few remarks, I do support this Bill and I resume my seat.

(Speech in reply)

Hon CHRIS LAORE: May I take this opportunity to thank those who contributed on this debate on this Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023. Although the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023 is relatively a short Bill with only two Clauses, the impact of the Bill is quite significant.

Coming back to the stories that we have heard from the Leader of Opposition, the Member for Small Malaita, Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee, all those issues that we have heard, those are what we are trying to identify, rectify and put them together.

When we brought that Bill in 2018, we did not see the practicality of it. So, I do not know if the consultation at time was done properly or not. Now, since the DCGA came in, we identify areas based on what we have implemented, dual citizenship is affecting these areas and one is Kenilorea vs AG. It could be the passport. The law on Immigration, whether if you are born outside and you have the passport of that country, the law here will not accept you. It could be, I do not know, and it is good to review these things.

But now, the government, DCGA, tries to legislate and put in the Act, so that it makes it easier for us. As the Member had mentioned on the issues or the case of Kenilorea Junior vs Attorney General.

So, those are the limitations and deficiencies that this government found out when we did the implementations of this Bill. That is what we are trying to put right so that it is not discriminatory to us. I will just read through the recommendations.

The Citizenship Act of 2018 is a current legislation that regulates the processing and issuance of Solomon Islands Citizenship in Solomon Islands. However, when the Citizenship Act of 2018 was implemented, several deficiencies and limitations were identified. It was identified that unless and until the deficiencies are addressed and rectified, the Act possessed the potential to open floodgate to non-citizens applying for citizenships without proper scrutiny.

It was identified that the five-year period requirement for ordinary residence and their dependents is too short, making it unnecessary easy and cheap to obtain Solomon Islands citizenship. In addition to that, it was also identified that the current criteria for application for citizenship are unfair and discriminatory upon the children under 18 years of birth citizens. In its current form, the Citizenship Act will continue to promote a disadvantage and to marginalize birth citizens and the children under 18 years old who have applied or are yet to apply for Solomon Islands citizenship.

As stated in my introductory speech, this amendment Bill is consistent with the government's policy to review the Citizenship Act of 2018 to allow social economic and family benefits to person who obtain right to move freely between their country of origin and country of residence. More significantly, this amendment recognizes our children. The amendment now explicitly provides for our children under the age of 18 years of birth citizens to be citizens despite your birth race being a place other than in Solomon Islands.

Now I will come to the recommendations by the Bills and Legislation Committee. Allow me a moment or two to briefly respond to the recommendations of Bills and Legislation Committee in their report dated July 19th 2023. The Bills and Legislation Committee report in summary recommends the following;

1. Creation of permanent residency status,
2. Marriage must be legal,
3. Provision of tax compliance,
4. Obligation of persons applying for citizenship,
5. Citizenship Commission to be empowered to compare third party,
6. Law Reform Commission to be part of the taskforce looking at immigration policy
7. Drafting style employed in Section 14(2)(d) for of the Bill.

The recommendations 1,3,4,5 and 6 are policy matters. We thank the Bills and Legislation Committee for their recommendation. We will take them into consideration upon our next policy review.

With recommendation 2, the Bills and Legislation Committee recommends that marriage must be legal and that there is potential for abuse in the regards that non-citizens must be legally married to a citizen in order to satisfy the requirement of Section 14(6) of the Act. This is a non-issue. The Citizenship Act already defines marriage to mean two persons, a man and woman, strictly; that is what the law states, who are married to one and another under the law of Solomon Islands or another country. The definition only allows legal marriage under the law for couples who consist of a non-citizen and a Solomon Islander.

The Islander Marriage Act is the only legislation in the Solomon Islands that allows Islanders to register custom marriage for the person to qualify as being an islander. The person would;

- a) a person of whose both parents are or were members of the group, tribes or relate to indigenous to Solomon Islands.
- b) a person at least one of those parents or ancestors whose a member of the race, group, tribe or line indigenous to any island in Melanesia, Micronesia or Polynesia and who is living in Solomon Islands in a customary mode of life of any such race, group, tribe or land.

This does not apply to non-citizens. Custom marriage can only apply if both man and women are islanders. If you are paying white people to marry here, it is not custom marriage. It must be legal. Recommendation 7 refers to the drafting style of the Clause.

The reflection of the drafting style employed by the Attorney General Chamber, there is no ambiguity in the interpretation of that Clause. Having said that, I would again like to thank the Bills and Legislation Committee for their scrutiny of the Bill and for providing the House with their reports to eight Members of Parliament in their debate on this Bill.

I would like to reiterate again to this House, that the amendments that are currently before this House is specifically aimed at strengthening the existing provisions of the Citizenship Act 2018 by also providing a helpful list of evidence, which an applicant for citizenship can bring forward to support their intention to reside in Solomon Islands or to maintain a close and continuing relationship with Solomon Islands.

Further, it also seeks to establish the applicants level of financial contribution to the economy of Solomon Islands by requiring applicants to provide economic stability of capital, properties and historical financial evidence.

The government is proud to present this Bill to the House and it is confident of the significant contribution it will make to the betterment of this nation.

I have also informed this House, that Solomon Islands diaspora have been waiting patiently for this Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023 to be materialized as they too have high expectations that this government will continue to support them in their struggle to reconnect with their homeland.

I believe with this Bill, this government has not only meet but exceeded those high expectations. We have delivered on our promise to our people and nation.

With those remarks, I beg to move that the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023 be now read the second time and do pass..

Question put and agreed to

(Bill is committed to the Committee of the Whole House)

THE CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) BILL 2023

Committee Stage

Mr CHAIRMAN: Honorable Members the House will now resolve into the Committee of the Whole House to consider to the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023. We are now in the Committee of Whole House. We will deal with this Bill Clause by Clause.

Clause 1 agreed to

Clause 2 agreed to

Clause 3 agreed to

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): Just to comment as to what I have said in the debate about the definition of the qualification here in the birth citizen about the consideration of living it open as to citizen instead of qualifying it with the word 'birth' in front.

Clause 4 agreed to

Clause 5

Mr DOUGLAS ETE: Thank you Chairman. I am happy with the 10 years period but does the Act also targets those that went for black birding in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Queensland? I just want to know.

The SPEAKER: That is fitting to what clause?

Mr DOUGLAS ETE: Clause 5 is residency. It is now being extended. Thank you Minister for that Clause; but I just want to ask that those who did not live here, but have been affected by this black birding thing in Fiji, Bundaberg, Samoa and other

places. Where do they fit in this Bill? No body has asked that question. So I just want to pause it to you Chairman.

The SPEAKER: As a chairman, I will refer it to the Minister. I think there was reference to that by the Minister responsible for Immigration, where there are now people in waiting in reaction to what this Bill would benefit to them. Those are the diaspora. I think that was made reference to earlier on the observations, but that is it.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (11:58): Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank you MP for East Honiara and Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. In terms of this actual Bill, the amendment here does not cater for that one. It is just additional requirements that we try to add. Basically, we are just dealing with Section 14. So it does not apply to the others. Maybe if I just make a comment on what MP for East Are`Are said in terms of birth citizen. It is defined in the principal Act in terms of birth citizen. So we still maintain that same definition.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: This term have been asked already but was repeated in Clause 5, and I am looking at sub-clause 5(b), 'birth citizens'. If the Attorney General can explain; how does this line up with the citizenship as described under the Constitution? What kind of birth citizen under the Constitution is birth citizens? More particularly, Chapter 3 of the Constitution, specifically Sections 20 to 26. I would like to know how does this term 'birth citizen'. It is a class of citizens I think? But how does it tie up with the Constitution or it is in line with the Constitution?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (12:00): In relation to birth citizens, the definition employed in the Citizen Act is that birth citizen means a citizen who has become a citizen on the persons birth and includes a person who has resume their birth citizenship on application under Part 3 of the Citizenship Act. That reference to birth citizen here falls the definition that comes under the Citizenship Act.

In terms of the Constitution, each of the Sections, for example, persons who became citizens on independence day, persons entitled to be registered as citizens after independence day, persons born on independence day, the commonwealth citizens. These are the ones dealt with under the Constitution. So birth citizen falls within these categories. Anyone who is born in Solomon Islands under the Citizen Act definition can apply under Part 3 of the Citizenship Act. Part 3 of the Citizen Act deals with the application for acquiring of citizenship under the Citizenship Act.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): Thank you again Attorney General. I just want to ask in terms of the question that was raised. If we have this in here now, and Section of the Constitution talks about citizen not qualifying by birth and all of that. Is it the intention that people can still apply? They will apply for citizenship but that still

stands on its own without interference by this Act. Is that the intention of the government on this?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (12:02): This amendment basically allows us to legislate for the Court of Appeal decision. First, it is common law. We know that common law is only a judgement law and now we want to legislate for it.

In terms of the amendment to the new Sub-section 3 on Section 16, what it does is that if a child, for example, in the case of MP for East Are'Are, the child can get a passport straightaway. That is what we are trying to achieve under this new amendment.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I am seeking clarification on this because, I think, in the Constitution, more particularly Sections 20 and 22, one is indigenous Solomon Islander and the other is citizen. Which one, under this citizen, as prescribed by the Constitution is birth citizen? I think there are others, like naturalized citizen. I would like to know about this. Is it the same thing as citizen of Solomon Islands as prescribed by the Constitution or is it different?

In terms of birth citizens, the Constitution recognizes that if you are born in Solomon Islands, you are citizen of Solomon Islands. So you are a birth citizens by virtue of the Constitution. But then it also adds that it also includes person who resumes his or her birth citizenship on application. If you apply under Part 3 of the Act and are granted, you will be defined as a birth citizen. It supplements what is in the Constitution. Section 20 of the Constitution says that those that become citizens on independence day. So it puts certain categories of persons who, on the 7th of July 1978 became automatically citizens.

Section 22, as we have heard described by the MP for East Are'Are through the Court of Appeal decision, it actually says that you never lose your citizenship until you are 18, when you can chose which citizenship you want to take. In this case, the Court held that a child who is under 18, if both parents are Solomon Islanders, that child can obtain a passport. This is what we are trying to do here in terms birth citizens.

I would say that birth citizenship in this context is different from what Section 20 says. Section 20 of the Constitution talks about whoever becomes citizen on independence day. That day has already passed.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): Thank you Attorney General for that. The case itself was based on Section 22. In Section 22, as we know, does not have birth citizen. It just says 'citizenship', which in our reading covers those that were born prior to independence, who upon independence in Section 20, became citizens of Solomon Islands. Before 1978, we are citizens of British, subjects. So upon independence,

those of us who are born before 1978, I am wondering if this Act limits us out by putting 'birth citizen' there because we were not born in Solomon Islands. We were born under the British Protectorate and upon independence, we became a Solomon Islanders. That is when Section 22 kicks in.

My concern here is that, are we limiting this deliberately to kids of those who were born after independence, who are birth citizens? In the Act, there is also definition for Citizen, besides birth citizen. It is that definition that I am asking here that we put instead of birth citizen. Then it will allow us, including those of us who have born before 1978 to have that same right that our children can also become citizens because we were not born under a Solomon Islands. I was born in 1972, before Solomon Islands became the Solomon Islands we know. That is the issue here. If I wanted to be clear, that is it.

I think there is a definition, and if the Attorney can correct me, also in the Act that defines 'citizen' and there is one that also defines 'birth citizens'. I am asking here whether we can use that definition for citizen in this and that would take care of this common law, I mean, in this case, because it was brought under Section 22 that does not deal with 'birth citizens' but just 'citizens' to which, I think, all of us here would fall under.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (12:10): I will start with the Citizenship Act. Yes, you are correct about these two definitions. One is for birth citizens and the other one is for citizens.

Citizens means, a citizen of Solomon Islands. So it comes back to the statement you made earlier, that whoever is born before 1978; at that time there was no Solomon Islands, and so we were colonial era and so probably we are citizen of England. But when 1978 comes in, Solomon Islands was established and we became own independence citizens of Solomon Islands because a new state was born.

That citizenship refers to the citizen at that time. So the birth citizens are those who born as Solomon Islanders and that is post-1978, because you were born as a Solomon Islander because the state of Solomon Islands was established in 1978.

I do not think it is discriminatory, but it is just the policy at that time when the Act was made that they used that to differentiate whoever was born after independence and who are born pre-independence. When does Solomon Islands become Solomon Islands is in 1978 and everyone that born post-1978, assumed citizenship. Then the Constitution recognizes that by two grandparents, we add the indigenous status to it and that you become an indigenous of Solomon Islands.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: This is not part of the Clause but was in the book we are looking at under the explanatory memorandum.

Mr CHAIRMAN: By procedure we are only going by the Clauses on the Committee of the Whole. Anything outside of those Clauses cannot be considered.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I would like to know the part on the name of the Minister, because this Bill contains the name of a different person, who is the Minister.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Sorry, the Minister who signed off on this Bill for Parliament.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (12:13): At that time, when the Bill was submitted to the House, the Minister of Home Affairs was out of jurisdictions, and so the responsibility of Home Affairs was temporarily assign to the Deputy Prime Minister. When he signed, he signed as the Minister of Home Affairs. So as soon as Minister of Home Affairs comes in back into the jurisdiction, he assumed that responsibility back again.

Clause 5 agreed.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Honorable members that concludes our proceedings in this Bill. This Committee is now dissolved and the Minister in charge of the Bill will report to Parliament when the House resumes.

Parliament is resumed

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Mr Speaker, I wish to report that the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023 has passed through the Committee of Whole House without amendments.

THE CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) BILL 2023

Third Reading

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Thank you Mr. Speake Sir. I move that the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2023 be now read a third time and do pass.

Question put and agreed to

(The Citizen (Amendment) Bill 2023)

Motions

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: I move that Parliament do now adjourn.

Parliament is adjourned at 12.15pm

[Edited]



Eleventh Parliament

Sixth Meeting

**NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF
SOLOMON ISLANDS**

Friday, 21 July 2023

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

(Subject to Revision)

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NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**Friday, 21 July 2023**

The Speaker, Mr Patteson John Oti, took the Chair at 09:48.

Prayers.

Business of the House

ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Minister for Finance and Treasury, Minister for Infrastructure Development, Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, Minister for Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening, Minister for Public Service, Minister for Education and Human Resource Development, Marovo, North West Guadalcanal, East Honiara, Malaita Outer Islands, North New Georgia, East Makira, North Guadalcanal, West Makira, Ulawa/Ugi, South New Georgia/Rendova/Tetepare, Ranongga/Simbo, and West New Georgia/Vona Vona.

STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Motions

SOLOMON ISLANDS ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Hon MATTHEW WALE (*Aoke/Langalanga—Leader of Opposition*) (9 :51): I beg to move,

That Parliament resolves itself into a Committee of the Whole House to consider the Solomon Islands Electricity Authority Annual Report 2021 (National Parliament No.33 of 2022).

We have not as much in this term of the House done what is required when the SOEs and government agencies submit their annual reports to Parliament and in that regard we have failed somewhat.

Of course, there is some assumption that when these reports came and those of us who are not in the government, including the backbenchers, by the way, would raise these kinds of standard Motions for us to consider the details of these reports in Committee and when Parliament does that, it concludes the accountability loop for SOEs and government agencies that are required by law to report to Parliament. However, that assumption is one side, and I wish to emphasize this point that Ministers have the primary obligation. When reports come to Parliament from SOEs under jurisdiction of particular Ministries, Ministers have the primary

responsibility to be moving this Motions so that it enables Parliament to deal with it.

So, on this matter all of us we have a shared responsibility. Of course, in this House we have been meeting; there is a matter I raised also with regards to the way that the government has managed its business before the House and adjournment of the House before Fridays. Friday is the only private Member day. So if those of us backbenchers and Independent and Opposition side, if we are to move such Motion, it can only be moved on a Friday. But if House is adjourned and we cannot meet on a Friday, then it will be hard for Parliament to deal with these kinds of reports.

I think this is a point you have made repeatedly yourself, Mr. Speaker, that once matters are before Parliament, they are no longer a government or Opposition or even private Member business. They are Parliament business. They are the peoples business, and we have a responsibility to deal with them, so that the House can express its views and perhaps some recommendations to come for better reporting or whatever else more Members may share as we go through the reports like this.

Specifically, with regards to SIEA, we are looking at 2021 Report today. It is a little bit dated, of course. The CEO or Minister will tell us later the 2022 Report is ready to be tabled anytime soon, but today we will be looking at Annual Report of 2021.

As we, know SIEA was established by The Electricity Act and it is a product, it is a creature of its time and context. It is a service provider and regulator at the same time. That is an issue that ought to attract policy attention.

As service provider, it is a monopoly in both the generation and distribution of electricity. Again, that too is a policy matter that may require some attention. But, as it is, it is the creature of its time. When this legislation was set up, it was fitting. There was nothing wrong with it, but times are moving and times are changing and changing times, moving times, changing dynamics, require changing policy responses.

The other legislation that governs most of our SOEs now is the SOE Act. Since this Act came, we have reaped rewards in the sense that the Act has cleaned up our mess in the way we have managed SOEs. Before that, if you are someone in Caucus or government and you have cronies in the board, you can rundown the SOE. People would go there to demand allowances, vehicles, and all sorts of things, to the point that almost all SOEs became bankrupt. And so we all know of this problem that we have, but since that SOE Act came into force, it has really helped us to clean up our Act, to allow for better governance, both in terms of board and management governance, and to allow the SOE's assemblance of commercial management and operation. So this has really been a blessing overall.

The SOEs have a unique and special place in our economy. They are yet to reach the mark, but I think in the case of the Solomon Islands Electrical Authority and Solomon Ports in particular, they have been exemplary when you look at the profitability. Again, that too is another issue. And so it has raised the issue of how we respond and what policy responses are required.

You see, because they are monopolies by nature, the SOEs attract profitability, and then the question to be asked in terms of policy responses is, that level of profitability, is it alright? In the context of our economy? In the context of social-economic issues that we face? In the context of Solomon Islands being a consistently high cost of living destination over many, many years, not just because of fuel prices going up, not just because of the Ukraine War, and not just because food prices going up, but has consistently been a high cost of living destination. These are things that we must look at.

And in this matter, economic policy, overall and broader government economic policy must inform how each of the SOEs are to be positioned, and the SOE Act provides a mechanism where government can do this through the Minister setting directives, strategic directions, overall policy directions that go to the Board.

Of course, the boundaries that exist between SOEs and the Minister are an one. It is important that the Minister does not call the CEO and threaten to fire him or her if the CEO does not provide him with a vehicle or buy fuel for him. These are the things of the past that ruined all the SOEs. So those boundaries are very important for us to keep. I am happy that the Minister for Energy never did this. Right? He never calls the Solomon Islands Electrical Authority CEO and threatens him or demands all sorts of things because he is a good Christian. He respects this boundary between the Minister, on behalf of the government, and the Chairman of the Board on behalf of the Board governance, and of course the CEO on behalf of the management. These are important principles that have helped us clean up the mess that was the situation before the State Owned Enterprises Act came into force.

With regards to the Solomon Islands Electrical Authority, the issues of capacity, reliability, efficiency, viability, cost, and sustainability are important. Important factors for us in the House this morning to think upon as we review this Annual Report for the year 2021. Of course, in the recent past, it seems to have improved in the last few days, but Honiara has had to put up with involuntary load shedding. It is voluntary because it has been building up over many years of critical decisions that may have been postponed. Some necessarily, I have seen the report, due to COVID travel restrictions for overhaul engineers to come and so forth, but I think maybe some are probably voluntarily decisions and choices that were made. We will look through those as we go through the report.

It is important that as we and one of the things when Parliament is in Committee looking at these reports is getting some sense, both of accountability for why such decisions are made and a sense of going forward that there will be no repeat of such things. Of course, we do not control all situations, but to the best of knowledge and ability at the given time by board and management of the authority.

The cost of electricity in the Solomon Islands is the highest in the region and yes, one of the highest in the world. This is a totally unacceptable situation and has lasted for too long. Even with lower fuel price, the cost of electricity is still the highest in the region. The price has dropped. It is projected that with the commissioning of Tina Hydro in the next few years, the cost of electricity in Honiara will be reduced by 40 percent. Even then, with that 40 percent reduction, cost of electricity in Solomon Islands will still be second highest in the region. So it will drop from highest to second highest, and this is ought to be unacceptable. It calls for some policy responses.

I note in the report that in the 2020 comparatives, that the fuel component on the cost of operation was 37 percent and in 2021 it went up to 44 percent. So, it is an important matter that fuel is unfortunately a huge chunk on the operation costs in Solomon Islands Electricity Authority and in that it is a price taker and therefore it is a major driver of the cost where users of electricity will have to pay.

But there are other alternative policy responses and they ought to be explored. An alternative to Tina Hydro. Tina Hydro, as we have seen in the previous report past and as the Minister had inform the House as well, Tina Hydro is not the in all end all solution to energy that Honiara and Guadalcanal need. And so, alternative policy options must be considered.

The issue of introducing competition in the generation subsector is also an important policy consideration. Is the time right or is it pre-mature? That is the question that policy must explore and to see if there is economy sub-scale to open that subsector to competition.

Rooftop solar, of course, SIEA itself has installed with the help of donor funds rooftop solar at their complex at Ranadi, but the SIEA is making so much money that it is able to either afford outright or subsidize roof solar for residents who are its customers, and that such installations could then be paid off and be deducted from credits a few years, four to five years. That is one of the important consideration to supplement the generation of power, but also to reduce the cost of electricity and the reliance on diesel into the mid-term.

The improved performance of SIEA is a direct result of the SOE Act and the improved governance where that Act has introduced. It may sound terrible that I say this but the level of profits are too high. Of course we want our businesses to

make the highest level of profits but not so with SOEs. We want them to be profitable but when profit is too much, we must look at it because it does not exist merely solely to make profit. Of course profitability is important to sustainability and sustainability for an operation. The size of SIEA require significant profitability to justify it. However, the level of profit and this again is a point that will come when we dealt with the Solomon Islands Ports Authority Reports that these organizations exist to provide public goods at prices and costs that are reasonable and a part of ecosystem that creates a conducive economic environment both for households and families so that cost of living is not too high and also for the economy.

We cannot transition and shift our economy from processing and manufacturing in any way that it is of big scale when the price of energy is so high., even if it was after Tina has come on stream and down by 40 percent. It would be still too high and it is a disincentive for processing and manufacturing.

Yet in all the physical outlook documents and projections over the last eight years, the government has consistently said we must shift to processing and manufacturing. So it is important that other policy option explored to look at the level of profitability and its contribution to the high cost of living and disincentivize investments the private investments in the economy, particularly with regards to processing and manufacturing. Some of the policy consideration matters. Of course the cost of electricity is also influenced by the tariff scheme, the structure itself and of course the decision making. I know this was reviewed recently and that review must continue more regularly so that it looks for efficiency gains, in that fuel represent more than 40 percent of costs of operations for the authority. Efficiency gains must be sought elsewhere in the operations of the authority as a push to reduce the cost of the provision of the service to the public.

As I stated, energy is important to the economy. Cheap energy is a critical factor and a catalyst inspiring growth of private investment and overall growth in the economy creating jobs. There is a strong a strong case for a little bit more government intervention to address the cost of operations in provision of electricity. And of course, the reliability of the revision of the services is the other factor.

Recently, because of long-delayed load shedding, which finally caught up with the authority, we have experienced regular power shut downs. It reminds us of days gone by when we experienced that perhaps even to a worse extent. But since then and since the SOE is here with the reforms and investments by donors and the government in SIEA, we have seen extremely good growth.

Governance is critical to any organization, and that good governance structure and decision-making resulted in reducing the power cuts. It is only when the power is

cut that we know if the authority is working properly or not. The things and decisions that are happening inside, we do not know of. But when power is unreliable, then one could say if those people are doing alright? Are they making good decisions? That is when the rubber meets the road. That is when the public begins to ask questions. And so reliability is important in that regard, and of course, it is also important to the broader economy.

If processing and manufacturing businesses operate and then power is cut, they lose half a day or a day's production. We are talking dollars. We are talking about job losses. Eventually, it will end up with people losing jobs because that business will not be profitable. It might lose its market because it does not supply on time since it has no power to produce on time. So reliability of the service is absolutely an assumed element in promoting and encouraging processing and manufacturing in the economy.

So we must do everything that we can to place SIEA in a situation where there will never be any minute lost in outages, and the reports that touch on some these issues and give some data and I hope Members will engage in discussion over that data.

In Committee, the House will have the opportunity to consider these issues and explore government policy responses targeted at growing the energy sector, reducing the cost of energy, increasing the reliability of services, and expanding the market to include more of our people to have access to reliable and cheap electricity.

Let us use the word cheap electricity. Get it in the CEO's mind, Minister and, PS that we are looking for a cheap electricity. And I know that there are consultants in and out. Tell them to give us some ideas on how to achieve reliable, cheap electricity.

With those few remarks, I beg to move.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA (*East Guadalcanal—Minister for Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification*) (10:17):): Thank you for recognizing me to stand here and share a little bit on this morning's agenda. But before doing so, since it is the annual report for 2022, I would like to register my respect to the late CEO, who put his efforts into this. Today it is a living document we can debate and talk about. So I just want to raise this cultural obligation. He is already passed on, so I just want to acknowledge that one.

I just want to thank the Leader of Opposition for his views. He is a leader that wants to look into issues want to dwell more in a more comprehensive approach. Thank you for taking it up.

I think, in general, what has happened to this country in terms of the load shedding; is a situation that we are currently facing now. We have to accept the fact that it is with us now. I think the Leader of Opposition has said it all in his remarks, and I

just want to stand here and said that the Ministry of Mines and Energy, looking after the SOE, the Solomon Power, we have been tirelessly engaging with each other, not only because of this issue but as the Ministry looking responsible for the Solomon Power. We have been putting our best, dialoging and see the way forward for the better future for Solomon Islands.

The Leader said it well, as it is the highest in region, and maybe the world too. So this issue of tariff affects all of us. We all feel it. We the Member of Parliament are all included as well. So going forward, we have submitted this issue to the AG office and soon will go to Cabinet to separate the powers that Solomon Powers usually have. I think that is the way forward. I believe it will be done in a short time. Maybe next Parliament we are going to amend that, and I call for the support of all of us here to see the importance of amending this Act.

Today I will just say a bit because I just got the report. We will be going through the report and I think a lot of people come out as we discuss the details of the report, and we will answer questions and we will know more about what actually happened.

Thank you very much Leader of Opposition for your in-depth views and look into this. I will ask the Speaker if we can go through the report straight away. I resume my seat.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA (*Small Malaita*) (10:21): Thank you Speaker for recognizing the Member for Small Malaita. I also want to thank the Leader of Opposition for bringing this Motion to the floor. It is very important and without repeating what he said, it is very critical that we look at some SOEs that provide services that are critical to the economy of this country; one of which is Solomon Power.

Those SOEs have tried hard to make reports, but we did not dealt with it. They give every report to us but we the Parliament did not deal with it. So I am happy that the Leader of Opposition is bringing this here. I want to also thank the Minister responsible for acknowledging the importance of this Motion for us to debate on.

I just want to make five points. The first being a policy issue, which the Leader of Opposition has enumerated very well and that is in terms of profitability. I think we should encourage our State Owned Enterprises not to be loss-making but to make profit at the expense of ensuring they provide critical services to this economy, the country, and the people of this country.

That objective has to be known by the people who run these SOEs. It is very important. You cannot run huge profits at the expense of the general public. I think it is morally wrong. It is wrong! It is morally wrong! So every State Owned

Enterprise has an obligation to provide services to this country, and most of them are in a position of having no competitors. They are monopoly. You cannot run an organization like a monopoly and do it at the expense of everybody! I want to say as well that just because of this profitability goal, they do not realize that they are undercutting their own nation.

I am looking at the mission of the Solomon Islands Electrical Authority, which is "to provide a safe, reliable, affordable, and accessible supply of electricity to Solomon Islands". I would like to say that nothing in this mission has been reached by them. This is very, very discouraging. I do not want something like this because power is supplied to Honiara, and when I see this report, in Honiara, I think last year only 17 percent of the population was accessible to power, which is not achieving this mission. 17 percent of the population of Honiara accesses this, and that is not acceptable! And when you look at the population at large in the Solomon Islands, it is less than 3 percent. I am using the figures in this report. That is not acceptable. Look at these percentages! It is like they undercut and undermine their own mission.

The words of the mission look very nice in the statement, but their own actions and their own ineffectiveness undermine their main goal, the purpose for which they were established by law. That point I want to make must hold for the SOEs, and in this case, Solomon Power must understand. You cannot do this; it is morally wrong!

When you look at our regional countries, I have looked at the recent figures in Fiji, which is 99 percent accessible, the whole country. What is wrong with the Solomon Islands? What is wrong with Solomon Power? We get the overarching program to help the Solomon Islands Electrical Authority reach out, and I think when I look at the figures, starting from 2015, there was some increase there, but this is one of the oldest SOEs in Solomon Islands, and to reach only 3 percent of our population, I think we will have to ask questions. Minister, your Ministry must bring in a policy, and I think the idea is to look at the Act. We need to look at it. We cannot continue on this way. It is like you are holding the rest of the economy at ransom. Power, it goes through every aspect of life in our society. So this sole provider of this very critical service cannot be allowed to do their own thing. That is my point.

Secondly, I would like us to look at the asset concentration belonging to some of the SOEs. And as we look at Solomon Power, I am looking at their statement of profit and loss income but it is for the previous year. When I look at the income of Solomon Power as of last year, as supposed to three items of expense; generation and distribution, administration and operating. These three, they account for 65 percent of the revenue or sales which is \$438,602,254. This is for the previous year and not 2021. But my guess, is that, it is the same. This concentration is not good because it means that the expense that we meet- for every dollar, we are spending 67 cents.

That is what this means and other expenses are not yet, but all the expenses that are directly relating to electricity sales. I am asking the CEO to look at this carefully. I think, we are investing very, very wrongly in terms of where the assets concentration should be.

Finally, on the point which the Minister has made and it is a policy issue as well to my view and that is in terms of the regulatory function of the Authority. I think, we must look at this carefully. I do not know whether it has been amended to ensuring that you cannot be a player and a referee at the same time. That is what we are doing here. So, I would like to encourage the Minister to look at this. You need to bring those amendments this year. The authority cannot continue to be the regulator as well as a player. No! You cannot have that.

With those remarks, I support the Motion to sit down and look at this report.

Hon. PETER SHANEL AGOVAKA (*Central Guadalcanal—Minister for Communication and Aviation*) (10:32): Thank you very much Mr Speaker and I would like to thank the Leader of Opposition for bringing this Motion. It is a very important Motion. It is a very important Motion and those on the other side have said so.

If I can remember and as far as I entered Parliament in 2006, not at any time a person raised a Motion for us to look at the audit reports, annual reports of the State Owned Enterprises. And the Leader of Opposition has done well in the sense that, perhaps- I may be wrong- this is perhaps one of the first that we go into details in the Committee State on an annual report of a State Owned Enterprise. Let me say that State a Own Enterprise is a legal entity that is created by a government in order to part take in commercial activities on the government's behalf. It can be a wholly owned or partly own by government and is typically mark to participate in a specific commercial activities. Hence , today we will be looking at the Solomon Islands Electricity Authority operating as a Solomon Power Annual Report of 2021.

I have other reports here too, the 2019 Report and 2020 Report, but today the Leader of Opposition 2021 Report, which is good. Doing business in the country is very critical. One of the critical elements is power, electricity, so that we can run a business in our country. SIEA has been formed to participate in the commercial activities of electricity on behalf of the government. Of course, we are the most expensive in terms of electricity bills and electricity payments in our country because of the issues of imported fuel. We import fuel and we do not have oil and fuel. we do not have an oil field. We do not have gas and oil. We import these things. It is expensive to import such things

The operation of the Solomon Islands Electricity Authority is expensive. I think the overhead of their operations is probably higher than what they are earning from the

revenues that collected in terms of the bills. However, SIEA is making profit and it is at the peril of us the people of who pay bills.

As been alluded, Tina Hydro is there and it will become an important player and consideration in terms of electricity expenses. I think we need more of that Tina Hydro projects, not only here at Guadalcanal Province but probably in our provinces as well, to allow our people to enjoy electricity at an affordable price.

There are many State Owned Enterprises. I make my statement in general. We should be allowed to look at all the State Owned Enterprises. SIWA, Solomon Islands Telecommunication, Auditor Generals Office and the 24 Ministries that have annual reports every year, and not only annual reports but audit reports as well. This Parliament should be one of the busiest places in the world if we are to consider all these annual reports. I think we should be doing that and have a calendar, which every report is tabled in Parliament and we debate them. This is for the good of this country.

I agree with the Leader of Opposition that we should do that. In the next House, I urged all of us to do that. It is important for us to consider the annual reports in the country. Remember, we went through the Standing Orders, I think last month, and we found that the presentation of report are not the same ? Some of the reports and some of the audited or annual reports of State Owned Enterprises are tabled in Parliament by Ministers. Some are tabled by the Clerk, while others are tabled by other people.

So the point that I want to raise here is, who is responsible when tabling an annual report or budget report in Parliament. If it is the Minister, he is answerable. If it is the Clerk, then how can the Clerk be answerable to Parliament, or if it is somebody else, how can they be answerable to Parliament? In this Chamber, only the Members of Parliament can stand up and talk here.

So we need to synchronize the presentation of reports to Parliament. Synchronize who is answerable to these reports, and in that sense and way, our process and procedures will be straight forward. Rather than complicating things, let us simplify things so that processes and procedures will be followed correctly for the future of this Parliament House.

SIEA's operation costs have been shared in terms of fuel and the import of materials and other things from here. Instead of criticizing SIEA, let us help it. What can we do better? What can this House do, suggest or recommend to SIEA? Maybe after this report we will have recommendations and conclusions as to what we want to help the Solomon Islands Electricity Authority with. When you go to Auki and Lata, power is not consistent like in Honiara and these people also needs services as well.

The Member of Small Malaita has read the mission and statement for serving people, and I agree with you. I agree with all the things that have been said, but let us not only criticize them because they are our business arm, which participates in commercial activities on behalf of the government. That is what all the State Owned Enterprises are. Let us help them. After we have gone through this report, they will come back with recommendations, and those are the recommendations that Parliament gives them.

I do not want to spend much time on this and I support what the Leader of the Opposition wants to do.

The government is not only the Executive. There are three pillars to the government, which include the Executive, this House, the Legislature, and the Judiciary. So the government in general needs to look at these things rather than criticizing the Executive. But we, the legislature, need to look at these reports as well.

I will stop there and respond to some comments during the Committee of the Whole House.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU (*West Are Are*) (10:41): I would also like to join other colleagues to thank the honorable Leader of the Opposition and Member for Aoke/Langalanga for moving the Motion.

As alluded to by the speakers who have already spoken, this is a very important Motion that addresses an important stakeholder in our economy, which is the Solomon Islands Electricity Authority, also known or trading as Solomon Power.

Firstly, I would like to thank the hardworking Minister of Mines and Energy for the work his Ministry has been doing. Like the Minister of Aviation said, that we should not criticize but compliment them. So I would like to compliment the work that they have been doing up until today. There is gap that we can help fill in, a lot of gap and we can do that collectively, as alluded to by the Minister of Aviation, that we can contribute positively .

I would also want to thank the management of Solomon Islands Electricity Authority. On that, I joined the Minister for putting my belated condolences to the family of the late CEO of Solomon Power just a short time in work. We have been looking forward as he will really contribute as a son of the nation, but God knows his timing and had call him to rest for his own purpose. God will bless his family. I also want to thank and commend the management of the company for the work that they did. It was beautifully reflected in this report where the Leader of Opposition has put before us.

May I also take this opportunity to thank the Board of Directors for working hard to guide the State Own Enterprise (SIEA) with its vision, mission, and objectives.

On the visions of SIEA with its mission and objectives, it is really clear that the Honourable Member for Small Malaita has already talked on that is important. I think if we put it there in the report, we will forget it. We will not remind us on it. Somehow somewhere at the appropriate time we need to be reminded, and the State Own Enterprise, SIEA, must be reminded. We are just too busy forgetting those things that we wrote there. It is also quite important because it gives the mandate for them to exist; and someone has to have a responsibility to remind them of the work that needs to be done; but again maybe policy that was already alluded to. Who should be responsible to remind them of those reports?

I refer to that in my closing remarks of my intervention. I just want to talk on the high electricity. I joined the Leader of the Opposition. Let us go for cheaper power. All of us, the whole country and Minister you lead us through this. Starting next year we must shout about this, cheaper power! cheaper power! Solomon Islands we will achieve this and we will be number one with cheaper power in this region. Why not? Why are we too low that we do not have the objectives to put high? Why I am talking so strong on this because this report said that we can do it. Accumulative profit in this report that we go through can help to start off with that objective. Definitely and certainly we can do it. We can stand. That is what I am shouting out because it is already there; you do not need to look anywhere else, so let us go out as a country and a nation, the government you lead us, powerful Minister, cheaper power must start next year. That is our call for this country. It also fits in as well.

I think when our people heard it now they are happy because we have experience it. It is not a new experience for us. It has been our challenge for almost every year on power access and reliability on our people. Profitability, yes is very high. It is good. We congratulate the SOE Solomon Power for doing good. That is how to do it; you make profit. You do not rely on your father, Solomon Islands government, to give you funds. It started it off, I know. They have started off well. They made profits. What are we doing with the profits? It just appears on paper? We just see it growing on paper? Digits going up to eight figures? Is it something that we need to do something with it? That is something that I would like to highlight on profit. The profit should be used to serve the interest that Solomon Power is mandated for. It is for the whole nation. It is not just for Honiara. You look at the mission here. Our nation is Solomon Islands. Go to the corners of Solomon Islands and give them the power.

I would like to touch on cheaper power. Get Tina Hydro into operation, Minister. Even if it starts with 40 percent reduction, that is a start. I know if you put your Acts together, within 12 months, you can come up with a better outcome of reducing that 40 percent. I remember the arguments when we did the negotiations with the Solomon Power Board of Directors and the Minister. I do know why they wanted to argue with the Minister. I know that it was wrong. It means that we still do not

know who we are serving. As a member of the team that did the negotiation, it was a shock for me. That is past, let us move on and take Tina into operations. We have invested a lot into that.

With the roof top solar, SIEA need to roll this out. Every house should have this. Why not? We have profit in here, Minister. install solar throughout the whole city, on the roofs. We can make the difference in the region because that is a blessing that we have in abundance. Let us think and do these things so that we achieve a cheaper power starting from next year. So, on the roofs, I support that project. You need to extend it to the villages as well. The nationwide need to have access to and experience the benefits of your mandate.

In terms of investments, do not give dividend to the government. Use it on the projects. Put it in an investment that SIEA and the government can work on it so that we achieve something tangible in respect of the objective. I do not want to hear our SOEs giving dividends to the government. You have a mandate and that is why you are a State Owned Enterprise. You have to perform. You have to make representation for the is nation. That is why you are chosen as an SOE. The Minister of Aviation state it very clearly. Buy solar panels to reduce high electricity. I would like to see profit like that.

For SOEs, their mandate, vision, mission and objectives is there. The government is doing good on the SOEs, but it allows them to operate on their own. No! We should partner with them so that we can guide them into our objectives and policies of the government. Honorable and powerful Minister, it is a State Owned Enterprise of the government and you are responsible. For SIPA, build wharves and not just use up the money. You build one wharf every year. This is an island nation. Solomon Islands is an island of nations. We need wharves and ships for our transportation. So invest in those infrastructures and they will be able to sustain our economy to continue to grow. On that, it is good that they are monopoly, so that they do it but then do not just do it on the cost of your people. As the Member for Small Malaita had said, cut it down so that we earn profit but then do not over charge us too much.

I join the Minister of Aviation to look at who will present the reports from the SOEs. We should look at the Acts and make amendment so that an SOE that comes under you, Minister, annually, you are obliged to make or move a Motion here, so that we have the opportunity to look at our SOEs and then we can help them as already alluded by earlier speakers. The Minister should take responsibility. Do not expectation Opposition. We are just sitting here doing nothing. We do not have those mandates. It is you who have that mandate. You are too powerful and so you should be looking at this. These are your SOEs. They are part of your policy. They implement your policy. You take stock of them. That means auditing them as well. Who provides the balance and check for us in terms of the SOEs?

There is need for greater transparency and accountable for our people and our country, but someone has to be responsible. I reckon it is the Minister and the government that must take us through. It has to be a presentation of the reports to the floor of the Parliament annually. As the mover of the Motion as alluded too, we do not just over look our responsibility. It is the responsibility that we have and that can only happen when we have the opportunity.

I suggest that we look at how best we can do that. Is it under the Standing Orders for the Ministers to annually present SOE reports or under the Acts?

Lastly, I would like to touch on another issue, on regulatory functions. There are those that are contracted by SIEA to do certification of buildings. It costs a lot. Is that reasonable? The person who runs the wires, the cost is cheaper than someone who just come and give approval. This is because he is issued with a certificate by Solomon Power. It is a bit big cost. At the moment it is more than \$5,000.00 to just come and say 'yes'. Those are things that this nation, people and consumers of the product of Solomon Power need to know.

I want to conclude and say thank Solomon Power for bringing this State Owned Enterprise entity to where we are. There is a big gap for improvement. We need to relook at the mission in order to the objectives. I think that is the purpose of this Motion. As we look at it together in the Committee, we will able to help each other on this one.

I resume my seat.

Hon FREDRICK KOLOGETO (*South Vella Lavella—Minister for Commerce, Industries, Labour and Immigration*) (10:59): Thank you Mr. Speaker. It is just a little contribution in support of this Motion moved by the Leader of Opposition.

My contribution will be short. Fuel is under the Ministry of Commerce, Immigration, Labour and Industry. I am in-charge of that.

Very important points have been raised by previous speakers. Just a few contribution on the paper in support. I will contribute on two areas in relations on. People talked about tariff. Some people called me about this as well.

Before doing so, I would like to thank the Minister of Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification who was in charge of the SOE and also the management and the board of Solomon Power.

The Opposition Leader raised a very important point. The expenses component of Solomon Power is 40 percent, which is alarming. More so, 60 percent is on non-fuel, as raised by the MP for Small Malaita. H mentioned 65 percent, maybe 60 to 65

percent. So what he was saying is that, on every dollar we are making, 60 cents goes to non-fuel items. He listed administration, operation and so forth.

As everybody are aware, our electricity power is very high. As the MP for West Are'Are stated, the mission of Solomon Power should be saying, 'cheap power, cheap power'; and if I can add, 'reliable cheap power'. We do not want power going on and off again and again.

There are two components I want to discuss in my support of the Motion. One is the fuel component, which is 40 percent. It is a bit hard for us to control fuel price, which is under my Ministry. I attend a few meetings. This is because of the simple reason that we are a price taker. We take whatever they give. There is little we can do with fuel price. In comparison to other pacific island nations, when we think about Australia and New Zealand, their fuel prices are high compared to Solomon Islands. Why is our Electricity still high? This is a very good question to ask, and I will leave it to the management to think about it.

Before I resume my seat, my next one is on the non-fuel component, which my good friend, the MP for Small Malaita already listed, which is about 65 percent, but as far as I know, it can be 62 percent some times. I think this is where we can control. I once worked at Solomon Power when I did my apprenticeship as a mechanical engineer.

So I know the story there, especially maintaining the engines, scheduling, and parts. You know, that is my field, and some of the managers at the moment are my colleagues at the university and also at workplace. But at that time, it was only a few of us working at Solomon Power. It may have just been 100 or 200 workers, and now the number of workers are doubled.

But one of the things that we are really happy about is the free electricity. This motivates people to really want to work there for that. At one instance, the house that I stayed was full of people because. the fan is on all the time. There are three refrigerators working. That is what is called rebate.

I would like to put it across to the management of Solomon Power, which countries in the Pacific still have this rebate? And why do we treat some of our citizens differently from others? Are they more special than others? I do not think so!

But I am not saying that you remove it, but how we can we properly manage it is the issue? How can we manage it so that we do not put that cost to the public that pay the bills, the low earner, like drivers, cleaners, and low-paid earners? It is good that these are benefits of working for Solomon Power. But that is a British practice during the colonial era, which already over. So let us think of us as Solomon Islands people and how we can help each other grow this nation.

So the point here, is that this is a very nice report, but I think the only place that we should put more consideration is for the board of management of Solomon Power to look at the non-fuel items, and one of them is the rebate. There are others that I do not want to debate. But that is one of the points.

I am very happy that this report comes to Parliament so that we can look at it. As other colleagues have stated, This is where we would talk about it and give some of our ideas. Not only to Solomon Power, but also Solomon Water, Telekom, and others.

That is all from me and I support this paper, and with these few remarks, I resume my seat.

Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE (*Hograno/Kia/Havulei—Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade*) (11:07): Thank you Mr. Speaker, at the outset, let me thank the Leader of the Opposition, the MP for Aoke/Langalanga, for moving the Motion which gives us the opportunity, especially the Committee of the Whole House to go through this important annual report, the Solomon Power Annual Report 2021. The Report has very important theme, and that is 'Energizing our Nation'.

I think the theme is both a mission and a challenge for all of us, not only for Solomon Power or the Ministry of Mines and Energy, which is the lead Ministry, as well as the Ministry of Finance. So let me thank the Leader of Opposition for this Motion as well as for the comments that he has raised in his statement. Those are very important comments, which means there are a number of economic policy measures that the government need to take note. I am sure the Minister of Mines and Energy and Rural Electrification, as well as Solomon Power, will take note on some of these important considerations.

Secondly, let me also thank the board and management of the Solomon Power for submitting this report through the Ministry of Finance and Treasury as well as the Ministry of Mines and Energy, which then is tabled here in Parliament. As the Leader of Opposition has alluded to there are a number of important reports that have been tabled and Parliament needs to look at those reports because there are issues and challenges that the reports outlined in different sectors. Not only SOEs, but also Ministry annual reports, for example, or other bodies for that matter.

Yes it is probably a shared responsibility that we as Parliament need to debate on and deliberate on those reports. I take the point that we as Ministers responsible, we do take the lead. I note the point that the colleague Minister of Mines and Energy said, that they are working on the review of the SIEA Act so that it can come to Parliament. I am sure that review will help us to address some of the concerns that are outlined also in those reports, or the challenges that we are currently facing in terms of power or access to energy.

The colleague MP for Small Malaita has passionately debated the importance of having access to electricity. We are a country that is rurally based and so we need our people in the rural areas to also have access to power electricity that is affordable and cheaper, but also reliable. I think these sentiments have been expressed by previous speakers. As the Minister of Aviation and Communication said, we need similar Tina Hydro projects in our rural areas. So going forward, I think investments in renewable energy are critical so that it is not Honiara that has access to power supply but also our people out in the rural areas, and that is very important.

Colleagues, you will recall the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Targets; in order for our people to achieve those, it needs access to affordable, cheaper and renewable energy. Otherwise, most of the targets that the STGs have, without having access to energy or electricity, it will be difficult for us to achieve them as a country or as a people.

I think a point also raised, yes we all know, that we are one of the countries that has the highest cost of electricity in the region, if not in the world; and that itself, as we have heard from previous speakers, is an impediment or obstacle to attracting investors to come and invest in our country. Again, this is a challenge for all of us to look at, but also to address going forward. If we want progress in the processing and manufacturing sector, then we need to really invest in ensuring that our country can provide affordable and cheaper electricity, so that we have movements going forward in those two sectors in terms of processing and manufacturing. As much as we have a number of market opportunities abroad and that we with a number of countries, but if they cannot the products to these markets because we may not have the cheaper electricity to produce that, then at the end of the day we may not be able to trade. So energy or having access to renewable, affordable, cheaper, efficient and reliable energy source is of critical importance.

Some of the points that colleagues raised earlier are also true. Probably we have to acknowledge that the SOEs have made some progress, especially after the new SOE Act came into force. I guess there is also always room for improvement. Probably we need to look at some balance. Of course, the SOE Act that is currently in operation, I think the leaning is much more towards profitability. Probably there may be a need for us to look at the service part of it, which is equally important, as the mission of Solomon Power states. Probably in terms of the regulations or if we are going to review not only the SIEA Act but probably the SOE Act, the current one, there could be some balance that we need to look at in terms of what percentage goes to the service responsibilities and what to reinvest in terms of further investments into that sector.

I though I just make mention and reiterate some of these important points going forward. As a country, certainly our need access to renewable energy, reliable

energy source, affordability, and of course sustainability and not forgetting profitability as a business in terms of Solomon Power going forward.

I would like to also acknowledge the fact that there is ongoing discussions and dialogue between the Ministry of Mines and Energy and Solomon Power in terms of how we can address some of these challenges going forward.

The report also highlight some of the challenges that Solomon Power is facing. Like other parts of the economy, they also experience the impact of COVID-19 and the November Riots of 2021. That, in a way, as highlighted in the report, it also affected some of the work and responsibilities of Solomon Power.

With those remarks, I support the Motion and I am sure we will have further discussions and fruitful exchanges when we come to the Committee of the Whole House.

Hon. BARTHOLOMEW PARAPOLO (*Ngella—Minister for Culture and Tourism*) (11:16): Thank you sir. First of all, I would like to thank the Leader of Opposition for moving Motion No.29, the Solomon Islands Electricity Authority Annual Report 2021. This Motion I very important for this nation and Honiara.

We realize that power shedding is causing a lot of problem to our businesses and all of us. As we know, the system that power in Honiara is using is very expensive in terms of management and operation. It uses diesel. As others have said, it is both the player and the referee. Those are the contributing factors to the power system that we have. Other countries, they have power generation separate from distribution and selling of power. So, we would like to encourage our Ministry of Mines and Energy to quickly bring the review on the Act so that we can be able to share those responsibilities.

What the mover had mentioned is very true. He counted all those single things which are very true. But we must not see it as a problem. There is solution. In the world today, changes in technology are coming up. We can work together with other partners so that we have cheaper power. There is cheaper power if we go with other donor partners that come up with modern technology of providing power.

There are renewable energy that we are so blessed with but we have not been using. One is sunlight and the other wind, like solar and windmill. They can provide a 100 percent renewable power to Solomon Islands. For example, Cook Islands is 100 percent renewable power. They use solar and windmill. We have solar, windmill and hydro. We can make use of these things, and also the geothermal in Savo.

As you can see, we are so blessed with so many sources of energy but we are slowing down because somebody is monopolizing the system. This is because they have their shares in it, that is why we cannot go out of the system that continues to

pay fuel, continue to meet the standard that we have adopted. This is why is expensive just to give approval to a building. The MP for West Are'Are mentioned \$5,000.00. If we can go into a new system where we fully utilize renewable energy, we will avoid those fees.

I would like to share a story. I just got back from China. The people who will come and build the new modern city at Mamara asked about the sort of power that is suitable for us. They want full renewable power, not diesel. They want windmill, solar or hydro. You see, we can work along with that group. They can help us with cheaper power and reliable one. So, I am asking the Ministry to quickly come up with the Act so that we can separate the functions of operators and distributors.

I would like to say to this House, that there is a way for us to achieve cheaper power. I am really sorry for my Ministry. It is power that helps to put up prices of the hotel rooms. So Solomon Islands is not a destination for tourists because of the high cost of hotel rooms. A manufacturing. As Leader stated, no one will come and do manufacturing here because of the high cost of electricity. Where will we get revenue to service the things we want in the country? Investors must come in to do manufacturing and business in the country. Most of the SOEs must come up with report so that we look through the reports.

The same with Solomon Airlines; very high airfare for tourists to come into the country. This is one of the contributing factors that hinders tourists from coming. I thank the Leader of Opposition. We need the Bill on SOEs so that something on it. SOEs are a State Owned Enterprise of the government. They should make money and support the services of the government in terms of what the government wants to do in the country. It is the same with the CCECC that builds the Stadium. Their government gives the money and they build the stadium and so the money goes back to them. We want SIEA to put money to the government so that it do the services it wants, and it is like that.

Thank you to the hard working Minister of Energy. Continue with your good work and with the staff of SIEA. To run SIEA is not cheap. It is very expensive, unless we go into another system of generating power. I want to thank the hard working staff of SIEA for the good work you do over the last two or three years during the COVID. It is not easy and it is good to work closely with the powerful Minister of energy and we can go into other energies to produce power in our country.

With these few remarks, I support the Motion.

Hon. NESTOR GHIRO (*Central Makira—Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources*) (11:25): Thank you Mr. Speaker, I will be brief.

I want to thank the mover of the Motion for moving this very important Motion. I am sure that the SOE Act is created through legislation and it is through legislation we can improve that.

I am very happy with the Leader of Opposition. As an alternative government, it is through such Motion that you give redirection to the government. I appreciate that a lot. I am really happy with everything that has been said, but I wish to focus on the statement by the MP for West Are'Are. He mentioned dividend for SOE. We use the dividend to create projects. Minister of energy, as you heard, it is clear that any amendments to the SOE Act, if it comes here, it can easily be passed. Anything to improve this SOE Act, it is already passed. That is what I stand to highlight it.

The other points, when it comes to papers in Parliament as the Opposition Leader said, we are all responsible. Thank you for the statement.

With these few remarks I subscribe to all points raised.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr) (*East Are Are*) (11:27): Thank you Mr. Speaker and I join others and colleagues in thanking the Leader of Opposition in bringing this Motion for us to consider here. We received a lot of reports but if there is one that we need to focus, I think this is the right one at this time in particular. Thank you to the Leader and Member for Aoke/Langalanga for his wisdom in bringing this paper for us.

I just like to join others in contributing to this debate, perhaps moving to the bigger picture and policy. I think for us, we know full well that scientists in the world have agreed that electricity is one of mankind's best inventions. Throughout the recorded history of mankind, electricity and the invention of electricity, which the Minister of Health would agree, is one of the biggest inventions that mankind has ever invented,

In fact, one of the quotes by Nicola Tesla said that;

"The day we shall know exactly what electricity is, will chronicle an event probably greater, more important than any other recorded in the history of the human race. The time will come when the comfort, the very existence, perhaps of man will depend upon that wonderful agent."

That agent being electricity and power. And of course, we know that through the history of the development of electricity, it ended up with Thomas Edison in 1879 when he lit that bulb, and that became the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. That was the biggest mover in putting the Western World where it is now, and everybody is still trying to catch up with that.

So this Thomas Edison, if you have been to the US, you would know that one of the biggest power-producing companies there is called Con Edison, named after Thomas Edison. When we were there, we used to pay bills to this particular power-generating company.

The importance of electricity is recognized, as we heard already from the Minister of foreign affairs in the UN with SDG 7, speaking particularly about clean and affordable energy. These are the words that I also see in the mission statement of Solomon Power. They also share the same sentiments of access to reliable and affordable energy. These are all very important.

As a least developed country, there is a special concessions that we can look into. The recently adopted Doha Program of Actions for the least developed countries has a good section there as well on energy and access to energy for least developed countries like us, partnering with our partners to have access to energy. This is in recognition of the importance that energy has for human beings throughout the world.

The Samoan pathway or the so-called SIDs accelerate modalities of action for Small Island Developing states also has a big segment there for us small island Developing states with our own challenges. And for us in the Solomon Islands, I think this is particularly important because we are also an archipelagic state. Our geography is spread out over some 1000 miles, and it makes it a bit harder for us to provide services to our people, when you have to keep replicating things throughout all our islands, unlike the other island nations where they only have one or two big islands. All you need to do is ring around that island, and you will be fine.

But for us, these realities put extra challenges on us, which allows us an opportunity to how to overcome these challenges. And that is where the policy comes in terms of what it is that we need to do. And I am sure the government, through the NDS, also has policy directions there. But I think it is important that we continue to work together with the SOEs as well as the government to continue to give direction and political will and support to Solomon Power, the only monopoly that provides power here.

Some of the issues in policy would be that it is time for us to liberate that market. Open it up and allow others to come in and also provide energy for us. Would that be something done under Solomon power, that they contract others to do this on their behalf? Or is it something completely separate from Solomon Powers? These are options for us to really look into.

The idea that we have been hearing now about investors looking at us as a very expensive destination to invest in is true. I have just seen a latest report here that from 99 US cents per kilo for an hour, we have gone up to over a dollar now. In fact,

we have been number one not only in the region but in the world for over 10 years. So we are at the top of the chart for the cost of electricity in the whole world, and that is something that we do not want to be number one for. Maybe we should look for other things to be number 1. But this one is something that we should try and work towards reducing. Perhaps if we come last on this one, it would be really good. So this is something that the policy can help direct in terms of what we can do moving forward.

I think the idea that the investors is important to come in, that one is key; but at the same time just the access to our people. Not necessarily just investors, but just the whole population. Seeing just from the report here, I think the idea of the volume of those that are paying at the moment is so small compare to the size of the population, and I see that there is increase and Solomon Power has been making efforts to increase that. Twenty five thousand people paying power out of a population of 730,000, that is perhaps why we are paying so much power because only a small number are paying power.

So these are issues that perhaps you should look at the volume. How do you increase the market? How do we get more people to pay? What should be the price that people should be paying? Perhaps you should work on more volume rather than on the less numbers that we have currently here.

We see Honiara is still number one in terms of power access. We know that the rest of the Solomon are not yet accessible to receiving electricity. So if you put the percentages 25 out of the 730,000, that is less than 4% for Solomon Islanders who have access to power. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why power is so expensive because only a small group is paying for that power. So that is something that, as policy makers, we should look at and help Solomon Power expand their reach.

The challenges are definitely there. Solomon Islands is a different make up to Fiji. We cannot compare us to Fiji. So many Islands in the Solomon, and distribution of population quite evenly spread as well. So these are challenges that will cost extra. The cost of doing business in Solomon Islands is one of the highest as well. These are all linked. So the idea for us to continue to work in policy in shaping how we see power generation, power distribution, and access to power, affordability, reliability, all of those rest on us working very closely with the Solomon Power; and of course through us the Parliament, through the relevant Ministry of Mines and Energy, hardworking Minister there working closely with the Solomon Power or the SIEA.

I think the policy level needs to be adjusted so that we know exactly what we want, and we need to put a timeframe. When do we need to get the 30,000, 40,000, 50,000 100,000 access, and how is the best way to get there? Who are the right partners for

us to get there? What laws do we need to put in place to help us get there? Some of the suggestions have already made by Member of Parliament for West Are`Are in terms of solar roofing. Those are done by other Caribbean islands already. We do not have to look and re-invent the wheel. There is a lot of these good practices already in place by the small islands. We can look at how they did this, including the tourism sector, and how they did that at some of their cities.

These are issues that if we put our heads together, I am sure we can build a path forward and a road map forward towards a much more better empowered and truly empowered Solomon Islands. Currently with the experiences we are going through, people on the streets are starting to say Solomon 'Powerless'. So Solomon Power becomes *Powerless*. That is something that is a reflection of how we are now doing. How can we work together to move our nation forward and drive our nation forward knowing full well that *electricity* is the basis. It cuts across everything we do and if we get that right Solomon Islands will continue to sail forward with confidence.

Thank you so much.

(Speech in reply)

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Thank you Mr. Speaker and I wish to thank the Honourable Minister for Mines as the responsible Minister for Solomon Islands Electricity Authority and other Ministers, the Minister of Commerce that used to sleep behind the generator at Lungga. That time they said that SIEA have lost a lot of tools. So I think he is part of the increase in the cost for buying tools. I appreciate very much the insights that were shared. Those are issues that the CEO will work on. I think the initiative that the Minister is working on in reviewing and separating the regulatory function is an important contribution, all towards finding those solutions.

I wish to join the Ministry to acknowledge the efforts of the Late CEO, a very young promising life lost to illness. We acknowledge his efforts and I urge the Board to move quickly and appoint a replacement. Do not leave such a important position to become vacant for too long.

I also join others in acknowledging and thanking the Board and Management for a very good work, splendid work done over many years, especially during the COVID period.

I want to particularly acknowledge the clean audit report. There are no qualifications by the Auditor General on any issues or material nature that does not meet the standards. This is very important. It is a clearest mark, yet, of good governance in organization .

Further also of course, in terms of the quality of the report itself, the disclosures are really of high quality. There is sufficient data for stakeholders and decisions makers to look at the report and form opinions. It is good to encourage, not just our SOEs but even in the private sector large organizations that have a disproportionate impact in the economy, that their reporting is of a good quality, so that it enables other operators to take cognizance of that kind of disclosure quality.

One area that I do not find in the report is environmental sustainability reporting. That is surely missing. Also there is allusion to it in one or two places, what it means for SIEA, a big emitter for us, what it means for a big footprint, that is not clear. It is perhaps something that we could look forward to in the next report.

The MP for Small Malaita raised the question of access. This is very important. We are a population of 723,000. In 15 years we will be a million people. If we see as we in this report, a 10 percent growth in customer growth, then it will take us at least another 20 years and we would have only just reach about 30 percent of our population. That kind of data points towards the greatness of the need and the challenge that is before us.

As I alluded to earlier, that the government must not let go of this. Just because it makes a lot of profit and government thinks it can let go. No! Government intervention will continue to be in some form, critical to expanding the objective of access to our people and of course access that is cheap. In terms of cheap electricity, because 40 percent of the cost is on fuel, and as the Minister of Commerce said, we are price takers. Most of the world are price takers. The only really effective way to reduce that 40 percent cost is to move it to solar energy.

For wind, it is said that it does not generate much here. But the Savo Geothermal and so forth, we tried Komaridi previously. We must do it again. But it must not be expensive like Tina Hydro. For Tina Hydro, the 30-50 million US Dollar for just a 15 mega capacity facility is way, way too expensive. That is why we will only achieve 40 percent reduction when it is relatively the fact that we are still the most expensive in the world. It is some consolation but not enough consolation to spur the kind of economic growth that we would like to see.

The regulatory responsibility, I think is very important. You know, we see that and previously the Minister of Health went and bought an item from one of the shops at Point Cruz. It was not that long before that item broke down. The quality of the inputs while it is good and cheap but the quality of electricals in those things, there needs to be standards not only imposed but enforced. It is a matter that Commerce deals with in consumer protection and consumer affairs on the quality of products.

Even the cables used for wiring. Some cables are so thin that if you are not careful, it brittles and can break easily. Also, I am not sure whether it meets the standard

and who sets those standards and who enforces them. So, there is need for that regulatory authority, not only in its current form, perhaps be separated from the authority as provider but also expand that regulatory authority so that it sets standard for electrical good, equipment which is coming into the country. We must not become a dump for bigger economies sending their cheap materials.

You know, they reuse, which is a great thing of course, they recycle materials so many times that those wires become brittle. They become unsafe and pose safety hazards in our houses.

Much has been said about you know competition, liberate the generation market or perhaps even distribution and they are all important policy considerations for the Ministry to think about. But I think the example on telecommunications liberalization in our country is instructive. We privatize the telecommunication sector and it has an independent regulator and stills the communications quality is one of the worst in the world and is one of the most expensive still. So, privatization alone and even having an independent regulator alone is not the total solution that we are looking for and so we must look carefully at this as to why that sector is still like that and therefore, it could be instructive to this particular sector. So competition is great but competition alone perhaps will not deliver the social benefits that we expect and of course, the economic benefits of having cheap services.

Those are some of the issues raised in the contributions and I think it is important that we explore them further in detail as we go through this report.

Again, I do wish to thank the Acting CEO and his staff and board and the Minister for the quality of reporting that contained in the annual report of 2021.

With those few remarks, I now await you, Mr Speaker, to put the question.

Question put and agreed to

(Report is committed to the Committee of the Whole House)

(Committee stage)

Mr CHAIRMAN: The paper before this Committee is that the Solomon Islands Electricity Authority Annual Report 2021 (*National Paper No.33 of 2022*).

Before we go through the paper , I wish to remind all honorable Members that debate may extend over all details contained in the paper. I will allow discussions on paragraphs of this paper but will not put any question or allow any amendments in relation to the paper.

I propose we go through the paper page by page. We will begin with page 2. If you look, at the report page 2 is actually where you see at the beginning. The report is not paged, where you do not see the number of pages on the report. The only page that you see page 1 is the one the letter to the Minister. By extension, therefore, page 2 follows and it begins with highlights 2021. That is page 2 and that is where we will start and there on we will continue page by page until we come to the last page.

I have just got the numbering there and the last page actually states 60, the last page before the final page to this report. We will now go page by page and we will begin on page 2. As I said, page 2 is such as one headed and highlights 2021.

Page 2

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: On Page 2 I want to start where we are at. I am happy with the highlights in terms of Tina River Hydro Power Project. Since this report, is there anything that comes up which is different from this report?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: Tina Hydro Project, which is a flagship project. This is coming. Tina Hydro Project with environmental issues has just concluded and soon the construction will start next month.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Just a follow up on that one, in terms of the delay. There is a delay of COVID in terms of travel restrictions and so forth. The delay has moved the schedule of the activities that needs to happen by how long?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: Yes, the COVID issues really extend the time period of this project to one and a half years in the first stage of the five years.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I am still on page 2. On this output-based aid (OBA) program. I wanted to know what the status of this program was. Is it still continuing or has it stopped now?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: Can the MP for Small Malaita repeat the question again ?

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I just wanted to know the status of the OBA program by Solomon Power. Is it still continuing or has it stopped now?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: The project have been completed.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Can the minister further clarify this program? Is this the program to assist many of our people living in and around the settlements in Honiara, who perhaps do not meet other standards, are able to get one or two power points and power connected, and we subsidized it ? I assumed that is what this project has addressed the access objective. So since it has been completed and stopped, does that mean there is no second or additional phase to it?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: This is for people with low incomes. But I think it is the funding that has stopped, and thus the program stops as well.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: In that case, the authority will tell us whether they have covered all the people who can be covered in the access object under this program. So perhaps the first question is, do we have 100 percent coverage of those who ought to be covered by this? Or what percentages have you covered, and what percentage is outstanding and still not connected to the grid?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: So the program has targeted places that it will cover, and those places are already covered, according to the funding.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I still do not get what the Minister has explained. Is this program covered the intended customers? So does this mean that for all the locations does all the house connected to the lines ? Is that what he meant?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: That project is meant for 5,000 people. So that 5000 are being covered. Thank you.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: It is good that it is meant for 5,000, and if all 5,000 have been covered, then it is wonderful. So the question is, is there another 100, 200 or 5,000 left so that we can do it again so that there is the need to negotiate an extension to a similar kind of program?

What is the capacity for such an extension to the program? Do we still have some that we can also give some access to?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: I think the need for us to run the program is there. There are a lot of people there that need this program, but I think the issue is in the funding that stops there. We will do our best to try and look for some more money for those funding to come. I think that is the plan that we have. If we have the money, then we will do this program again.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I think it is a very important issue in terms of the policy goals and mission of the authority. So I want to ask a question on that particular issue on accessibility. I want to know, definitely that 5,000 customers is nowhere near where we want to, but anyway, I want to know two things. First, with the 5,000 customers, what period does it take cover? Secondly, how many of the 5,000 customers are in Honiara and the provinces?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: I think you have stressed a very important point because it reached the people that are very low earners, and so we need to understand this well. The Solomon Power that do the work, it is a challenge for it to do it. I think the two years period of time, I think most are in Honiara. The provinces

are challenging, because of COVID and other things and we could not do it properly and the funding as well. So most of these 5,000 are in Honiara.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Anyone of those two

Mr CHAIRMAN: No, I will have to go page by page. So you tell me which page? Still on page 2 correct?

Hon MATTHEW WALE: The issue with this highlights and plans for 2022 is that all of these issues are contained in the various reports and accounts and money they spent etc.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Except that page 2 is highlights for 2021, page 3 is plans for 2022. So they are not exactly the same.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Right, but continuing of same thing. Though they are not quite the same but both of them are just the same.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Ok please go ahead.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Ok. Just in terms apprenticeship and graduate programs. So I am just wondering that should be the regulatory aspect I supposed, in terms of course content at Don Bosco, and I do not know what other TVET institutions have this electrical courses, and here at SINU and the kind of competencies that the regulator sets for us here to be examined on and then a proper program of apprenticeship. Like before, you do not really go for work quickly. You are supervised until certified to be competent. I would like a bit of update on the apprentice. So apprentice program is one and the course content and its quality and review or assessment by the regulator of the quality of the course content and its delivery in our institutions.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: So Solomon Power in terms of licensing, it does not recognize other institutions. It only recognizes SINU because their program is inline with the standards that SIEA adopted.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: In that case, those who do course at Don Bosco in particular, but I am not sure whether the other TVET schools are offering them. What happens to all these programs and the products of the students who had graduated out of those institutions?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: I think the standard of accepted course is at SINU. If they want to be issued with licenses, they must go and take the course offered at SINU. I think it is similar to nurses and doctors. They have to blend in with the program that the government accepts in terms of health. I think, it is the same principle that is applied to this or to do licenses. They can go and get it from any

institutions but they have to come back to SINU or maybe get upgraded to reach the standard which Solomon Power will accept.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I am on page 3 on the plans for 2022. In particular, the progress with the renewable energy projects, more particularly solar hybrid conversions at Kirakira, Lata, Malu'u, Munda and Tulagi and the mini grids at Haohui, Namuga, Sasamuga and Vonunu. For us to know on where are we in terms of completion of the projects.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: Most of these projects you have mentioned are in the commissioning stage.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Just further down on this report and the plans for 2022. The work on design and installation on installation of rooftop solar. That is the idea and I think the mover of the Motion had suggested. I am wondering whether either in the Ministry or in the Solomon Power, if you had been thinking on expanding of this kind of installations for public buildings like the airport terminal, the schools, so that it complements power source at Solomon Power.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: This is an issue that we must do. It is a must now but by doing that, we could amend the Act and then allow us to do other things. Otherwise, if we do not amend the Act, we will not be able to do that. I will bring it shortly and I hope as we had debated on that we will support this Act. So, once I will bring it here, we must pass it and then work on those things.

Hon CULWICK TOGAMANA: Let me thank the honourable Minister as well as the Solomon Power for the work at Buala Flood Protection Civil Upgrade. It is completed. I would also like to thank Solomon Power for extending the power grid from Buala all the way to Kuburota, as well as Buala to Naria. I thank them. I am sure the honorable Minister may have already answered the question that I will ask. But for the sake of the people of my constituency in which the power grid is already completed, I would like to ask the Minister as to what time they will activate the power grid so that the constituency can be able to help the villages, so that we can be able to connect to the houses through the scheme that was mentioned.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: I think the Solomon Power has a program as to what will happen and when things will happen. The commissioning of lines for extension strips will take place this year. We will then extend to other households.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: A supplementary question on the renewable mentioned by the MP for Small Malaita. I understand that there is a partnership with World Bank. Is this still the case or is Solomon Power taking over the program?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: Still with the World Bank.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: The 1megawatt at Tanagai, has there any work on it?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: With Tanagai, yes, it is at the construction stage.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: On page, there is mention of improving environmental reporting and performance. Incorporating sustainability into business activities; that last paragraph. They are really noble and grand statements of intent. As I mentioned, I am sure activities are happening, but just the reporting of that activity to show objectives, I think the reporting needs improvements that it is clearer how you are achieving those objects. I just want to point that out, but acknowledge and appreciate this report. Social environmental reporting is very important. Reporting is a very important thing and I think if we can improve this disclosures, reporting under this object will help all the other SOEs and other companies will follow suit to copy the same kind of reporting. It will be very good for our economy.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: The Ministry acknowledges the points you raised and we know that the Environment Act is a standalone Act. So Solomon Power does not ignore this. It will include this in its next report.

Page 7

Hon MATTHEW WALE: On page 7, just on the matter of bond purchases by the authority and I think this is applied on Ports and I do not know which of the other SOEs takes up the development bonds of the government. So, as we know, when Parliament approves the government borrowing in an Appropriation Act and then government sets about to auction the borrowing instrument and the obvious first point of reference is usually, well at this point in time in recent past, SIEA and Ports, because they have a lot of cash reserves to subscribe to the bonds and the government borrowing. Now, of course from government borrowing view point it does not matter where the money comes from, as long as the money comes. From the SOE view point, if their interest is good, they are getting more for it from the government borrowing than it remains idle in the bank, it makes sense, if it is going to be idled, it makes sense to put into use to earn some interest from the government instruments.

On that front it makes sense, but I think this was an issue where the Minister of Foreign Affairs and acting Prime Minister has raised to day, echoing the chorus of Small Malaita in the level of profitability that it is so high that cash is sitting idled that has not being applied to re-investments in capital expenditure or capital expansion to achieve the access object. When you see it in that loop, you can say that if money is sitting idled and so it points to capacity issues as to why they did not use it in order to expand.

I think it is a policy matter that both Ministers as accountable Ministers, that capacity expansion access is the issue of the Minister of energy and financing capacity on the side of government and authority is the issue of the Minister of Finance. There is need for some policy collaboration to make sure that government borrowing does not become the best investment for them. Their best investment should be in expanding the access, making that service cheaper. Those two objectives should be what the money must apply to. If it is sitting idled and therefore you attract back the government borrowing, that should never happened. I think those would be policy considerations that two accountable Ministers need to look at and maybe set some mechanism in place to force the, not force, but nagged them some discipline to the authority in terms of how much money is lying idle.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: On page 7 paragraph 3. I will read it. "One of the major outcomes in 2021 was the review and implementation of the new electricity tariff that reduced". It is this review that I would like to ask about. How often do you or whoever is responsible reviews it? Because it looks like this is what Solomon Power is looking forward to be reviewed otherwise it is delayed.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: The review occurs every five years.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): In terms of Solomon Power's strategy to deliver affordable energy to its customers is to invests in renewables. In terms of investment in renewables, I think the next paragraph talks about \$1 billion investment to Solar. Could there be a better breakdown in terms of that \$1 billion investment in planning? Is it just for solar, or some of it wind energy too? Where did the investment go?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: One quarter of the \$1 million dollars will go towards the line for the Tina hydro project, and the rest will be distributed to other renewables like Solar , wind, and other things.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): I think it was said here that it is a continuing goal for investment in renewable energy. That is what I want to talk about and ask about, and it is actually \$1 billion worth of investment around the country over the next five years. That is what I asked about. Perhaps you have answered it partly, but I just feel that perhaps there are other clarifications or information that the Minister might want to share regarding this. This is over the next five years, \$1 billion worth of investment around the country.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: So this \$1 billion dollar is the capex for the whole planning of Solomon Power . And like I stated earlier today, one quarter of it is for Tina Hydro for the transmission lines to the grids, and then the rest of it will be distributed to other renewables.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: That 1 billion, as I understand, and going back to the pages that we have covered already, which talk about the transmission line from Tina, I thought that was going to be fully funded by DFAT or some kind of loan facility, or it was DFAT grant financing, isn't it? So that \$1 billion on page 7 does not include donor funding but entirely Solomon Power funds?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: This \$1 billion is included and also included Solomon Power. Both of them do it together. It is a project, like what you said today, Leader of Opposition, a project that blows up the budget a little bit in terms of a small 15 megawatt, then it blows up to 300 plus; a lot of money.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: I am in page 8 Chairman. You are not there yet?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Yes you have any comment on page 8?

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: I am going down to the 5th paragraph that talks about the permanent staff and it comments on the staff for productivity and the work that they did. In terms of the policy of COVID. Some of the technical staff, as I understand, because they were not vaccinated, they are out of their job. Is there a review or the position still maintained? Are you getting those people back? We sponsored them to do their studies but then they decided under the particular policy at that time 'no job no job. Is there a review for us to make use of those people? We spend a lot of money on their education.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: It looks like they have to follow the government policy of 'no job no job'. I think it has not changed. It still stays the same.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I am on page 8 also, but second paragraph of the CEOs report. In that paragraph, the last line talks about \$74 million authority has reached, and then it says that most of these profits are reinvested into business to extend the network and ensure a sustainable and quality service over the medium term. I just want to know whether the Minister can tell us about the \$74 million. Instead of generalizing it, where is the network? In Honiara? And what part of Honiara they do they reinvest in?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: So this \$74 million, it also involves other provinces as well and Honiara. It is a partly funding they have spread it out to the provinces as well.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Just a follow up. So how much of that \$74 million was used for reinvestment purposes?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: I think the officials need to come back with that one with proper answers, otherwise, we say something that is not true and it is not good. So I will not answer you straight.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): Just on the next paragraph, 3rd paragraph, page 7. Operationally, the second sentence there says 'while some generators slated for overhaul did not eventuate due to border restriction, overall generation capacity was maintained with no load shedding'. In the context of our current situation- note that this was written two years ago perhaps in 2021- is our situation today, this one catches up on us now, in terms of generators slated for overhauls but was not done because of COVID?

Is that part of what is happening, now that load shedding is happening, because those generators have been affected?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: Exactly! I think this is the result of the COVID-19 that we are experiencing.

Proceedings of the Committee of the Whole House interrupted

Parliament is resumed

Parliament is suspended at 12.29pm

Parliament is resumed at 1.36pm

The SPEAKER: Again the House will resolve into the Committee Whole House to continue the consideration of Paper No.33 of 2022.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The Committee is resumed and before we had lunch recess, we were on page 7 of the paper but from here in, we would like to go through the paper on subjects and divisions. So, if you look at the page 9, it is the Engineering Division and so those are number of pages covering the engineering division so pages 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 are all related to this division. We consider issues under that heading on those pages.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Thank you Chairman. In that case, you must not rush too much. My reading is a bit slow. They cover some very important issues.

Mr CHAIRMAN: You do not go page by page. Any issue that you would like to bring on any of those pages that I have referenced?

Hon MATTHEW WALE: The first issue I suppose, going back to page 8 , 2nd paragraph, is the number of customers. It shows a 10 percent growth but has a total of just 24,000. Again, capacity and access questions arise obviously out of a population of 720,000 people. That is about 3 percent. Even if we took the urban population, assuming Honiara's population which is about 100,000, that would be about 24 percent of it. This is not for any responses now, but it is obviously a metric for access object when planning for the expansion of the access object.

The other metric that I wish to acknowledge and appreciate is the customer minute lost. I think sensitivity to that in practice and management decision making and of course in reporting is a good thing because it increases the accountability to make sure every year is under control.

Coming to the Engineering Division, on page 10, it listed a number of specific issues on the generators and alternators and so forth. Perhaps to cover all of those issues, it only become relevant because of the current load shedding. You know the old, inefficient generators do experience oil leakages. Maybe just one response to say that situation we are in is that this much of the generators are down and these ones are still on stream. The work on those that are down is this and so we get a sense of we are over this situation or we are just about getting over it and that it will not be repeated. That is what I suppose what I am angling for.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: The second one is that, yes, in general we have 11 generators, and then 6 of the 11 have some issues and that caused the current power shedding that we experience. In megawatts, if the 11 generator are working, it is 26. That is the normal load. Now it is reduced to 11 megawatts and we are trying to manage the 11 megawatts in between.

The timeframe for each set to come back, I think procurements have already been done and it is just a matter of the time they will arrived. We are looking at September and October and that time we should have the normal power supply. Power supply should come back to normal.

With the current experience, the Solomon Power also stands by as well. These are experiences that we have to stand by for any arising circumstances. Some of the generators suddenly have issues. Otherwise, 2 of the 6 generators are under maintenance, the other 4 generators suddenly have mechanical issues. So it collapsed the whole power supply of Honiara. By September or October we should come back to a normalcy in the supply in Honiara.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Therefore, is there some contingency planning during the games so that we do not have over capacity, that if there are issues they would be continuity of supply?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: I think the program is a very important program and we cannot allow power to go as this time and so Solomon Power ordered 5 mechanical generators to come and stand by. I think this is the contingency generators.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: On page 12, at the bottom of the left column under the regulatory, are the licenses. By the end of 2021, 39 licensed electricians managed to revalidate their licenses, of which 20 belongs to Solomon Power and 19 is from

outside the Solomon Power. It would seem a fairly low number of licensed electricians and so competition in that service, which is a very important service in the market connecting or addressing issues of the need of the industry and households.

This relates to the question I asked earlier in terms of not only regulatory making sure everything is up to standard but that first training and apprenticeship to get to this level. Because the regulatory aspect is under Solomon Power, is there some planning happening to make sure that we can increase the number of licensed electricians?

Of course, the issue that was raised today is that once they come to do inspections, it costs about \$5000. So I think they have an association that sets out the level of fees in the private sector that they charge. To what extent does the regulator has anything to do setting of fees to promote competition rather than rigid fee structures?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: In terms of the increased number of technicians, Solomon Power conducts some training for more technicians to have licenses. It has to meet their criteria and the international standard.

In terms of the charges such as \$5000, these are contractors charges. They put the charges themselves. I think the remedy for this is that, when we amend this, we are going to retain certain powers so that we can take charge of other things that Solomon Power is normally in charge of, and then we can see from there.

I think when we allow Solomon Power to run it, we give more power to them. I think the technical part is that we can agree that they will do it. But in terms of the smaller number of people, they are charging more. I think that is exactly what has happened, that is, \$5000 per connection, as raised in the debate.

I agree with the point that you have raised, Leader, the more people have licenses, the fewer charges are given to customers to do some of their work. Because I think very small earners do not have that much money as well. So I agree with the point raised, and we will look into this and see how best we can address this issue.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: Just a follow-up question. For the license, how many times do people have to come to the regulator or Solomon Power to attend the course, graduate, and take the license? How often do they conduct the course for these electricians before they take their license?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: This is a yearly program.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: Does Solomon Power charge a fee for this? I question this because we need a lot of our electricians to be licensed.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: Yes, of course, there is a fee. That fee is enforced by those who conduct the trainings, and it is \$1,500.00.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: With the 2megawatt solar installation at Henderson, what stage is it at now?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: It will actually happen next year.

Mr SAMMY GALO : Just for clarity, on page 12 under renewable energy. A contract was signed in 2019 between Solomon Power and Netcom Clear Energy, especially for this mini grids. I believe the Member of Parliament for Small Malaita already asked this but just for clarity sake. The hybrid progressive, how progress is it? I am interest in Sasamunga and what is the progress on this? I feel that the area is registered. What is the progress of work on this hybrid?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: What happen to the issue in Sasamunga is, I think during the COVID, the contractor never showed up. So the contract details is in the close or termination. So he has been terminated.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: And then what happens? Are you going to look for a new contractor? You terminated him and will still be working on it or not?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: So as a responsible SOE, they have taken up the job now.

Mr. ALFRED TUASULIA: I just want to know, apart from those solar hybrids that we have already in the country and the provinces. Can you update us how many proposed solar hybrid projects you have in Solomon Islands?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: So far we have 20 solar hybrid in Solomon Islands.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: In terms of those measurements, perhaps the Minister can enlighten us on power system reliability. There are three main measurements here. Maybe Minister could explain how we could understand it properly on the interruption that gauge it, whether those outages are long or not long? It is on page 13. If Minister can clarify.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: I think, from the official, it is an indicator of length of time where network is out. I think that is the measurement you are talking about Leader.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Just hearing stories along the road, and I do not know if it is true or not. Those stories had it that those that connect the cash power meters, they do direct connections. It means that the meter does not pick it up. In such situation, are you able to pick that up? Do you have some kind of a monitoring

system or digital system that lets you know if people are tampering with the cash power meters?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: Yes, the system can pick that up. When the customer does not pay for bill, it means that the customer tampers with the cash power meter. Some illegal activities might be happening. It can be monitored through paying of tariff. If a customer fails to pay bills for a month, something is wrong somewhere. Yes, they can monitor.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: In terms of paying for cash power using mobile phones. When you do that, the units are not the same. The amount of money, for example, \$300.00, that you pay, it depends on the time and day and week. It is not consistent. It can be 45.8 units, 42.6 units, 42.9 units or 46.5 units. It is in my phone because that is how I pay. Why is it like this? I thought it would be fair if the units for \$300.00 are the same. That is not the case. If the Minister can explain.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: The change that appears in figure means that tariff also changes. When it increases, it affects the money that you pay. It depends on the tariff on that month. I think tariff changes monthly. I sign the tariff every month.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I do not really understand this. So the tariff changes every week? It happens every week. I do not know if you are buying power. It happens every week. I pay for power every week. It goes up. If I pay \$500.00, instead of 60 units, which is what I get last week, this week is 59 units, the next week will be 58 units.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: I think that is quite a technical question. Tariff is a monthly tariff that, as a Minister, I sign. From the official, the weekly changes is a tier. There are three tiers. We will produce the documents to help us understand it. It is varied when you pay . It depends very on the amount of money that you pay. It changes the three tiers. That is the explanation I can give now.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: It is not clear to me. Why is it the same amount but the units are reduced?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: I think, from the official, when you pay 1 to 50 or 50 to 100, it changes. Maybe that affects the payment that we do and then the tariff automatically changes it. It is automatically set in terms of how we do mobile banking. From the officials, it automatically changes the number of power that we pay according to the money that we pay.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: I think, it is the machine that must be changed because the money is jus the same. Like, for me, almost like every fortnight, I pay \$300 but the unit is going up and then going down. Since the beginning of this year, I had that question, maybe the machines at the office wants to cheat because I always pay

the \$300 but the units are changing. When it goes up, I am happy but when it goes down, then I said that something is definitely wrong.

I also have this thought that maybe the time of day also determines this. Like when the sun is really hot, it goes up and in the evenings it goes down. Because the times when I put into my phone is like that. It is my problem and I think that explanation is not satisfactory. Maybe the machine down there is made to change and it is not tariff as well. Why is that tariff changes every week and every fortnight?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: Can I explain a bit more? Sorry, as he had said, maybe the explanation is not clear. But we will come with a comprehensive explanation in black and white so that we can see.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Thank you. I am happy that the Minister had made that response. It must be comprehensive because this affects our population of this whole country. People are not talking that is why you are unaware of it. It really affects them. I would like to ask a different question.

I want to ask the Minister because I think this is a policy question on renewable energy, but I think Solomon Power, maybe they have answer to it as well. What is our policy target on renewable energy? Do we have such a thing? And perhaps for Solomon Power to help the Minister on the how we try to achieve this policy target?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: So, the policy talks about 100 percent renewable energy by 2030. This is for Honiara.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: So maybe Solomon Power can explain on how they are progressing towards this target?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: This road map is for the JICA Program. This is to achieve this renewable energy.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: Yes, I have questions on all pages but this one is on page 13. The current problem that we have on load shedding or the generators no longer working well. It is the same thing that is reported on page 13. When they do the implementation of the major overhauls of the generators, it helps. I was thinking that buy some generators as spares. When we do overhauls, we connect to the other ones. There is no break down because that is what will represent Solomon Power. Solomon Power has been the power generator for this country for many years and we should not experience this one. This is not good. I do not want this to happen to Solomon Power. I am proud of Solomon Power. Why do not we take extra generators?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: That is exactly what the Solomon Power wants to do. I think a lot of the issues complicate the current situation now; and we are talking

about COVID. The parts did not arrive on time. The professionals who should come to fix the generators did not come. This why we have these issues. Solomon Power learns from this issue and we will try and much as possible to fix this.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: This is on regulatory division. I note on page 12, where this department deals with two areas, licensing of electricians and licensing of private generators. Is there any other work that regulations does??

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: Apart from these two is to check the installations so that the installations are proper.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: This is still on regulations but this is on licensing of private generators. I note that this is for the use, where it is 50kilowatt and above. So those below 50Kilowatt, like house, does it require any licensing?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: There is no license for the small generator but they issue the compliance rule that must be followed.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: I am on page 14, on the maximum demand. In there it stated 2021 peak at 16,082 Kilowatts. I know one of the history peak is during the Pacific Games in November and the demand of Kilowatts will increase. How much is the Kilowatts and I know you are preparing for that. If the Minister can help me understand it?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: We are anticipating that by the Pacific Games, there will be 2megawatt increase from the normal 16.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I am still on renewable energy but my question is on what is discussed in my statement earlier on this morning. I note that the authority has installed a number of solar installations in the various parts in Honiara and out stations. The Minister stated earlier today that we need to change the law in order to go into this. Because this is for us to reach the target you have set. But how can we reach it? That is what I would like to know because my earlier question has not yet been answered.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: So for this roof top, we cannot do it now until we amend it. Then we will work on achieving the lot of things that we wanted.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: So how are we dealing with the solar systems that we already installed? I just wanted to know what law disallows us.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: So once we amend it, we have to create a grid code for us to spill out what action to take. At this time, we can talk about it, and we can be happy about it, but there must be a law governing this kind of thing that we want to do. So once the amendment is completed, we will work on how we will do it.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: So now, if a person puts solar on top of their roof, is that illegal? I have a small panel on top of my roof, and that makes me afraid now.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: We can say it is legal in that sense. But the compliance part of it is actually the issue we should be dealing with. When you do it, what are the pros and cons of it? Because when you install it, who installs it for you, and how does it work?

I am not a professional, but when you connect the batteries in series, it could cause some danger to the family and the household. So for Solomon Power, once we amend this, but for now, the people who are doing it, I hope they are installing it in a way that it does not cause danger to the family. So once we amend this, then its compliance is what must be addressed.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: My question is almost related to page 14. But I wanted to know the power supplier in terms of the street light because our roads do not have lights. But they say that we will have them. So they say that the Ports Authority and Solomon Power will provide electricity. Is that true? For me, that is the first time I hear that one of Solomon Ports Authority services is providing power. If they will provide it, I want to know.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: In terms of our road in Honiara I think the Ministry of Infrastructure or Town Council should do it. But of course, Solomon Power is not obligated to do it, but it is supporting the work to put lights on the streets. They do not understand too how Solomon Ports will come in as a supplier as you mentioned. But of course our roads must have lights, and some people must do it before the 2023 games.

As the Ministry responsible, we will try as much as possible for the streets to have lights. Whoever is doing that, we should not worry much about it. But we will make it happen.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I think it is important for the Minister to ascertain it. This came up in the inquiry that we had just recently. The question was actually addressed to the Clerk to City Council, when they came up with the plan to prepare Honiara for the Pacific Games. The question was on streets that have no lights, how do we make it? He said Ports Authority will do it. That is why I am asking that question because Solomon Power is here. It looks like we do not know. So anyone of them can do it.

My question is on the table on page 14. The area or sector that I really want is the solar. I am still insisting on it; but when I see energy produced between 2017 to 2021, this one that comes out from Lungga goes up by 3 or 3 point up, but this one in Ranadi solar and independent power producers. In 2017 Ranadi solar is 0.042 and

goes down in 2018 by 0.015 and then 2019 until now I think it is nil. What is really happening? The same goes to independent power producers. I do not know who are at the IPP?. In 2017 we had some energy produced that year from that source. Every year since then is zero. What is the story here?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: I think the issue appeared here is, you know every solar power have monitors. This one monitor is not working but it is functioning. So that one in the record is sort of as if there is nothing in there, the solar power is working.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: I want to ask about those solar that Taiwan gave us in the past. Are they still working? Did Solomon Power involve in monitoring it?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: So the issue of the solar behind, I think, from officials, they have some technical issues and they cannot find the solution for it. So it stays like that until now.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I am looking at the table on page 18, number of customers 2015 to 2021. This is just to underscore the point I made about accessibility. It does not look good when you have the authority, just to increase from 15. I mean you are dealing with a population of more than 700,000 people and this number does not look good. That is my observation.

In fact the number for 2021, almost 80 percent of the number is Honiara and not the provinces. I am wondering where this accessibility mission statement is and how do we catch it. It seems to me that we missing it. It is really slow.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: The answer to that is that you are looking at the figures. This is number of household. It is the number of population that benefits out of this program. The 24,000 is the number of households. The population might be half a million, for example, within this 24,000 households.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: It is good that the Minister made that point. But the 24,000 households is less than a 100,000 people. That is my observation. I still insist that we have not done enough.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: On page 21 on Offshore data backup. Where is the offshore that this data is stored. I initially thought that load shedding is just a short break. I always call the power station at Lungga. I have their number. They advised me to call 166. I was very pleasantly surprised by the tone of the voice of the lady that answers the phone. She was very friendly and very helpful. She had information and when power resumes, she called back to check if power comes back. This is good customer service. I was really very pleasantly surprised by the customer service and I wanted to acknowledge that.

In terms of disclosure, on page 23, on cooperate services, is the sensitivity to gender equality, gender awareness and so forth. I like it that there is training happening. I raised this, I think two years ago or in the last House, when the former CEO from India was there. The Committee were looking at another SIEA Report. It is good that awareness is going on but there must be some reporting as to how many gender-based complaints were raised, lodged and what was done about it. Were they investigated? What is the outcome of the investigations? Those kinds of information will lead to greater accountability and more focused on making sure that workplace is safe for every body, especially our women folk.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: On the first question on offshore thing. It is not here but in Sydney. It is in Sydney to keep everything there. Thank you for acknowledging that gender and as you have said, complaints have been raised but we do not have the report. Thank you for your telling us on what was raised some years back. We have the record for the day to day thing but thank you for acknowledging that.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: On page 22 and I have just going on where the Leader of Opposition had made this observation or what he had said about service or customer service. I would also like to say that I am happy on the customer service. I do not ring a lot to the Lungga Power Station but once or twice they would answer and they were very polite. The customer service is also very good and couple of times I have been there, they were very good.

I would like to know on why they were very good and I see employee by division, one of the highest is customer service. That is a very good investment which the authority had put on customer service. It is where the revenue is, so you must make sure that your customers are happy and so forth. I just want to mentioned that one.

What I would like to ask question on is capital works. I imagine that capital works mostly and probably are projects that are tendered out so staff are not that plenty but maybe the Minister can tell us on whether my understanding is right or not. Because the number of employees on capital works is low.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: Capital Projects, as you have raised in the question, is a team. It is the team that looks after the projects and they are increasing it as of now. Increasing the number of people involved.

Mr SAMMY GALO : Just on page 23, training and development. There is a list of long term and short term training. I believe this is in-house training and just from interest sake. Does the Solomon Power also do internship programs, seeing that we have newly graduates in various fields but related to Solomon Power? Do we have any programs in terms of internship, like for three months or so? The students can be from SINU or other universities who can be trained there.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: We have an in house program, Sol Power.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Point of Order!

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: Sorry South Choiseul, but yes we have a program, an in-house program for two years. Currently, it is an on going program.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Just a last one. On 24. The Ministry of Environment is doing inspection. The Chief Inspector and associate visited the farms at Henderson, Lungga and Honiara power stations but it does not state what they are inspecting and what are some of the outcomes from the inspections. But it is good that they looking for inspection and we assume there are some environmental compliance issues.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: Yes, they made the check incase something is not right there.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): Just on the legal division, High Court. They said that three cases pending, which is back in 2021. The status of the cases and what kind of cases usually reach us at Solomon Power. What sort of cases the legal department ends up with it at High Court?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: The issue which is normally raised there is that sometime is the bills issue. When some people have some issues and result as this. That is the issue of that question you raised. Some people cannot accept some kind of demand.

Page 26 & 27.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: This is mainly on the board of directors. I want to commend the board on the excellent work they do and others who are still staying there.

My question is on the table on page 26 on the five names of the five directors. I think the chairman is current in 2021 and two has been expired and the other two has no replacement. If the Minister can inform the Committee on what was the status of everyone in the table?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: The chairman and director post will be re-advertised. It has been advised and then I think it was taken for signing and the two Ministers decided that they go and re-advertise again for the two other directors.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Firstly, as I said earlier it is a clean audit report and the disclosures are very useful. It is more rather than less information and I think that the authority needs to be commended for.

In the auditors report itself, just one bit of it, which I did not understand, is on page 32. If you go from bottom and going up, it is on 5th paragraph from the bottom going back up. It says 'conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of...'. In the second last sentence, 'and obtains up to the date of Roy Auditor's report'. It is this 'Roy' that I do not understand. Is it just a typo, or does it mean to say my auditor's report?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: According to my officials, that is a typo.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Just a comment from me. I have been through the entire financial part of the audited financial report. As I have said, it is very impressive.

In terms of policy, when there are revaluations and then, of course, transferring the changes that are reflected in the profit, the nature of the business and assets that are revalued are unique to the provision. Land and buildings can be sold in an open market because you can get a price for. But for the valuation of a Lungga power station, such things are not easily sold in the market. So the valuation of those may appear quite high in the books or on a valuer when he looks at its usefulness and so forth.

But if it comes to it, the market may not value it as much. So to the extent that those unique types of assets have values when the revaluation component of them is transferred, it can be a little misleading because authority usually does not give big dividends to the government. So it is safe. But as a matter of principle, I think this policy of revaluation of unique kinds of assets needs to bear that in mind. That is a comment that I wish to make.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: Thank you for the comment. So according to my officials, the value is valid through the replacement asset. But thank you for your views; we noted other things that you have raised for our future improvement.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: : Just to put things into perspective. In terms of other comprehensive income, the revaluation increment for property and equipment is \$71.1 million. The profit is \$74 million. If we are talking about unique types of properties or assets that contribute to this increment, I suspect they would be a significant part of it.

So I am saying that that part is probably not easily realizable. This word may technically means that it could not easily be converted to cash or sold on the market. Because who else would want to buy power stations and run them? So I am just flagging that, and perhaps the accounting policy itself needs to be reviewed to reflect those unique circumstances.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: I think, from the officials, the 71 million is not on the genset. It is the value of land and properties of Solomon Power. Just to make that clarification.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Yes, I understand that, but my point still stands because that is contribution to the income, and so the extent to which the profit that is made is reflected, not all of this, but the part of it that is comprised or unique asserts that are not easily realizable to that extent could look a little bit deceptive that it is high unnecessarily. Any way, we leave it as that.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: On those finances, I also want to join the Leader of Opposition and the mover of the Motion to also commend Solomon Power for the report that we are looking at, the 2021 Report. It reflects well and you deserve to be commended, as well as the Auditor General that helped us to look at the responsibility where Solomon Power Management and Board of Directors take on behalf on the Government as a State Own Enterprise.

We need it, and if that was translated to other State Own Enterprises, that is the trend that we want to encourage. I just want to go back again to the comments and sentiments raised earlier on vision and mission of this State Own Enterprise. I think it is a matter of policy for the Minister to look at and take note of that. We have a State Own Enterprise that have its mandate on behalf of the Government to deliver. We need to look at those things. Like I did mention in my intervention and contributions in the morning, that the profit I myself see it, should not come to the government, the dividend. Let us put it into the projects so that it is in line with the mandate we have given the Solomon Islands representing government implementing the policy of serving our people and give them access to power. That is all I want to make in my comment.

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: I think that is an interesting proposal. I think about it as well. Those State Own Enterprises establish to deliver specific services like SIEA, for example, is power, and Ports is transport etc. . We appreciate them giving us dividends for the revenue. That is the requirement of the State Own Enterprises Act. It is like that so we require them to make profit and profit seems to be the focus of their operations, and that is good. They must operate profitably.

There is an extension of government to deliver a specific service so I think the observation made need probably amendment to the State Own Enterprise Act; so that once they make profits, pull more lines; once they make more profits, build a wharf in Temotu, something like that. That is an observation which we are seriously looking at and something that needs amendments to the State Own Enterprise Acts to be the objective of our various SOEs.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I am in page 3 of those statements. Probably it is something the finance officials will respond to it, but I am looking at P&L comprehensive income statement. On expenses, there is this item administration. There is reference to Note 10. You will find Note 10 on page 49. of the total administration, more than 50 percent of the amount is accounted for by personnel. In other words, it is the staff. the breakdown for this is on Note 12. The breakdown mentions administration. It would be really helpful if we know the breakdown of the personnel. In here, it only states administration. I am quite confused. This is just an observation. Maybe the finance people have some explanation.

The other is on page 13, which is the explanatory notes to the item on depreciation and amortization. I cannot trace the \$67,663,604. I would like to ask two things on the note. Note 13 is on property, plant and equipment. At the top, buildings is \$189,664, 096. Of course amounts change as transactions happen throughout the year. I would like to know if there is a break down on office buildings and staff housing. I cannot identify that. This component comprises of more than 16 percent of this piece of asset. The other thing is, at the top, generators, plants and equipment distribution. I think this are assets that generate power. That comprises of less than 60 percent.

My question is on the carrying amounts. What is this carrying amount?

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: That is exactly what I would like to raise. It is more of a technical thing. The finances know more. They can explain that well. We have the details of it. It is not in this report but in the assets registrar, it has the information for the question that the honourable MP for Small Malaita had raised. We will provide a more comprehensive detail and we will send it to everyone.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): Thank you Minister for your hard work. It is hard work answering the questions. But maybe this one you can also add to this note that might come. It is on page 47 on the table as what is described here as the contractual maturities of financial liabilities. It seems that there are liabilities of Solomon Power or SIEA. Here, there is one label, which is Solomon Islands Government Loan. It is for this that I would like to know. What is this? Did you loan from government? The amount is totaling some \$20million, if I am reading it correctly. Just wanting to know on the government loan.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA: This is a lending which World Bank gave to government and the government gave it to Solomon Power to use it.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Honourable members, I think we have exhausted all comments on this and therefore-the Committee has considered the Report 2021 National Parliament 2022 Paper No.33.

With that, I therefore conclude proceedings of the Committee of the Whole and mover of the Motion will report to Parliament when the House resumes.

(Committee of the Whole House is dissolved)

Parliament is resumed

Hon MATTHEW WALE: I wish to report to the House that the Solomon Islands Electricity Annual Report 2021 (National Parliament Paper No.33 of 2022) has passed through Committee of the Whole House.

The SPEAKER: Honorable Members, the Member of Aoke/Langalanga has reported according to Standing Order 18(2) that the Committee of the Whole House has considered the report.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: I move that Parliament do now adjourn.

Question put and agreed to

(Parliament adjourned at 3.03pm)

[Edited]



Eleventh Parliament

Sixth Meeting

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

Monday, 24 July 2023

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

(Subject to Revision)

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**Monday, 24 July 2023**

The Speaker, Mr Patteson John Oti, took the Chair at 09:51.

Prayers.

Business of the House

ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Minister for Infrastructure Development, Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, Minister for Traditional Government, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs, Minister for Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification, Marovo, North West Guadalcanal, North New Georgia, North Guadalcanal, West Makira, Ulawa/Ugi, South New Georgia/Rendova/Tetepare, West New Georgia/Vona Vona, and West Kwaio.

PRESENTATIONS OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

- Report on The Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023 (National Parliament Paper No.20 of 2023) by Hon. John Maneniaru, Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee.

Bills

THE HONIARA CITY (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 2023

Second Reading

Hon MATTHEW WALE (*Aoke/Langalanga—Leader of Opposition*) (09:52): Thank you and good morning Mr. Speaker. Firstly. I would like to thank the Honorable Minister for bringing this Bill before the House. The overall policy purpose of this Bill is a highly desirable one and something that has eluded governments, both at the national and city level, since independence. It is therefore commendable that government is seeking legislative responses to enable the city government to clean up the city, not just for Pacific Games, of course, but also for the long term.

We all must take responsibility for Honiara City and treated with the pride and respect and care befitting a capital city. Piles of uncollected rubbish, including old vehicles, are all too common and litter our neighborhoods and streets. The roads and drains are filled with plastics after every rainfall. People throwing rubbish out of vehicles or as they walk along the streets is sadly an all too common site.

Betel nut spitting on footpaths, out of cars, on to roads, even at building walls, are a constant reminder of the disrespect shown to Honiara City public spaces. It is clear that most people who engage in these practices do not feel any sense of ownership of Honiara City.

It is sad the issues Honiara faced with waste are also faced in all our other provincial towns, and I think perhaps in many of our villages. Waste production and management is a national challenge that requires a robust national policy response.

The loggers, for example, often abandoned old equipment at log camps or ponds. I have seen similar practices on Rennell from mining. This practice has attracted consequences and the communities are left with waste that is often beyond their ability to manage.

With regards to Honiara City, not all of these require a legislative response. But they do point to a decay in the city that must be addressed. On the other hand, city administration over so long has been very weak, disorganized, ineffective and grossly unfunded. Rubbish collections has for a long time been unreliable and inconsistent.

The rubbish dump has not attracted the level of funding investment needed to support a growing city. The need for a new better planned managed rubbish dump has long been a pressing one but has not been met with the urgency required.

There is this perception that waste is waste to be disposed off and not to be further tampered with. The city's problems and challenges with waste management is reflective of our society's attitude to waste. Fundamental change will undoubtedly require a cocktail of inventions, including legislations such as this.

The city administration that he has lacked the legal teeth to enforce its ordinances that could result in a clean and orderly city or at least contribute to it. The imminent arrival of guests for the Pacific Games in November has given this need much greater urgency. So this Bill is a response to that need.

The Bill's object aimed to respond to that need by empowering city law enforcement to issue on-the-spot fines and under the administrative penalty scheme as an alternative to prosecution of offenders. And also by providing for the appointment, functions and powers of city law enforcement officers and by enabling the City Council detained persons.

The Bill has divisions. Division 1 and 2 enable infringement notices to be issued and fixed penalties. Division 3 empowers law enforcement officers and provides for the conducts for their work. Division 4 empowers detention of suspects by the City Council. Division 5 provides for the prosecutions of offences where an accused has not taken advantage of the administrative penalty scheme.

I wish to make few observations on the policy choices made in the Bill and whether they are the best options for achieving the stated objects of the Bill at this point in time.

Firstly, on 6, the new part 10(a). Division 2, 55(f)(3). This provisions may be rendered impractical in certain situations. The term use is on or before 12 pm on the day on which the infringement is given. This terms presents problems. There is no provision for installment payment of penalties over an extended period of time to make it affordable for Solomon Islanders .

As a principle, penalties must be within affordability of the community, otherwise the Bill will result in more offences going to prosecutions and likely imprisonment time. So we may be condemning more people to imprisonment just because of that phrase.

55(f)(2) makes it clears that the infringement may be issued within 14 days of the offending. 55(3) then requires that the penalty be paid in full by 12pm on the day the infringement notice is issued. If the infringement notice is issued at 11:45am at KGV1 the suspect or accused has 15 minutes to pay the penalty or the case is referred for prosecution. Of course, if he has the money on him right then, he could pay right away to the Law Enforcement Officer and get a receipt for it.

Law Enforcement Officers are empowered by this Bill to do that, but what happens in the situation that the suspect receives an infringement notice after 12pm? The current wording does not allow for payments to be made after 12pm on the day the infringement notice is issued. The suspect cannot pay the next day either, as that is not provided for. The matter would be referred for prosecution. There is no option. This is unnecessary at best. It probably stems from a misunderstanding of the term spot fine, to mean must be paid in full right away. However, spot fine may also mean that the fine is imposed immediately but could be paid by installment over a reasonable period of time. It would still serve its deterrence effect. This payment of penalty on or before 12pm requirement coupled with the lack of any provision for an installment payment scheme will result in an unnecessarily high number of prosecutions. These are unnecessarily hurdles to the pursuit of the objects of the Bill. They are also unnecessary hurdles to compliance by people who are otherwise law abiding. It is best that 55(f) is amended to avoid this problems.

55(g) X an advantage of an administrative penalty scheme such as is contained in this Bill is that the payment of the full amount of the fixed penalty is not admission of guilt and is not recorded against the offender. On the other hand, this leaves the scheme vulnerable to repeat offenders because of the lack of deterrence from a record of offending. If an accused is a repeat offender who for some reason ends up being prosecuted, the Court cannot hold his record of offending against him in

sentencing. Each time he would be treated as a first time offender. I am not sure this is a good policy choice.

55(j)(1) the Minister is empowered to set maximum fixed penalties for offences of a class of offences. In democracy, it is desirable that elected assemblies create offences and set the maximum penalties applicable. It is not good practice for one person, whether elected or unelected, to be setting maximum penalties. I note that this provision is put in there because we do not yet know what new offences and the City Council may create. However, I would propose that this power be removed from the Minister and given to the City Council that such maximum penalties are prescribed by the City Council or by Parliament in a Bill such as this.

55(j) 3B provides for a Law Enforcement Officer to receive a fine and issue a receipt for it. I hope that this does not become breeding ground for corruption. I note that there are offences for attempting to engage in corrupt conduct by both a Law Enforcement Officer and/or a suspect. Let us hope it works. I would prefer that law enforcement officers are not at all involved in the receiving of penalty fines. It is an unnecessary temptation that ought to be eliminated from their work. If 55(f)(3) is fixed as I proposed earlier in giving ample time and installment payments, it would render this particular provision unnecessary for law enforcement officers to be involved in receiving fines.

Division 3(55)(m)(1) four issues require clarification. First, the construction. The wording is 'the Minister may acting on the advice of'. Usually the term 'acting on the advice of' is used to compel a person to act as advised. He has no discretion in the matter. Here, however, the word 'may' is added before that term, clearly giving discretion to the Minister in the exercise of his powers to a point. If the policy choice is that the Minister should have discretion in the matter of appointment of law enforcement officers, then perhaps the term 'acting on the advice of' should be replaced with 'after consulting with'. So it is poor construction and just for consistency in our laws, I think it would be good to amend it.

Secondly, why is the policy choice to give the Minister discretion in the matter of making appointment of law enforcement officers. Under what circumstances would the Minister refuse or decline to make an appointment necessitating the discretion? If the Minister should remain the appointing authority, then he must act as advised and have no discretion. This is a poor policy choice.

Thirdly, why is the Minister the right or the best person to make the appointment of law enforcement officers? It would be far better that the Minister is not involved in the appointment of law enforcement officers. Why the need for an appointing authority outside the city council administration? The City Clerk is the administrative head of the City Council, he should be the appointing authority.

Fourthly, in making appointments of law enforcement officers, the Minister receives advice from the City Council. that is the current wording. how is this expected to work in practice? Because that would be the full council. Usual recruitment involves advertisement of positions, receipt and assessment of applications, a shortlist is created, interviews are conducted, perhaps by a panel, that then recommends offers and awards and appointments are made. How is the full City Council comprising the elected and unelected members? How is the full City Council expected to play an effective role in this process culminating in the advice going to the Minister?

Further, this runs the risk of politicizing the selection and appointment process as various Councilors may have their preferences. Recruitment ought to be left entirely at the administrative level and to the Clerk.

55(m)(2) and (3) stipulates the requirements to be met by prospective law enforcement officers. Guadalcanal Province raised the need for ethnic balance across all provinces in the recruitment or representation in the law enforcement unit. The women also raised the need to require clean criminal record of applicants to be submitted as a requirement in the law. These requirements are not in this Bill. (55)(m)(4) provides for some law enforcement officers to be engaged under construct and we were informed by the Clerk that this would be representatives in our various neighborhood communities. A contracted law enforcement officer under this category maybe paid a percentage of the penalties received by the City Council from infringement notices issued by him. In other words, he will get a commission out of the penalties that City Council receive from the work he did.

On one hand, this is a creative choice to incentivize law enforcement officers to be very alert and be effective and not fall to bribes. On the other hand, this incentive scheme may result in contracted law enforcement officers becoming over zealous in pursuit of the commission and issuing infringement notices unnecessarily. This power can easily be abused even on any minor arguments.

We have a big problem with corruption at levels in our country and this lends itself vulnerable to abuse, and at this time, I would posit that it is not suited to our context. It is better that this provision is removed entirely and all law enforcement officers, permanent, appointed or contracted are remunerated as other staff of the City.

55(n) sets out the powers of law enforcement officers. The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force noted that these powers are broad and the powers of enter and search, seize and retain property do not require a Magistrates Warrant. The RSIPF can only exercise its similar powers under authorization by a Magistrates Warrant. I note that 55(n)(6) and (7) may mitigate this. However, given the likely infringement of individual rights, 55(n) overall needs to be better constructed to clearly state that

certain actions can only be taken by law enforcement officers under a warrant issued by the Magistrate's Court. We want a clean, orderly city with a compliant citizenry but not at the cost of the erosion of civil liberties.

55(o)(1) The Law Reform Commission suggested that the daily reports by law enforcement officers be given to the head of that unit who will then report weekly to the Clerk to make for easier administration. It is important that the head of law enforcement review these daily reports and only raises in his own weekly report matters of weight that require the attention of the Clerk. The current wording is everyday the law enforcement officer must give it directly to the Clerk the reports on the individual activities done.

Division 4 deals with the detention of persons. 55(r)(1)(a), the Magistracy submitted that the Bill specify how long a person maybe held in detention. As it is currently worded in the Bill, it is open ended. 55(r)(1)(b) & (2)(b) ensures that the detention facility has the highest standards under the UN Nelson Mandela Rules, the entire set of rules. In the event that any part of these rules are not compiled with, a liability is created on the City Council. The Law Reform Commission submitted that perhaps 55(r)(2)(b) be reworded to say that only applicable parts of those rules apply as determined from time to time by the Minister. And 55 (r)(3) reinforces this issue.

55(t) Does the list of visitors exclude those not mentioned such as relatives, lawyers and so forth?

And why is a visitor required to report to the Minister.

Division 5 deals with prosecution of offences. In 55(u), prohibits prosecution of offences with the Clerk's approval. The Magistracy suggested that perhaps a prescribed form should be used for this approval to ensure it is in writing and needs some basic standard requirements. Why should the Clerk be involved in approving prosecution of cases at all. The Clerk will be under immense pressure from his political master to prosecute some cases for whatever reason. This is a very real possibility given our political culture. Such a decision ought to be given to the head of legal division or law enforcement and prosecution decisions should be based entirely on evidence.

All Stakeholders that appeared before the Bills Committee were not consulted on the proposal contained in this Bill and expressed disappointment. These included the Law Reform Commission, Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Correctional Services of Solomon Islands, Magistracy, Women Groups, and Taxi Operators Association.

The Law Reform Commission proposed that perhaps the Bill be amended to remove entirely Divisions 4 & 5. Given the short time to the Games, the pressure on resources, need for recruitment and appropriate training, it is sensible to leave the functions in Divisions 4 & 5 to the Correction Service and the Royal Solomon Islands Police, but that City Council collaborate with them closely. The proposal in those two Divisions are too far reaching to be rushed upon the City Council. The removal of Divisions 4 & 5 should not affect the city's efforts towards the Games.

The penalties standardization. The penalties in this Bill are inconsistent with the general scheme of penalties in our various legislations, where the base is 5,000 penalty units is equivalent to 6 months imprisonment. In this Bill 2,000 penalty units is 6 months in imprisonment. 20,000 penalty units is equivalent is 5 years instead of 2 years. The 50,000 units equivalent is 10 years. However, 100,000 penalty units would be the equivalent 10 years if it was revised and so forth. The penalties in the Bill is not correct. This is the same issue for other penalties contained in the Bill. It probably is just a problem with the drafters not having recourse to standardized penalty scheme in our laws. I hope there is such a tool readily accessible to drafters. Further, it is also likely a result of the lack of wider consultation on this Bill that would have picked up on this important issue.

Let me conclude. Overall, the policy intention to clean up Honiara City is commended, whether in its current form that Bill will achieve this in time for the Pacific Games is doubtful. The capacity work and adequate investment of funds are required at the City Council level. This will take some time, necessarily. The Bill requires a number of amendments to make for an effective response and avoid some pitfalls, and improve some of the policy choices. The number of amendments required would substantively alter the Bill.

Detention and prosecution of offenses are perhaps better left to existing institutions in our criminal justice system to handle. An amended Bill ought to be limited to granting powers for the issue of infringement notices and setting fixed penalties for offenses. That is why you will note in the Bills Committee report the recommendations that, erring on the side of prudence, that the Bill be withdrawn in its entirety and redrafted for submission to Parliament again soon.

With those few comments, I will resume my seat.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU (*West Are Are*) (10:22): Thank you Mr Speaker. At the outset, let me thank the Members of the Bills and Legislation Committee and the Secretariats of Parliament for helping the Committee in its inquiry and consultation. I would also like to thank the Ministry, especially the hardworking Minister, for this Bill, whose objects are very clear and had already been highlighted and alluded to by the Leader of the Opposition in his contribution to the Motion.

I would also like to thank the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the entire staff who have put the Bill together, and I also extend my gratitude to the AG Chambers for the drafters who have helped to put forward the Bill that is before the House.

I also want to sincerely thank the stakeholders who also come before the Committee. Despite the short notice, they made an effort to attend, and I would like to register my appreciation as Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee to the various stakeholders who have appeared before the Committee in its inquiry on the Bill.

As already alluded to by the Leader of the Opposition, the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023 is a good one. We want our city to be clean and green. More so, when we are preparing to host the Pacific Games, which it will go down in our history as a nation where we have participated in regional competition but yet to have the opportunity to host the Pacific Games. So in terms of our preparations, I am glad that the government, through the Ministry of Home Affairs, has worked very hard to put this Bill forward .

At this juncture, I would also like to sincerely thank the Honiara City Major, Clerk, and staff of the City Council for also working very hard for this event, which this Bill would like to support.

The intention and object of the Bill is clear. We are all citizens that love our country and this city. We will have no problem with the intention and the object of the Bill. Three of those objects that give rise to this amendment. Firstly, enabling the issue of infringement notices to persons who allegedly commit offences under the ordinance for the payment of fixed penalties instead of being charged and prosecuted for the offence and a penalty that may be impose on the conviction being impose on those persons. That is the first objective. Second, providing for the appointment, function and powers of the Law Enforcement Officers. Thirdly, enabling the City Council to detain persons. These are good objects and that give the rise to this amendment Bill.

Cleanliness and to have a clean and green Honiara City is indeed a noble desire and our goal. For us, it is a good dream to have and to put all our energy behind. Where we live and dwell everyday in our city, represents our various society and particularly our attitude. Our mind as Solomon Islanders, indigenious and those that we give them citizenship, it is our town and when we walk around, it reflects us. You go to other countries, they are proud of their cities and well and also reflected their attitude, characters. Honiara city belongs to us.

This Bill tried to remind us that there is space for us to be proud and be happy of our city when it is clean and green. I really like this. It has been an initiative that has already being alluded to by the Leader of Opposition that the City Councilors in and out have tried their best. As Leaders of the Government, we must to make

Honiara a City that we will always be proud of. We are proud of it despite its phase, but because of the Games we need to put our acts together so that we present a city that will host our visitors.

When I think about Honiara city and the statement that says 'one of the dirtiest cities in the region', is this true or not? Those of you have gone overseas every time will help us understand this. Few times I went overseas I see that, yes, we accept this. It is our city but it is dirty. One that carry that name in our region is good for us to wakeup to that call to help and ensure that our city makes us proud. Yes it is dirty. We have tried but what is wrong? We are not dirty like that. Our household are not dirty like that. Even some of our provinces are very clean. So I reflect on those and ask you what is wrong? What do we do wrong and failed that is why our city is like that and have that problem?; Hence this Bill for us to actually address cleanliness in our city. We have this piece of legislation the, amendment Bill so that it will help us to look carefully at those who break the laws. The benefits, advantages, and disadvantages of this one were alluded to by the Leader of the Opposition, and I agree with those interventions. Whilst we make laws, regulations, and even ordinances, they are good and an option to achieve our goal of a clean Honiara City.

We just blame our attitudes, the residences of Honiara. If we have good attitudes, the place would be clean and green. Something is wrong with those of us living in Honiara. Some of our provincial headquarters are very clean. Legislation can help, but as citizens, we must change. It is an option. How do we start? Maybe we start in our households. We need to start teaching our children. We start at home so that children know where to throw rubbish.

So let us seriously look at how we start from here. Whilst we have the Games in front of us, I agree with the Leader, let us take it beyond the Games and make our city a city that we can be proud of and happy about because it is clean and green. So it goes back to the household, residents of Honiara, through a program policy of the government and Honiara City Council. Let us start educating by teaching the households so that they can be able to look after their houses, and then they what to do when they go out.

I think that is an option that we should look at. I know it has been highlighted before and even on the floor of parliament, but we need to take action. I think it is now time; we have finally reached the point where we will take heed of our responsibilities and start to talk about and teach them. It should extend to schools, like the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, our schools, kindergartens, and every school throughout our city and country for that matter. They must learn this and practice it so that when they go, when the children are grown and have left schools,

and when they reach our age, there is no problem. And every child will have the habit, which will be passed on. It must be alive and active in schools.

I think that is something that we need to look into and will need the work. The government and the Honiara City Council, as I have alluded to, they have to put something in place, a policy and not just a law. It is one option, and we add it to be a part of us, part of our family, and part of the society that we live in and the city. We start cleanliness in our homes, and then to our city, in schools, in sports grounds, church facilities, clinics, hospitals, sea, river, road, all the places that we live. This is so that when we go to those places, we should know and not to throw rubbish everywhere. I would just like to highlight that, but we have gone wrong somewhere and our attitude is not in line with what we desire here, which is clean and green Honiara City.

I would like to thank the government for the Safe and Green Games Strategic Framework. It is a very nice one and it contains the actions, the plans and the tasks, which we need to engage in as we prepare for the Pacific Games. It highlighted well what we need to do. I would again like to say thank you to the authorities, government, City Council, those stakeholders who are involved in this framework. It even also has its own budget of \$446,201,639 to implement this Safe and Green Games Strategic Framework. I am really happy about this. It also has its own resources. This framework contains the various tasks for us to achieve so that we can achieve the safe and clean Pacific Games 2023. It details the management plan for our city.

Secondly, beautification program, tree planting and landscaping, Honiara amenities and other services, safety and security services, health services, strategic governance and coordination. The Communication Strategy and budget, which I had mentioned already. It is the implementation that the stakeholders came and particularly, GSIC and we have asked them on where they have reached now because all of us want to make sure that we are on schedule, on course for this hosting of this Game. This one is very important to our Committee because we are not really involved directly. If we are up to date with this one and on schedule it gives my Committee happiness.

It is a bit confusing when we ask them updates but we hope the professionals and our technical people appointed to be chairman, vice chairman who are responsible for main tasks and activities that I have mentioned, are up to par.

Second, when we asked about the budget, if they had received it or had received half of it or three quarters of it. This is almost \$500 million to use for the implementation for the Pacific Games. They had not answered us well on that. I am highlighting this so that the Minister of Finance hears the Chairman of Bills and

Legislation Committee. When I enquire and consult with our stakeholders, they did not really answer a satisfactory answer. This worries my Committee. These things must come so we start to do the work in terms of cleaning and preparing of facilities and amenities. It is less than four months left. All of us agreed that it is less than four months, and they said that they will do it. I hope they can do miracles.

I know that Solomon Islands, we are good at last minute and we are effective and efficient at last minute but I am just sharing things that we really want. If we can be on top of things, it would be good. There is one of the thing I want to elaborate on, and the Leader of Opposition already talked on, is consultation. A lot of the stakeholders told the Committee that they were not consulted. Stakeholders must participate in the process of making legislation Bills for our country. The host Ministry must invite them. I also found out that even when we put their names, it is the junior officers that report on behalf of the senior officials.

A problem we are facing is reporting back to the Committee. When officers went back to their offices, they never report back on what the Committee requesting. It is important that stakeholders, when we are making the Bills and law for our country, we must involve them.

On this particular Bill, the taxi drivers who represent the taxi and bus companies told us they are not invited. These are the people who will be penalized heavily because their passengers will spit betel nut and throwing rubbish when they are on the road.

We will not catch them because they have dark glass. You take their number plate and report them to the Ministry of Finance and Treasury and they can track their TIN Numbers. It is a big worry for them because it can close down their companies within months, because the fine is not yet determined here, but if it is higher and how many times a day they will be fined, is quite serious for them and also important. If anyone of them is angry and abused an enforcement officer, the fine is 20,000 penalty units with 10 years imprisonment. If an enforcement officer asks for a fine of \$1,000, that is a big a lot of money.

So consultation is important and my Committee found out that those that came before the Committee said that they have not been consulted. That is what I want to discourage. I want us to encourage us to work on it, especially our hosting Ministry.

I will touch on some Divisions in the Bill because the Leader of Opposition clearly presented it. I just want to go on to Division 1, the preliminary matters for part X(a)(55)(d) - monitoring of enforcement of the Act and Ordinances. The City Council will supervise and monitor this enforcement of the Act and Ordinances. Do they have the capacity? Already, the stakeholders that have submitted their written

submission to the Committee stated that Honiara City Council will not have the capacity to implement this Act with the intention of making sure the city is clean and green before the Pacific Games. That, we need to note. Capacity, human resources, and funds. The City Council still relies on the national government to provide funds to them for this task and activity. My what! How are we going to deal with this, City Council?

Then, the timing for the Pacific Games is just less than four months away. What are we going to do in terms of this Bill and what it asks if we pass it? Even if there is recruitment and training. How are we going to train these people because they will write reports and act as magistrates? Is the Honiara City Council going to achieve that training within the time period that we have before hosting the game? After time, I do not have any problem with that, which I wish to highlight.

On 55(f), The Issue of Infringement Notice. Some of our people who are mentally ill, if they commit these offenses. How does an enforcement officer deal with them? In terms of Division 2, it does not really clarify that. Are the law enforcement officers going to allow these people to go freely? How are they going to make decision in terms of this? Also those with disabilities who are usually in wheel chairs on the road. What if the law enforcement officer issues the infringement notice to them because the law enforcement officer has jealousy toward them? Where will these people get the money?

I would like to talk on 55(j), on fixed penalties. I already highlighted it, and the Leader has already spoken on it. The penalties are yet to come. The Minister will set the maximum penalties, and I agree with the Leader, that we give power to just one person. We hope that good people will look after these responsibilities, so that when we give power to them, they will make unilateral decisions.

We had it before, but now we are having problems with it. Because of the influence and some of the decisions that our decision-makers make, we sometimes disagree with them. And that is what I would like to highlight here before the Minister prescribes the maximum fixed penalties. So it is good that he consults with Honiara City Council because that is their work to make those decisions. So I agree with the Leader of the Opposition on that.

In terms of 55(j)(4) says 'law enforcement officers receives full amount'. With due respect to our officers, when you exit the market, they will ask for \$10. I sometimes question whether this money reaches the top, or are there additional receipts that they duplicate and issue to us?

I commend the HCC for trusting their officers. I for one, I do not trust them. I have the mindset of Chinese people. It is hard. Even family members, I have to be careful with who to entrust with collecting fees.

When we legislate, these are things from our practical experience that we must carefully look at. Minister, I trust you. You are the only honest and trusted Minister. I do not trust you if you already used it and another person come to replace you. So when we are legislating, then these are the concerns. Do not collect the money and put it in your pocket. So I just highlight or reiterate that point.

55(l) – 'offences for person who damage or alter infringement notice'. It started with 2,000 penalty units and imprisonment for six months.

The people, the mothers and fathers are now really struggling. We are all struggling to make ends meet, feed our household and extended families, our Wantoks system. When we legislate, let us see that the penalties are reasonable and affordable and for us to deter and start to educate our people into good habits and characters. I think that is important. We do not just put in figures where we ourselves do not afford it. What if it is our children that throw rubbish? What are you going to do? I think you will call the City Clerk, Mayor or maybe the Minister because the provision is there. Those people are the ones we can call and they will give the decision. That is normal we do not deny it. And so let us legislate and make law for the future. Make a good one so that it will not come for amendment.

55(m) - Appointment of the Enforcement Officers. This is okay, and the Leader has talked on that. That is an interesting one. Submissions have reached the Committee and highlighted issues like, where these people be trained? The recruitment of these officers will be done in what ways? Which institutions will these officers come out from? SINU or those technical school? Are they going to learn how to write report and then become magistrate? That has been submitted to us. How long will they be trained? What qualifications will they carry? Even for them to start, the minimum qualification is what? Form 3? Form 5? Form 6? Form 7? But we know that these people will write reports. It means that they must have certificates, maybe diploma. Many people have educational papers but do not know how to write reports. That is an issue; but then what was highlighted is, where are they going to be trained?

It is not clear as well the conditions and criteria to recruit the enforcement officers. A lot of police officers who were terminated from the police force are now just security guards. Why were they terminated? Are they sacked? Then we recruit them in another place? Those things are not clear as to where and who we recruit. This is important because we will trust these people who will be dealing with our people. More so, our people who will come from our provinces and rural villages, particularly here in Guadalcanal. It is very, very important for us to look at Law Enforcement officers and what kind of criteria and conditions are involved in selection and appointment. And it is good for the Clerk to have all the powers.

55(q) - Offenses relating to law enforcement officers. The penalties are very high, and they are 50,000, imprisonment for 10 years, or both. 50,000 units or imprisonment for 10 years in the other section. 50,000 units or imprisonment for 10 years. Every 50,000 is here, and it goes down to 20,000 penalty units, imprisonment for five years, or both. These are offenses relating to law enforcement officers.

These are no small amounts. The units are equal to \$20,000 for 20,000 units and \$50,000 for 50,000 units plus the years of imprisonment, and the Leader has highlighted that they are inconsistent with our penalties. I agree with the Leader, and I would like to submit that we should have another look into it so that things are consistent first, and second, it is something that we could afford or catch up to.

The problem with this is, is that it does not give installments. There is no provision, for example, of paying \$1,000 for two weeks, \$500 this week, and another \$500 next week. This does not give any chances. You pay from your pocket, and that is a strong one. It is good because we want people to not throw trash. We want our city to be clean. But the penalty is another thing.

That is on penalties, but it relates to the enforcement officer. If the minister comes and puts the penalties for the people who are throwing rubbish on top of this, it will be good.

I will comment on Division 4 - detention of persons. In 55(r), 'City Council may detain person'. We asked them as to how is this project going to start? They said that they would convert a room. No! Detention! and in 55(r)(2)(b), it says 'United Nations standard minimum rules for treatment of prisoners'. I was scared when I heard this. But you said you would convert a room; will that fit UN standards? No! This is serious! I know that the Ministry and City Council know, but these are standards. They are not small things. Detention center; it is not clear. It does not say anything about detention centers for females, males, or children. It is not clearly stated in this Bill. It should! Are you going to put everyone in one room? And then the question that the Leader of the Opposition asked was, for how long are you going to detain them? And that is a point that I would like to highlight and reiterate here. It also makes mention of our constitution of z Solomon Islands. 55 (r)(3), the manner of construction of the City Council's detention facility must be to a standard and in a manner that enables the City Council to comply with Subsection 2', which is on the top, the UN Standard. The timing there. Can we achieve this for Pacific Games? No! For our long term and so forth, when we implement the Act, yes, but this one is important.

Certainly, for the UN Standard, those who go to prison, their food is more better than us. I heard that they are really eating well. The Minister can confirm that to us, because the minimum meal, you have milo, sugar and there are measurements to

it. How many biscuits to have, like if one packet of biscuit does not meet the weight then you had to put two. Someone said to me 'and even my friend went to prison for manslaughter then he came to me and I asked him if he was released and he said yes. They usually called me coach, so he said coach I want to go back inside'. He is an educated person. He got a bachelors degree and he said he wants to go back inside. So I asked him why. He said that it is in there that the food is really good.

So detention center, Minister and your PS must look at this but we have already put United Nation Standard in the detention center. So those things might also put demand on this to achieve it.

The visitors, I agree with the Leader of Opposition, those people we have put in, they will have pressure. We must allow doctors to come as their sugar level will go up. They will also need the priest to come to pray for them. Family members will also be needed as you know people who go to prison, it is all of us who wants to go for a visit. These are things which are not really clear and not provided for as the Bill is concerned.

On Division 5(55)(u) approval to prosecute, it is with one person and they had put the Clerk here. With our politics, if he is a friend to the Mayor, with due respect, is in trouble, he will go to the Clerk and the Clerk is someone who is appointed and he will be sweating to make a decision, which is fair and just when the pressure comes to him. This is the risk that I would like to highlight inside this 55(u).

55(v) – 'law enforcement officer may charge and prosecute'. This is like the Magistrate. so their training, How will they be trained so that they represent their clients like in the Magistrate? The training is quite important and it is not particularly provided for inside the Bill.

The protection of the officers on the liability, the Leader had already highlighted in 68(b) liability to Honiara City Council. These people will make Honiara City Council to always pay. It is important when we leave liability like this to the officers, their negligence is paid for by the Honiara City Council.

The recommendations of the Committee is in the report, already highlighted by the Leader in his intervention. There are 14 recommendations and 14th recommended that we do this properly, so that it comes back to us to look at it properly. The amendment are important. That is few recommendations of the Bills and Legislation Committee. Because of the number of recommendations, the amendments recommended to be made to this Bill and the effect this would have on structure of the Bill, the committee further recommends that the Bill be withdrawn in its entirety and submitted with these changes. That is the submission as per recommendation 14, from the Bills and Legislation Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity given to me to debate. I resume my seat.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Mr. Speaker, I move that the debate on the question be now adjourn until the next sitting day..

Question put and agreed to

(Debate on the Bill adjourned)

Motions

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: I move that parliament do now adjourn.

Question put and agreed to

(Parliament adjourned at 11.08am)

[Edited]



Eleventh Parliament

Sixth Meeting

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

Tuesday, 25 July 2023

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

(Subject to Revision)

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NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**Tuesday, 25 July 2023**

The Speaker, Mr Patteson John Oti, took the Chair at 09:42.

Prayers.

Business of the House

ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, Minister for Mines Energy and Rural Electrification, North West Guadalcanal, Central Honiara, North New Georgia, West Makira, Ulawa/Ugi, Savo/Russells, and West Kwaio.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

- Solomon Power Annual Report 2022 (National Parliament Paper No.21 of 2023)

STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Bills

THE HONIARA CITY (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 2023

Second Reading

The SPEAKER: Honorable Members, debate on the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023 continues and concludes today.

Members may speak on the principles of this Bill, and in so doing, may I kindly remind Members to comply with the rules of debate set out in our Standing Orders. The floor is now therefore open for debate.

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE (*East Choiseul—Prime Minister*) (9 :45): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the floor of Parliament.

Before we adjourned yesterday, we listened to debates on the other side of the House and the presentation by the Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee. And I take it that, that is the position that side of the House takes and recommends, that the Bill be withdrawn. That is their recommendation.

I just want to inform the House, that after consulting the Cabinet and the Ministry responsible for the Bill, the government will not withdraw this Bill. We will go all the way with it. And as the leading statement made by the Chair and Leader of the

Opposition is that they fully support the intention of the Bill. I think what they are really concerned about is are the practical issues that they have raised. We have noted that.

If we confine this Bill, there seem to be that what is probably driving some of the thinking that come up here for us to withdraw this Bill, is that there will be a very short time for us to prepare to implement this in order to address the cleaning of the town for the Pacific Games. The Bill is not for that sole purpose. It is actually for us to come up with the measures to address the city going forward, beyond the 2023 Pacific Games.

We note 14 recommendations that the Bills and Legislation Committee has raised. If we strictly follow the procedures, that really the response from the Ministry should come first, as that is normally the procedure, but we have never done that. Almost every Bills that come before the House, when the Bills and Legislation Committee come up with the report, really the responsible Minister should respond to the recommendations of the report first and the report of the government should also be available for Members of Parliament to read first. That has been the processes that we have followed in the past when I was a Permanent Secretary as well. That has sort of fade away and so what we have left of course is the report of Bills and Legislation Committee and the House does not have the benefit of looking at the response by the sponsoring Ministry. So as it stands and obviously without the response of the government, we will come up with those kinds of conclusion like that.

We appreciate and fully note that but we will take the opportunity when the Minister rounds up the debate. He will respond to all the recommendations and issues that are raised by the Bills and Legislation Committee on this report, so that you can see the intentions of the government on this one and to smooth out the fears that we have.

So that is how we will approach that. The Bill is still in the process being passed. So the process still continues. So during the course of the Second Reading and of course the Committee of the Whole House, when the Clauses are looked at closely Clause by Clause, that is when we will have more interactive discussions on the points raised by the Bills and Legislation Committee.

So, as the government is concerned, the Bill will not be withdrawn. We will go all the way because we feel that it is good for this country and those that appeared before the committee, we have been listening, and they support it as well. It has a wide support from our people, but the practical issues that the Bills and Legislation Committee raised are issues that we will need to explain so that we do not have any more fear.

With that, I support the Bill.

Hon. STANLEY SOFU (*East Kwaio—Minister for Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology*) (09:36): Thank you Mr. Speaker for giving me this opportunity that I may contribute on this very important Bill.

Before I continue, Mr Speaker, if I can seek permission from your goodself, to invoke relevant Standing Orders to allow me to sit down and make my contributions. The Bill that is before us, the contributions made by the Opposition Leader and Chairman of Bills and Legislation Committee, I think they covered everything. It will be a remiss on me if I do not make my contribution on the floor of Parliament. And I wish to make my contribution on the Bill.

The objective of the Bill is well said by the Minister responsible. And I wish to thank the Minister for tabling this Bill into Parliament for us to contribute and to make our views on the Bill.

Let me first of all thank the Minister, Permanent Secretary and the staff of the Ministry of Home Affairs for working very hard in compiling the Bill before it comes to Parliament. I wish to thank the Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee and its Members for their deliberation and scrutiny of the Bill.

The Chairman is a very hardworking person and even the Leader of Opposition too. When they look at the Bill, these two persons always present. Four times they sit to deliberate on the Bill. I see the Chairman all the time, and the Leader of Opposition is always present. Their first sitting on the 12th according to the report in my hand here, second sitting was the 13th and then the 14th and 15th of July 2023. And I wish to thank them all. I want to thank the witnesses. They were called to attend the meeting to give evidence before the Committee and they have their own time but they attend. I must thank them too. The Bill is set before us. Without their good work, they would not come, the Bill would not end up here.

I wish to thank the government of the day. The Minister brings the Bill on behalf of the government and I wish to thank the Minister. The objective of the Bill was well said by the Leader of the Opposition and the Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee.

I wish to thank the Attorney General's Chambers for vetting the Bill before it comes to Parliament. Your good work is also acknowledged Attorney General Chamber.

I will be very brief in supporting the Minister of Home Affairs on behalf of the government of the day. The intention of this Bill is very clear as I have said already. It is the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill of 2023. The enforcement of littering and waste management in the City of Honiara is vitally important and compliance with the Act is also considered important. The Buildings in the city, we must build

according to what the city wants. In this regard, the processes that the government sees is, that people just do not have any care. They want to build according to what they want. They do not want to follow the process. No, this is a city, it has an Ordinance and plan to build and to work from.

I think this Bill is timely. The Minister sees it fit to bring the Bill before this Parliament. It went through the Caucus up to the Cabinet and ended up here. The property owners as well they failed. Those of you owning properties do not usually pay the government. This is very important and that is why we say that Bills timely.

The amendment Bill, if passed, will also support and deal with the issues on littering and waste management, which are connected with the policy oversight of the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology.

In this concern, I want to highlight that work towards the new regulation for the ban of single plastic is progressing well. We have set up a Technical Committee to work on this. It was chaired by the Administrative Technical Under Secretary in my Ministry and they are working on that.

We have taken a slightly new approach by engaging stakeholders, including the private sector to provide inputs to the drafting instructions. We have taken this approach because of the need to ensure that stakeholders are fully aware and on the regulation and will therefore support its enforcement. Consequently, we are very supportive of the Bill before us now. For us the Ministry of Environment, we fully support the Minister on the Bill. We know that the enforcement of any law or rule of the country is only effective once we work together towards it. The public and the people in the city- and I am referring to the people living Honiara- Honiara city cannot enforce the law, not those that are coming in from the provinces and those of us living in the city and visitors from outside. We need to work together and enforce this.

I note that in the build up to the South Pacific Games, the HCC has paste notices in some areas in the city where there is illegal dumping of wastes. Some of this notices have been vandalized and practice of illegal dumping continues to unabatedly. We all need to respect our city and take pride in it as opposed to bearing a no care attitude. This has spoiled us, our attitude, that the Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee touched on; our ways and behavior.

The city belongs to the people of this country. The littering and waste management is one the thing said in the unabatedly. Therefore, it is very important that the connection in time is what this amendment is upholding, the Honiara City Council.

Whilst I have the floor, I know that Honiara City is the host of the Pacific Games. The MECDM, that is my Ministry, through the National Disaster Management

Office with the support of key agencies are also finalizing a specific disaster management plan for the Games. We have started socializing it to stakeholders and more will be done in the coming weeks up to and during the games and post Games as well, since aspects of the Games Disaster Management Plan will be useful as well in the finalization of the Honiara City Management Plan. It is also covered by the Honiara City Council Act. I hope the Honiara City Council will put an ordinance on disaster risk management, whose infringement may be covered under the Honiara City Act.

The amendments in the bill are based on the need to strengthen enforcement and compliance. That is what it is all about. As I have stated in my contribution, that a law can be good when we work together. It is not the Ministry itself, nor the City Council, but all of us. Its provisions can be applied to all areas of work in the Honiara City Council. Therefore, I have no reservation whatsoever in supporting the Motion and this Bill.

With these few remarks, I support the Motion.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA (*Small Malaita*) (10:09): Thank you Mr Speaker. I would also like to contribute to the Bill, which was moved by the Minister for Home Affairs last week. I would like to join others to acknowledge the work carried out by the Ministry in putting this Bill together, and also the Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee. I would like to thank the officials from the line Ministries and the Clerk to the Honiara City Council.

I will dwell mainly on a number of issues that were highlighted in the Bills and Legislation Committee inquiry, all of which are detailed in the report. At the outset, I wanted to make it clear that my arguments will be in support of the report's recommendation to withdraw this Bill.

These amendments are proposed to ensure that Honiara City is clean, beautiful, and ready before the Pacific Games. This is less than four months away. Furthermore, it is to make it a safe and green game, which by definition means that when we do it, Honiara City will be safe and green.

As outlined by the Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee, this objective will be achieved through the management and implementation of this Safe and Green Games Strategic Framework. This is a very comprehensive piece of work. It outlines in detail what each line Ministry and each government agency will do. And of course, it provides very comprehensively by way of budget funding for this framework. That is how this objective of Safe and Green Games will be achieved. That framework details how we will do it.

It is noteworthy and I want to talk on three things that come very clearly to me on this framework. First this plan is expected to be delivered by a whole of government approach. It is a good approach. A good thing. Secondly, funding and implementing of the plan will come from all participating Ministries and government agencies, and others. In fact 17 or 18 stakeholders; and this funding of nearly \$500 million will come from the Ministries and agencies.

The objective of the Bill is to enable effective enforcement of the HCC Act. These amendments and previous amendments and principal Act itself. That is what it means. Plus the city by-laws and ordinances. So this Bill seeks to achieve a number of things, but mainly on enforcement of on-spot-fine or fixed penalties. It will empower the Law Enforcement Officers to issue infringement notices to persons who are alleged to commit offences under the law, and then authorizes City Council and the Minister to appoint officers. In these appointments, it states the functions and powers of the Enforcement Officers. It also seek to authorize the City Council to detain persons or people. It did not talk about how to clean the city or to throw rubbish, or how to build buildings. No! Those things are already there.

When I look at this Bill, the policy intentions; these are very well intended policy objectives, which I really support. I think one thing that the Bill tries to make very clear is to be able to apprehend and penalize offenders. One of the things it tries to make is to ensure this thing is efficient. In other words, as it is now, when an alleged offender is apprehended they will take him to Court. That is one of the things this Bill tries to stop. Courts will be congested, if not already, with all sorts of misdemeanors. That is what this laws tries to do. We know this type of process is costly in terms of time, but also in terms of financial and other resources. So the question is; is this Bill going to achieve that? The proposals under this Bill. Will it achieve that? That is the question about the house that we are looking at.

In my view, there are many aspects of this Bill that are obviously practically difficult, if not impossible, to implement. At the same time, there are many avenues and steps that are available to the City Council and government to not only enforce but also ensure that this safe and green gaming strategic framework is implemented. We have laws and regulations that we can follow to achieve things. And I will only mention a few.

For example, the objective is to clean up Honiara. Honiara City Council already has a requirement that not only shop owners but everyone who has property in front of a road clean it up every seven meters. The City Council already has this law in place; make them do it, make everyone do it, and that is one of the premiums for you living close to the roads.

In my view, this is a requirement that should be fairly easy to ensure compliance, and I believe once we do it properly and effectively, this town will be clean without any new laws. And that is my point. It is possible to clean up Honiara with that approach. Engaging the community, like we are trying to do every Friday for government officials to come out and work, is a good thing. The communities coming out to clean up Honiara and their front yards is a good thing, but that is only to complement what is already there.

The Minister of Environment just talked about plastic. That is a good one. Bring in the law for plastic. We do not have a lot of time, so when is it coming? But this Mataniko River, I see a billboard there almost like four years ago, and the leading ministry to do the cleaning up of Mataniko on that billboard is the ministry of environment. What have we done with this? That did not need any laws! We just cleaned it up!

Secondly, one of the things that came up very often during inquiries from the City Council is the problem of Betel nut Stalls and sellers, as well as Hawkers, but more so the Betel nut sellers.

I have seen Betel nut sellers since the beginning of this town; this is not a new thing to the successive governments of the City Council. It has been there for ages; why is it that no one has looked at it all this time? Now that the games are here, they are just thinking of them. Sir, I see this as one of the major issues or contributions, and I support and agree with what the City Council Clerk mentioned: is the biggest contribution to making Honiara City dirty. Our city is labeled the dirtiest in the region. If not, in the world, and according to the City Council, one of the major contributions is. So what time are we going to look into betel nuts? They keep saying that they are going to look for an alternative side; have you only just thought about this today? No. These are things we should have been doing for a long time. We do not need any new law to do that. But when they talked that it is very hard to implement the laws of the City Council, the bye law, one of the major weaknesses of applying the law is because people who enforce the law, they have a conflict of interest. That is what it is. They have a conflict of interest probably in three areas. One is that those who enforce the law, that is their source of survival. Do you think you will stop them? No, you cannot, it is difficult. It is impossible. You cannot do it.

Secondly, those who want to enforce the law, they are brothers, sisters, son and daughters are the ones doing that. In fact, probably some of them own the stalls. How can you do it? It is hard.

Thirdly, it is hard for you to take out the stalls. They are voters of those who want to enforce the law. How can you do it? The Councilors and even some Members of Parliament as well. This is very wrong. It is really wrong. And this is why you

would see that when officers try to remove the stalls, police will be there in full force. But then the stall come back again the next day. It is hard. This is why it is hard to enforce the law.

This law that we are trying to make, this conflict of interest will be there. We are just wasting our time when there is conflict of interest in it. Actions that had been taken, the law is there and, they can do it but the outcomes have been disappointing. As I have said, this is a very old issue. The City Council does not pretend to just wake up and say that we need to do this because the Games are coming.

Laws are just laws. We can enact as many legislations as we can. Any number of laws cannot make this work. That is the point. It is the people that enforce the law and of course we that have to comply. What the City Council need in this on the cleanup and all that, they need money. That is what the Clerk had said, they need money to do this.

Thirdly, on the rubbish disposal, the City Council is complaining very much on us throwing rubbish everywhere. This morning, when I came, one car in front of me threw rubbish after eating. I tap my horn at him but probably he was saying that I supported him or so. This is just practice. It is a practice and why is it a practice? Because we allowed it to be a practice. We ask people on demand or enforce or tell people to throw rubbish inside the rubbish bin. Where would he throw it? Where along the roads? There are no rubbish bins and what do you expect from the 100,000 to do?

Of course they will not put it in the car and kitchen. They will hang it out. I know you see this one. When I saw it I thought was the coloring for Christmas but it is not because all the rainbow plastic colors are hanging on the tree. They do this because they want the Honiara City Council to see it and that is why they hang it up and also along our roads. What do we expect as there were no bins. This simple thing does not need a law and a new law my colleagues.

During the inquiry I urged the City Council so that they put rubbish bin every 10 meters along the road in Honiara, including the main road and feeder roads. We can expect people to throw rubbish in the bin. But now the rubbish bin is every 50 meter or 100 meter and filled up very fast. The collection and disposal of the rubbish is another thing. We do not need another new law and legislation for it. Honiara just need to do its work but of course what they need as stated by the Clerk is they did not have the money. Give them the money because they want to do their work.

This is the last issue I will discuss on even though we have a lot of issues in this town. This is the public toilets. This is a very elementary and basic service in my mind in any community. If you need it at the house then surely this town needs it. There are 100,000 people walking around the city. When nature calls, where will

they go and what will they do. If they need to use a toilet, they will go to a place where it is hidden that people could not see them. Some do not hide but urinate along the road. What else are you expecting? Where will they go. We should be providing this service as it is very elementary and basic and yet one of the things that contribute to this city being the dirtiest in the region. Again, we did not need the law to do it or another new law. The law is enough, but the City Council needs the money to do it, and that is what we should be looking at.

Like all other new legislations or new policies we want to enforce on our community and people, a very vital part is to ensure our people and community are fully aware of what requirements, especially what this means to them in terms of infringing or when they break the law. I do not know how much awareness we made on the by-laws of City Council that are already existing and even the existing City Council Act. I do not know if we do any awareness for our people to know. For this one, definitely they will need to be made aware of the penalties and implications for the public. Honiara residents and surrounding communities must be made aware of the impacts from this law.

With such a short time, as we have now, which is less than four months away, I am convinced this may not be possible. When it comes to the law, the question remains, how can this be enforced? It will be difficult. All we will have, is hundreds and hundreds of residences will pile up, and I do not know if the detention centers that they will create will accommodate all.

In terms of the implementation of the proposals, there are certain requirements proposed in this Bill that, in my opinion, are nearly impossible to implement, again, given that very short time we have. I always mentioned this because this is the reason why this Bill comes. It is triggered by our need to prepare for the Game, which is why I always make reference to. Of course, we need it for the long term as well. For example, Clause 55(f)(3) and 55(j)(3), which talk about the timeline for paying the fix penalty. This clause, if truly implemented, we will see hundreds and hundreds of people will be caught unaware.

As the BLC Chairman had stated, no one on the streets of Honiara can afford to pay the penalties if the infringement notice is given to them. As the BLC Chairman had stated, no one on the streets of Honiara can afford to pay the penalties if the infringement notice is given to them at 9 o'clock or 11 o'clock and then the offender is to pay it before 12 o'clock. How can anyone on the streets of Honiara pay this before 12 o'clock? We will see the detention center full, and the Court processes will be congested. This is exactly what this Bill tries to avoid.

Although the issue of offenses and penalties has already been raised, I still want to reiterate that the Bill does not prescribe offences or the respective penalties for these

infringements, where the law enforcement officer will issue infringement notices to people. This law does not prescribe that. In fact, it is foreshadowed in the Bill. I really do not know or how much time or how quickly this will come in order to meet the target, which is the Games. On this one, definitely again, time is not on our side.

Another issue, which I also noted in the Bill, is in clause 55(n) on the Functions and Powers of Enforcement Officers. It looks like the law enforcement officers will not only be interpreting and enforcing the law. But this clause will empower them to arrest people, receive money from offenders, and enter and search premises and properties without any warrants. They will seize goods and movable properties without any Court or Magistrate warrant. go out on patrol come back write reports. I think writing reports along the road as well. When we saw the RSIPF, the comment they say is that 'they are more powerful than the police officers'. Under the Police Act, you cannot go and search and seize goods without any Court Order.

Another area that I have looked at and a little bit difficult for me to know how we can enforce it or ensure it happens is the recruitment and equipping Law Enforcement Officers. This Bill has proposed a concept where the onus is in law officers for interpreting and enforcing the law. As I have said earlier, they will have the power to ascertain if any person has infringed any parts of these Acts under Principal Act, and its HCC Ordinances.

I do not want to underestimate anyone, but I think this is a tall order in the normal scheme of things. We are expecting too much from Law Enforcement Officers. Considering that it will take time to recruit suitable candidates and having to train them and having to equip them well before the games. To me, in my mind, it is hard for us to do that before the Games. it is difficult to implement this before the Games; but also it is noteworthy that the recruitment of Law Enforcement Officers will not be subject to normal recruitment requirements. Those things, like the Leader of Opposition and the Chairman had already said, those things do not need police clearance. They do not need to provide any educational background. They do not need to provide any previous work experience. Those things are not necessary. Under clause 55(m) it is clear. The recruitment and appointment HCC meaning the Councilors and the Minister do it. Everything was done at the political level.

I smell a rat! I looked at the Bill and especially all the proposals in the Bill. It seemed to me that the Bill has not fully investigated potential risks to Honiara City Council. The potential liabilities of City Council and government; the provisions to arrest and detain persons do pose a potential and financial and reputational risks to the Honiara City Council most especially. I do not want to detail it more, but especially in terms of this Divisions 4 and 5, I think the risks in financial obligations that might

come when this is enforced and hopefully investigated. Some of these things have already been talked about by the Leader of the Opposition in his intervention.

But, when I looked into this after we spoke with the Law Reform Commission and members of the magistracy, they looked into this and said that the City Council must be careful. The City Council must be careful because the obligations at risk that might come from implementing this division are high. In fact, they strongly recommend that divisions four and five, if this Bill is going to pass, be omitted. Let us not run that risk.

In conclusion, I want to say that, in my view, this Bill will be difficult to implement, let alone enforce in its entirety and in terms of its expectations. And to my mind, it is pointless to pass a law that will not deliver on its goals and intentions, especially for the games. I believe Honiara City Council and the government can still deliver on the safe and green games goal under current legislation. The policy intentions for the Bill's beautification, cleanliness, and tidying up of Honiara City for the games can be achieved without this Bill. Like I said earlier, how will they deliver the goals? That is the plan; the plan is already there. What is urgently needed now is funding for the implementation so that it works, and they do it. That is what we need. I therefore strongly urge and support the recommendation in the report that we should withdraw the Bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I resume my seat.

Hon. MANASSEH MAELANGA (*East Malaita—Minister for Infrastructure Development*) (10:45): I would like to thank my colleague for giving me this opportunity to talk about the Bill. I will not say a lot; I will be brief and then stop just to show support for this Bill.

First of all, I would like to thank the Minister for Home Affairs, the PS, and the staff of the Ministry for preparing the Bill for Parliament. I would like to thank them for putting this Bill forward and also thank the government for submitting it to this house. Also, I want to thank the Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee and the committee members for going through this Bill. It is true that we will have our own thoughts about Bills, but the government always has their own say on their Bills that come before Parliament, I think this side of the house sees support for this Bill, and that is why it has come to Parliament.

I just want to raise a few points. Personally, I see that it is time. We have to start somewhere. We cannot just wait and wait. For me, I see that this is the time for this Bill to come before Parliament so that we can see how Honiara City Council can do its work. That is why and we can say all the reasons that we want and I totally disagree with the honourable Member of Small Malaita. I disagree with him because he is not looking forward on how we will be able to look after Honiara City. We should have visions to help.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Point of Order! I think the Deputy Prime Minister did not really listen to my debate. We already have laws, that is the point that I emphasised on. We have the laws for the plan, what the law is for.

Hon. MANASSEH MAELANGA: Point of order! I think this is my time to talk. He had spoken already. I would just like to say that he has his own thoughts but to me, I oppose it. He has his own views as well but I will slowly go through some of the things he has raised to be clear on what and why. I see that some of the view do not make sense to me.

I think if we look at this Bill, it is true that we look towards the Pacific Games but to me it is not only Pacific Games. It is something that will go on, for the Honiara City for us to look after it. It is not only Pacific Games, it will go beyond Pacific Games. For us the people in Honiara, let us see on how we can start to change. We must start our lifestyle of how we live in this city. So, that is why I think that the by-laws that we try to put in place, it is something that we need to start working on. That is why, I see that sometimes, we just fall short on our thoughts here.

Coming back, when we start to look at, like in this Bill, we are looking at good green Games. Looking at clean Honiara City. We are looking at offences and things that will happen inside the city. We want enforcement to look at it. These are the things that I see here. That is why we have to move on to pass this Bill to cater for these things.

I know, we go on, the Committee will say on how they will do it better. Sometimes, as time goes on, we see on the regulations that will need to come in to fit it in. That is the way I see it. When we touch on and we come to the powers of the enforcement, sometimes what I have seen is pinpointing those people that are working. They are people who will be trained to enforce the by laws. Instead we are just standing to rubbish those people. That is how I hear it. That person is this kind of a person. How can we trust them? This is not how we look and how we talk about our own people. We should respect our people. When we come into this House it is not to pinpoint and talk about these people. That is what the Member had been saying earlier.

So, it is good that we come and look positive on those things. I know that these people will be trained and they must be trained. You cannot just pick anyone in the street and tell them to come. We want the Law Enforcement Unit for people who are trained. People who must be qualified. People who must be trusted.

I can recall back, as a former police officer, in the past, in the 80s, we have special constables and they have worked very hard. They have taken oath. They can arrest. These people really worked hard in our communities. Sometimes when the police are not able to reach the middle of the bush, that special constable reached it. They are trained and trusted. So I think we have to go that far and trust some of our

enforcement officers. It is good for them to take the oath so that their work is with integrity. I know the Member for Small Malaita said, when you see that an officer is a betel nut chewer. No! A lot of police officers are betel nut chewers and smokers but they have to think about their ethics and loyalty as an enforcer or officer.

I think it is time we have to see how we trust our people. We have to value those who are on the enforcement and that they keep the law as well by implementing the by-laws of Honiara City Council. I want them to take the oaths and do some training under the police academy training school. I know these things will come and the Minister knew it and how they will do things in terms of training those officers.

Regarding the rubbish bin, I am happy with what was mentioned by the MP for Small Malaita. I think its time and the City Council will come up with these things. It is good to see Honiara City Council put rubbish bins around the city so that when you go by, you throw your rubbish in the rubbish bin. With all these that we are trying to make will help Honiara City Council.

To me it is one way to try and change the mentality of people. There is something that needs to be there so that people can change. That is how I look at it. Today, somebody just go and throw their rubbish. Sometimes ago somebody ask me the question here regarding the drainage at the road that are blocked. During heavy rains, Kukum Highway is filled with rubbish. That is from us. We need to think about how we should keep our rubbish. We should not blame anyone else, but come back to us. We throw rubbish in the river and or drains, it will block the drainages at our main roads.

I think if we have something, like some fines, somebody has to realize so that next time they will not throw their rubbish. We have to do something like this rather than stuck and stay like this all the time. I think we have to move somewhere and forward on how we do things. It is something to do with our mentality. Just go to other Pacific Island Countries and one would see the difference. Just very close to us, like Vanuatu, for instance. Look at their small city. So this is mentality and if we continue with a mentality that cannot be changed, then we have to start somewhere. When a person is held for throwing trash, they will not do it again. After I eat this ice cream, I will put my trash in a plastic bag. Or those of us who eat betel nuts might have a container. When I was in FSM, I was escorted by an officer. That officer gave me a plastic container so that when I chew betel nut I can spit in it and throw the container when I see a garbage bin.

You were also there, Mr Speaker, when I led that delegation for the PIFS meeting. These people are also betel nut chewers, but when you look at their street, there is hardly a stain from betel nuts. So these are some of the things that we need to start

with, and we need to start somewhere. So the way I view it, it is all about keeping Honiara City Clean and living with law-abiding citizens. That is my opinion of this Bill.

As I have said, there will be regulations in place. It is true that the other side of the House has differing views, but we will work on it and see how we can reach a point where it is agreeable by all of us..

I speak in support of this Bill, and as someone who really cares for Honiara City, I want to see this Bill passed.

With these few remarks, I support the Bill and resume my seat.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr) (*East Are Are*) (10:59): Thank you Mr Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make a contribution to this Bill. At the outset, I just want to thank the Minister and the Ministry for the continuous hard work and efforts to bring in legislation that they think in getting to the objectives.

As we already heard, the policy objectives of this Bill are quite clear, and I know everyone agrees with them that we want to keep our city Clean, and the games Safe, and Green. But I think there comes a time when there are some differences, and I think that comes in the actual draft bill in terms of what its outcome might be and whether it is workable. So I think that is where there is some difference, but I think it is fair to say that in terms of policy, we are all together on this.

When it comes to the Green Games, this was a concept that the member for East Are was quite keen on supporting. When I was still not a member and working for the government. When we were working on and preparing for this game back in 2017.

The green games, as it turns out, is not what the original concept is for the Green Games. Back then, the talk about the green games was all about energy serving. So Stadiums should be using solar. There should be solar or electric transportation in terms of moving people and athletes. The lighting on the streets should be solar. The rubbish collections should be biodegradable. Plastic, one-time use plastic to be implemented and launched at that time that time for the Games. This was supposed to be a celebration, the Green Games that went together with the graduation with the LDC status that we were suppose to also have, that now has been moved. So it is fair to say that the Green Games concept is now not what originally what we had plan. Of course, we know that COVID was there and that puts aside many of this ideas and concepts that we cannot deliver on this green games as was originally thought. I remembered the group coming to Foreign Affairs Office and I suggested this should be the first green games in the whole of Pacific; but it is fair to say that we have moved away from that, and not because of our faults, and that is something that we all know.

In terms of a clean city and Honiara that we would all like to live in, that is something that is beyond just the green games. It is something that I think all of us who calls Honiara our home, we reside in Honiara; we would love to see a clean city. That is something that as years goes by we can just see that it is not perhaps the city that it once was.

I remember coming back to Honiara for holidays when I was still overseas, with a group of ladies, one of which was so excited to bring her friends to Honiara. She was talking about city lined with trees. Different frangipani trees, Christmas trees and telling them all in the flight; and I was listening in, I was getting embarrassed because the Honiara that she was speaking about is no longer there. It is no longer there; and when they arrived at the airport, you can see that their faces are changed and they probably think that their friend was lying to them. On their drive in, and I saw them later in town, you could see that they were bewildered, a bit shocked about the state of the city that their friend has been promoting on their flight across.

Honiara was once a beautiful city as we can all attest. It is one of the only cities in the Pacific that has a river that flows through it. If we look after that river, that will be our main attraction. A beautiful river that flows right through the city. Amenities for public to enjoy, visitors alike. These are things that we can envision for our city moving forward. It is good that we the games. perhaps. to be a focal point, so that we can start work on this, to be catalyst for us to focus on what we need to do. I think that is something that we have to appreciate the games for. They gave us our focus on something we need to do, but perhaps do not have the time to do, or perhaps guilty of procrastinating, delaying our actions.

So let the games be a catalyst; and while the policies are definitely agreeable, I think the law as it stands on the Bill, as it before the House; perhaps needs better scrutiny, perhaps needs better redrafting, so that we can meet the goals that the hard working Minister really wants us to meet. As Parliament, both sides of the House, we want to see Honiara prosper and beautiful. Keeping Honiara clean is simply the right thing to do. Overseas, I remember, seeing bins with a simple slogan '*do the right thing*' written in the streets with the sign of people throwing rubbish into the bins. Just one line '*do the right thing*' gets people thinking about doing the right thing, which is putting rubbish where they need to go.

I think our issue here in Honiara is a bit more deeper than that. Of course it involves doing the right thing and all of that, but for many in Honiara, they see Honiara as a transient point. I heard people saying that they will be going for holidays at their villages at Christmas. They do not call Honiara their home. They call another place home, yet for most of their lives we live in Honiara. There needs to be an acceptance that Honiara is our home so that we can start treating it as our home. We just keep passing through Honiara perhaps because of our cultural, customs, we know that

we are living perhaps on a land that is not originally ours. So there are cultural issues at play as well, I would like to put.

That needs us to continually address, national leaders, keep talking about our national capital being a place for all Solomon Islanders. There should not be in this house particularly comments coming from us that make people question whether this is really their home. Honiara is our home, it's the capital territory of Solomon Islands. That fact needs to be appreciated and it needs to start with us, I feel in whatever we say we do because our people are looking to us, hearing us.

When comments about chasing people out of here, telling them to go back to their place, it just reinforces yet again that people are transients, they are just passing through. This is not their home. I think it is deeper, we need to appreciate that Honiara is home to all of us regardless of where we come from. We thank you for the people of Guadalcanal that have given this space for us to all live in. And that is something we have to continually say and remind us in all that we do. Because I think it starts there.

I think when you go back to the villages of those that are littering Honiara, you would not find too much rubbish there because they respect their home. They know that that is their home. It is time Honiara people know that this is their home. And it takes leadership, the tribal leaders of Honiara from past accepting that fact, all of us from different parts of Honiara living and residing calling Honiara our home, coming together and acknowledging that. I think that is a powerful, powerful concept and it can be a powerful reality. This is something that is a bit more deeper than just throwing rubbish around. But it maybe part of the course of why people are so careless and do not respect Honiara as their home.

Honiara the capital territory of Solomon Islands belongs to an indigenous group of this island and they have given it to the nation as a gift. We have to look after that gift that they have given us. Appreciate that gift for what it is. I believe it starts there. It is a bit more deeper it adds to our nation building, yes it is that deep. But when we have visitors arriving here, we know that first impressions last. When they get here, they see something that sticks on their mind and it is hard to forget first impressions, it is a powerful sentiment.

But how I see this Bill as presented for us, is what is described by a prominent lawyer as the "big stick" approach. We are coming with a big stick to ensure that Honiara is clean. Why do we say big stick? I say that because I think the only reason we have this Bill before here is to ensure that the powers are there for these officers to ensure that there is some sort of detention so that we do not run afoul of *habeas corpus*. You cannot detain somebody without going through proper processes. For me these are the main reasons why we have this Bill because I think as many have

said already and the Deputy Prime Minister mentioned by laws, that is not our law. We do not by laws. We do not do ordinances. These are done by the Honiara City, the local governments, that is their law. They have the role to play there.

The Minister we all know has the power to make regulations already but I think this Bill is before us because of this reason. That we need to cover these people who will be going around and having this power, put these notices, make people pay and if they do not pay, they end in a detention. Be prosecuted, for that you need a law to come to Parliament. I think those are the real reason we are here. That is why I called this reason, the big stick approach. We have a big stick, chasing people down with big sticks. That can work for sure, there is no doubt that can work. But I think, that by itself will not solve our problem. I just really feel that there are other things that we need to do that might be more effective than this big stick approach with a threat.

You have been to Samoa and when we were there, they have really literally big stick approach because the tribes that own Apia City come out at 6.30 with sticks literally to get people back to their villages. They can do that because it is part of their culture. It works there, I do not know whether colleagues have been there but you will see this. Particularly on Sundays when everybody were supposed to be in church. You would see them hanging around there whole white. They are in white shirts and white sulus and they hold literally big sticks. That works in that society because that is part of their culture.

Now for us, and Samoa as you know is a homogenous culture. Everybody speaks Samoan and they say that in Samoa, everyone is related. For us, it is a bit different for our Melanesian Society so the culture, approaches that we need to make here need to be considered as well. What will work and what might not work. The big stick approach worked in places like Singapore, that is a collection of different races coming together. Malayans, Chinese, Indians trying to build that country themselves. A lot of them do not have indigenous tie to the land in Singapore. Not like us, we are different there as well. We are indigenous peoples with direct connections to where we are rooted, where we set up our communities.

This big stick approach that I see very clearly in this Bill will need to be balanced. It needs to be balanced with other approaches. We cannot go along with what is here currently because that is the only reason I see this Bill before us. Otherwise, I believe the Minister has power to make regulations already. I believe the Honiara City Council has powers to make by laws and ordinances. But they do not have that power to give this special power to these officers who would be arresting people, charging and fining them. Confining them to detention. They need to come to Parliament to get that power. I think, that is why we are here.

But if that is the reason, then I feel that we may have jumped or for a better expression, we may have jumped the gun on this one. I think there are actions that can be done already without needing to come to Parliament, if really what we are looking for here is to empower these officers to have extraordinary powers. I am sure that this is not the real policy that the government wants to implement. We want a clean and safe Honiara for the green games that we are looking forward to host.

I would caution that and really asks us to think about what it is we really want to do with this Bill. We make laws here in parliament regardless of how it comes up with the numbers. Some of us might vote against it but we know the numbers is with the government and it will become law. But we need to ask these question, are they implementable? Are enforceable? These laws that we passed? Are they fair? Are these laws to change behaviors of people? Are we legislating to change behavior and changing attitudes? Will it work? Is it a right approach?

I believe that there are certain segments of the Bill that can be broken down into some regulations or ordinances and the current powers that the Minister has and even the Honiara City Council. For example, the vehicles. The littering from vehicles, as we heard just this morning. It oversees that a separate ordinance and regulations for that and that allow citizen to snap a photo of the littering vehicle as they drive by in ensuring that they capture the registration number. All that is left to do is that the Ministry just set up a platform online that people can report to when they see such infringements. It allows citizens to be involved in ownership of the place. Of course you have to put the right information because if you are wrong through the process, the person you take the photo is the one who is going to be fined.

The knife cuts both sides. That, I think, would help and allows whistle blowers to go around unanimously. All of us can do it. We now have phones, especially in Honiara. We know that this Bill is for Honiara and not for anywhere else in Solomons. We know that it is very much about Honiara and there are better ways that I think we can do this and the power is already there for the Minister to simply do this and allow our people to snap a photo. Of course clear it with the Attorney General but I think there is sufficient power to make such regulations.

Graffiti, spraying all sorts of swearing words and signs on our buildings. That is also part of littering and that has its own laws that involves the businesses to which the walls have been sprayed upon. I do not see that in these things that we are talking about here in the Bill. Noise pollution is also a way of making reputation of Honiara being too noisy, but we know there are laws in place, by-laws and ordinances that allows authorities, Honiara Town Council to approach people who make noise and play loud music at a certain time. They are being a nuisance. We

can also address those together in readiness for the games because we do not want athletes to come and be disturbed when they need to sleep and prepare for their next days of competition. It is more than just littering. The stray dogs. We have a stray dog problem in Honiara. Not a day goes by we hear or see of a dog being hit in one of our high ways. How do you address that if really what we want is clean and safe Honiara?

You cannot detain these dogs, or can you? These are issues that are a little bit broader, but I think they all impact the policy that the minister is trying to deliver here.

So we are not just focusing on the powers of people to do certain things, but we try to address real issues that affect our city. I think if we can do those things, and each of these things can be done, because I think there are certain ordinances and by-laws already in place. Enforcement is the issue. Implementation has always been an issue for us, and we know that. I think it is fair to say that we have been guilty of selective enforcement.

We have so many laws that we cannot enforce all of them. No resources to enforce that we start to pick and choose which ones to enforce. There are question arises as to who makes the decision as to which laws should be focused on to enforce? And for us, the Parliament, we pass these laws knowing full well that they will be hard to enforce . Are we also to blame, when we know that what we are passing may not be enforced.

These are issues that, as Parliamentarians and legislators, we need to think about as well. I, for myself, I do not want to be complicit in passing laws here that I know will be hard to enforce for whatever reasons. It could be capacity or the lack of resources, but we just keep passing it.

These are issues that we need to think about when we pass laws. For example, recently we passed the SIM card registration, and there has been mixed reactions. I have spoken to people who have gone and got registration of SIM card with nothing. Then others I have spoken to who have gone and got the full monty, as they say; take photo, signing of the form and everything; mixed implementation and messages that are being sent out.

We have the Tabaco Act that actually stops people from smoking in public buses, and yet every day I see people smoking in those buses. Some of them are perhaps the owners of those buses. But that is prohibited under the Tobacco Act. You cannot smoke on public transport, but who enforces it or does the work to implement that important law that affects our health? Are we to say now that, with this new Act, that is the only one that we will enforce now? What about the others that we ourselves pass here?

Let us not be guilty of selective enforcement. If we want to make laws that has certain conditions for enforcement, we have to make sure that resources and capacity are there. Otherwise, we might have what I called selective enforcement. So there is a lot of good in the policy.

I had no argument there. I really welcome this policy that the minister has brought forward as government policy. I support this. But the bill as it is, I would support the recommendation to withdrawal this time for the reasons that I have just outlined and stated already by the leader of opposition, chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee, member for Small Malaita, and others who have stated similar sentiments. This is not to stop. We want to help, but we want to help do it right so that we can achieve the overall objective. We are not doing these suggestions lightly.

These recommendations are not made lightly by the Chair and the Committee. We are doing this because we feel we can improve where we need to improve; and we can really target where we need to target. A lot of the work will done by the Minister and his Ministry and his hard working staff, Permanent Secretary to continue to lead the charge there. But currently with the Bill, I think it is very focused on this big stick approach, and I do not think that is part of the policy. I think there are other things that are more important than coming down hard because it might not work. The idea is that we can make this work, but not with the Bill as is currently presented in Parliament for us.

The idea here is that we are trying to improve our capital, getting us ready for the games that are soon approaching, welcoming our friends from the Pacific that are coming to enjoy Honiara. Focus on things like amenities, and public toilets. We need more of that. Put money into those things especially with the short time that we have.

Look at this vehicle littering. How you can address that specifically? Focus on vehicles. Put messages out; doing the right things. Throw rubbish here. Focus on messaging. These are things that we can do today even without enacting this bill into law; and I think if we think about it those are perhaps more effective in getting our people ready for the games. Honiara residence, Solomon Islanders are excited about the games. They would want to help. Let us appeal to that positive emotion that many are already sensing looking forward to the games; rather than putting up a big stick approach whereby people feel that they and their rights are again on the verge of being infringed. I think we are well placed in terms of moving forward on this issue and going ahead beyond the games.

I just like to close with this story I experienced about two years ago. Stopping right in town opposite Kingsley I went to get a photo taken for a visa. Upon parking my vehicle, the lady ran up, I was parked facing that fence looking the opposite

direction to Kingsley behind me. A lady ran up and did her business right in front of my vehicle where she felt was private. She did not know that I had just parked. I was gathering my things to go out. She came and relieved herself right there. I have mixed emotions witnessing that. I was disgusted, but I was overwhelmingly sad for the situation that just happen before my eyes. It is tough to see but then you are sad because you know that there is no other facility.

We can do better than this I think. These are the issues that we need to address before the games; and I do not think we need Bill to address those issues. If we can address those issues, then you have my fuller support, but with this Bill the recommendation of the Committee is that it be withdrawn as it currently stands. So I stand with the Committee's recommendation that this Bill as it is before the house be withdrawn. Thank you and I resume my seat.

Hon CULWICK TOGAMANA (*Maringe/Kokota—Minister for Health and Medical Services*) (11:32): Thank you for this opportunity given to me to contribute to the debate on this Bill. At the outset, let me thank the honorable Minister for Home Affairs, the Permanent secretary, and the staff from the Ministry of Home Affairs for tabling this Bill in Parliament. Also, I would like to acknowledge the contributions from the opposite bench, the very important issues that have been raised in relation to this Bill, and the chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee for the scrutiny of this Bill and its report now tabled before this honorable chamber.

This Bill is very simple, and it addresses the issues that we talked about today. We heard about some very real-life encounters, which I just heard from the intervention of the member for East Are'Are, a very sad situation that relates to us. Issue of the almost non-existence of enforcement to ensure people behave and act improperly in public. So this Bill is to give power to implement the existing ordinance of the Honiara City Act. And to remedy the infringements, there are penalties associated with them.

So we are talking about Honiara, which is a city for all of us here in the Solomon Islands. We all congregate here as one of our capitals, and we would like to see that this city is a place that is livable for all of us living here and that we cannot act independently based on our upbringings and culture, but there must be laws and regulations to ensure we act accordingly to ensure we live peacefully and co-exist with each other in a very clean environment. I agree that there are ordinances or bylaws that already exist, but the issue here is enforcement. That is what we are talking about, and with this Bill that is before us, let me put it this way, the only law that I know cannot change or remain the same is the Ten Commandments. We cannot change them. This ordinance or laws that is passed in this honorable Chamber, these are dynamics, subjected to nature, subjected to changing

environment and changing attitude as we progress and therefore we have these amendments that we will do.

Yes I do concur with the practicality of enforcement, which has already been articulated by colleagues from the opposite bench. We are talking about payment of fine, how practical it is if an offence is committed at 11.45 am and that payment must be done at 12 noon. But the story does not end there, if that payment is not able to be executed in full, then the process is still carried on where that offence will come to the court. So, we will still address that.

And we talked about the nitty gritty of the qualification of the enforcement officers that is spell out in the principle ordinance or Act. But there will be regulations certainly that actually provided the direction as to who and what minimum qualification are we looking for. Those who will be selected or chosen suitable for this enforcement role, that they have the capability to at least read and write and write reports. I am not surprised that the enforcement officers probably will not need-just two or three years down the line, because the whole Honiara City will be or will have CCTV Cameras so that those who are driving and opening their doors spitting chunk of betel nut that they chew, that will be caught. And we maybe not need this enforcement officers actually going around with cameras and so forth.

What I am trying to say is, that this Bill that we have here started, its dynamic and it will change and therefore this honorable House will in future will have amendments coming for this Bill to suit the needs as we progress.

I heard being articulated here that this Bill is purposely for the Pacific Games. No, this is not what it is intended for. It will continue to live on beyond the Pacific Games. It will continue to be implemented to ensure that our city, Honiara City is clean. The citizens must act accordingly and if they do so and breach this, they will be penalized. While I appreciate the sentiments raised as I heard earlier that we do not need this Bill or enforcement and that all we need to do is awareness. We put big billboards there to say no littering and so forth. That is what we have been doing along. Our roads are filled with rubbishes and no body wants to touch them. It is the enforcement component, the very fabric of this Bill that is before us and we would like to address.

I think, I have made my point, that this Bill is not a ten commandment so that we put it here and however weak it is, we will not be able to change it. But we have to start somewhere, we cannot simply withdraw this and wait for miracle to take place.

On this note, I support the passage of this Bill on the floor of this honorable House. Thank you and I resume my seat.

Hon. REXON RAMOFAFIA (*Fataleka—Minister for National Planning and Development Coordination*) (11:41): Thank you Mr Speaker for giving me the opportunity to briefly debate on the Bill, the Honiara City (Amendment)(No.2) Bill 2023. On the outset, I also join other colleagues to thank the Minister, Ministry, HCC and of course the AG Chamber for bringing this Bill to the House. I also thank the Bills Committee for the scrutiny of the Bill and also the report that was submitted to Members.

As we all know, the law enforcement plays a crucial role in maintaining peace and order in any city. The Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill aims to address the gap within the existing laws and also to empower the City Council and enforcement and the ordinance.

As already alluded by some speakers, the rationale or the principal objective is very clear and every one agreed. But when it comes to passing of this Bill and we will began to see that it is not its time or big stick approach. The way we see this Bill might not helpful in terms of administration or enforcing this Bill. We also sort of echo here that the timing of this Bill is mainly as part of preparation towards the hosting of these Pacific Games, which is not the rational or primary objectives of this Bill.

The intention of the government and also the purpose for bringing this Bill is that we have to deal with the situation facing Honiara City. We just celebrated our 45th Independence celebration at Lawson Tama and we hear that the City Major also calling to us to respect our city, your city and everyone's city.

It is important that the need to address issues that faced by Honiara City is everyone's business. We learn from Ports Authority. We know that once you stay at the province and came to Honiara, when you are in the ship, there will be announcement made that at the Ports area, you must not throw rubbish, smoking and chewing betel nut. When we arrived at the wharf, we know that we will not do such things. As we exit at Ports gate, we start to think that we can able to throw rubbish, smoking and betel nut chewing.

I think it is important for us to see our way forward clearly in terms of dealing with Honiara City so that it is one of the good place for employment, accessing social services such education and health is important. Of course, we also want to make sure that our provinces also continue to deal with development challenges that we faced as in Honiara. For us in Honiara, the City Council finds it very difficult to deal with development, especially for enforcing building permit. If you go around Honiara, one of the challenges is that Honiara is really unplanned. When we want to enforce this Bill, as highlighted by the colleague member for East Are'Are, enforcement is one of the problems that we face as a country in enforcing laws that

are passed here in Parliament. So this Bill will help Honiara City to enforce the by-laws and ordinances that will be passed in the City Council, and this Bill will help to address that. The bill aims to establish guidelines for the enforcement of ordinances or laws that are carried by Honiara City.

We also acknowledge that Solomon Islands is a country of diversity. Tradition plays a critical role in dealing with issues that affect our people. So the ways and approaches that we will administer these Bill are that it is not that we will heavily impose penalties on people. No! We are dealing with these issues so that Honiara will become a good, peaceful, and orderly city that everyone can enjoy living in.

Informing our people through awareness by training the law enforcement. This is all part of the administration that the city council will continue to do as it enforces this amendment.

We also note that attitude is also a problems that we find difficulty as Solomon Islanders and Citizens of this country. We can go outside of our country to see some of the good practices and good things that are happening in those countries. When we come back, we think that if we do these things in our country, it will help our country change some of the practices and attitudes that we find difficult.

We find problems in doing things, especially with the no-care attitude that we have. We do not respect our city, and so it is clear that we continue to address issues that affect Honiara City that we continue to experience.

Like the Deputy Prime Minister touched on in his debate, when there is a big rain or flood in Honiara, it is time for all the trash to be brought down to the town, for instance, on the Kukum Road. So in dealing with the practices that will help us address the issues that we face here in Honiara because they are linked, we continue to add problem after problem to how we are doing things. When we block the drainage with trashes, it adds another cost to maintaining and cleaning the drainage and adds additional costs to repair the infrastructures. So it is important for us to address the situation in Honiara, and as we continue to improve and see how it will help us.

We also want to do things in our provinces. We almost see Honiara as a place of someone; we are living in Honiara and we will die in Honiara. Only death will take us to the province; but we were born here, raised here and lived here, and so it is important for us to care for Honiara.

We have heard a number of problems other speakers have raised about the rubbish, noise and respect for neighborhood in Honiara. If we do not address this, how can we address this in the future if it continues to happen? And so it is important while we have the opportunity to prepare for the Pacific Games, but not for the two weeks

that we will host the Pacific Games, but we want to deal with problem and issues that is affecting our country, and we are starting to do some good practices here in Honiara. While the recommendations and issues are raised by the colleagues in terms of how this Bill was not drafted in the way that we can address this issue, the Minister can bring the regulation to guide the administration on this Bill.

Take for example the issue of Minister to appoint Law Enforcement Officers; the Minister can bring regulations for dealing with process on reaching how he will appoint the Law Enforcement Officers. We know from this SOE Act, the regulation there was clearly spelt out how the Minister of Finance and Minister responsible whether for Energy or for SIPA, how they are going to appoint those Board Directors. It was well spelt clearly the processes for the Minister to appoint the Board Directors; and that similar case does not mean the Minister will politically interfere into this processes. No. The merit of appointing the Law Enforcement officers will guide the Minister to do the appointing. It is good for that to stay with the Minister because it will be independent for appointment apart from the Honiara City Council like others have suggested; like it should be a Clerk or a City Mayor.

Maybe it is based on the recommendation from the Clerk or the Mayor. The appointment processes will be spelt out clearly on how we appoint the Law Enforcement Officers. So I am comforted that some of the issues raised in terms of how this Bill be enforced or administer. The Minister can bring the regulation. The other comfort like what colleague Minister of Health touched on; that is what this Parliament is doing; amendment to the laws that we will continue to amend so that it will help to address situation in the country and Honiara City Council for this case. We must start somewhere. We already heard it clearly that we find it very challenging on how to enforce the laws. This one will address how to enforce some of the laws because we will empower the City Council to carry out effectively their By-laws and ordinances.

And so to finish I joined other colleagues to support this Bill.

(Parliament is suspended at 11.57am)

Parliament is resumed

Hon. NESTOR GHIRO (*Central Makira—Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources*) (01:40): I also wish to thank the Minister for Aviation for giving me the chance to start with the speeches this afternoon. Thank you also for the opportunity for me to contribute briefly to the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023. Before I do so, I would like to thank the Chairman and his committee, the Bills and Legislation Committee, for scrutinizing this Bill, and I also thank the Minister for Home Affairs for bringing this Bill to Parliament.

Like any other Act of Parliament, it goes through amendments. The whole intention of this Bill is to amend the HCC Principle Act so that this amendment provides for what is not there in the existing Act. And one of those that we are talking about here is enforcement. I think that is the whole intention of the Bill. I also want to thank everyone who spoke before me about the good intentions and purposes of this Bill. I will be brief. I have three practical issues to raise here before I make my conclusion, and one is detention.

Solomon Islands has a very good society. A lot of the people in this country are law-abiding citizens. And within this, there are a few. When it comes to detention, there is the practical part, but there is another one. Let me give an example: if you detain 100 people today, there will be no 100 people tomorrow; tomorrow there will be 70. And if tomorrow is 70, then the next day it will be 50. It will be reduced to zero. And that is the practical part of that one.

For example, Ports is also there; the first time there were a lot of fines, and now if you check their data, it is almost nil. Any fine that happens there happens, but not for that intention but as an accident, like someone forgot and did it. How do we relay messages to our people about the laws and their practical parts? I have a fine there at the ports; I forgot and I smoked. When I got home, I announced it to everyone living in my residence. I told them about the rules at the ports, and at that time I passed the message. So I do not think of 10,000 or 1,000 people that walk along the Honiara streets are there to throw rubbish. So, enforcement officer is helping us to enforce that ordinance.

The second point that I would like to raise here under this Bill and when it comes to tax quality and just take for example, when we are talking about litter, we are talking about parking but I would like to draw my example on the plastic. When it comes to plastics, it has no boundaries. They are created somewhere and they are discarded somewhere and they become quotas. I am saying this, the enforcement officers will see who is doing something wrong before they will report him or fine him on spot. But for plastics, if it comes from somewhere else, the wind can blow it and the enforcement officer does not have anyone to report. That creates an avenue for us to be able to identify where is the plastic coming from.

Lastly, the enforcement officer will not have anyone to repeat because who threw the rubbish, that is because who threw the rubbish or the plastic and that is one issue. We can only identify where is the plastic coming from. It might be from a store from there or so.

The third point I would like to raise here about this Bill is, it is an amendment. Now, as I am sitting down, I am still filing my knife but the already I am or maybe I am told on how to use the knife. You are filing just one side of it. You should file it like

this, that is not practical, I am filing it and you will have to wait while I go and use it to brush. It is when I am doing that that you will have to tell me that it is not working or is not good, you have to go back and file it. And that is the issue about registration. All the Acts are amended along the way, they are improved along the way. So, I believe that the amendment of this Bill will clear the way that we can be able to change the existing Act. But it is not working out, we must bring it back. We must legislate for it and change it.

Honiara City as we have said already is one of the dirtiest cities in the region. What does that mean? Not only that but the biggest car park in the region so there are other ordinances where this legislation provides for that must be enforced. One is littering and the other is parking and the other is animal strays in Honiara. So, with this legislation, I believe that it will help us to endorse the ordinances of HCC.

The heavy fines mentioned in the Bill are meant to curb corruption. It is for the enforcement officers that make sure they are not corrupt. Why are we going to be lenient when we try to promote a country that is free from corruption. So it is better that the high fines are there, that is meant to curb corruption.

Lastly, I wish to convey the message to all citizens in this country that we must take ownership of Honiara. Honiara is our home. What is the home for? It is a home for us to do our education, medical attentions, to work as public servants and the list goes on. Please, let us take ownership of Honiara and be responsible.

Thank you and I support the Bill.

Hon. PETER SHANEL AGOVAKA (*Central Guadalcanal—Minister for Communication and Aviation*) (1 :48): Thank you very much Mr Speaker for allowing me the floor.

First of all, I would like to make some acknowledgment. I would like to thank the Minister for Home Affairs and the Member for Shortlands for bringing this amendment, the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023 to Parliament. Secondly, I would like to acknowledge the ever hardworking friend of mine, the Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee and Members of the Committee for bringing a Committee's report to Parliament for the indulgence of Members of Parliament. Also I would like to thank other speakers who have spoken before me. I subscribe to some of the points that have been raised during interventions but I do not subscribe to others as well.

Most of all, I would like to acknowledge the Member of Parliament for East Are'Are. The land which this House stands is in the capital of Honiara and it is in Guadalcanal, and the people of Guadalcanal are so pleased to host the capital of Solomon Islands, our beautiful country. for people from all over the country,

Honiara is a melting port for every body. But Honiara is not a home for the people outside. It is a place where they build houses, run businesses, education, medical treatment and other things, such as finding employment and jobs. That is what Honiara is, a melting port for people around the country to come and live.

As stated by the Member for East Are'Are, and I subscribe to his sentiments. Honiara is not a home. It is where people build houses, a structure to keep families, children attending school and people seeking employment and medical treatment and to run business. When people go for holidays, they say that they are going home. That is what exactly happens

This brings the problem of no care attitude in Honiara. Nobody wants to own Honiara. Nobody care wants to care about it, hence, the attitude of throwing rubbish all over the place. We do not care about Honiara. We do not have the pride of a city in our country. For us in Guadalcanal, we feel sad. We welcome you but how you treat our capital makes some of us sad.

The Member for Gao and Bugotu, when we went to China, in Beijing, on the way to the hotel, he mentioned this, 'hey honorable Minister of Aviation'. He was looking at the landscaping there. Trees and flowers were lining so well. The city is so clean. I turn around and said, 'do you see anything like this in Honiara?' No! This is where people of those cities are part of the cities because people can come and appreciate their city and very beautiful. When you go around the pacific and also Papua New Guinea, as for some of us studying at PNG, Port Moresby is one of the dirtiest city at that time but now they are clean. Their by-laws are really working and also enforced to a point where people are starting to respect and they are having a partnership where they corporate and respect their city. So much so that it is a learning curve for all of us. Most of you that have travelled overseas have seen other cities have flare up in terms of landscaping and beautifying their city. For us Honiara we can do that as well.

It is a good start with this Bill. It is just an amendment to amend the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) of 2023 and it prescribes other matters inside this Bill.

Of course, the Member for Small Malaita alluded to the fact that we do not need this Bill because we already have existing ordinances. This is true. There are other ordinances that already existed in the City Council, like the Market Ordinance, Litter Ordinance, Building Ordinances, the Business License ordinance, Hawkers Ordinance, Commentaries Ordinance, Parks and Recreation Grounds Ordinances, Ice and Aerated Water Factories Ordinances, Bakery Ordinances, and even the Dogs Ordinance, the Prevention of Sale of Traditional Artifacts Ordinance and Car Park Ordinances.

So there are existing ordinances or by-laws in the City Council. These are very important for enforcement. Its penalties and how we give power to those who will be enforcing this and how we administer the arrest, the fines, and so forth.

It is never too late. This Bill comes at a time when we need it the most. Not only for the green games but for ever after that. We do not just clean up Honiara City because of the green games, but for all times. Allow the ordinances to be there, and we can improve on them.

This ordinance spells out the out provisions, but when it comes to the nitty-gritty of it, we can put it in the regulations. A regulation that spells out we can act on certain clauses of this ordinance, or by law, if you want to call it that.

The report by the Bills and Legislation Committee highlights and focuses on certain things that appear in this Bill and I would like to say that it is not only charging business houses and shop owners for the infringements of trash on their door steps of 7 meters. But we must also look at our seafront because people just dump rubbish there, and our streams and rivers are used as dumping grounds for rubbish. And each time it rains in Honiara, our roads are flooded with all the waste and rubbish that comes down from those residing up on the Hills. That causes a lot of problems on the main roads in Honiara. So much so that we wonder whether our civil engineers properly designed the drainages or not.

But I hope they have thought about it, but our problem is that when the waste is flooded down, they clogs up, and the spillover goes onto our roads and causes a lot of problems for our vehicles. Not only our seafront or streams and rivers but also our residence. Some of the residences will surprise you. I was observing the discipline force's residence. When we drove by the houses of the police officers, they even could not look after their yards. So these are the kind of attitudes we have. We expect others to come and do it for us. Clean our backyards, front yards, side yards, and every side of your house. It is important to make sure that during the games our residence, our business houses, our industries, our drainage system, our water ways, our rivers and streams are clean so that people can appreciate the beauty of Honiara City.

I want to talk a little bit on the penalties. After this Bill is passed, the Minister and his committee or the Ministry in conjunction with the City Council will come up with regulation to regulate how these penalties are administered. We should be able to issue tickets, like a parking ticket. When you go to Australia and if you park on the wrong place or over speeding, they will flag you down and write up a ticket for you and within a week or two you should be able to pay that ticket or else you will be punished for it. That is the kind of administrations that we will be looking at in terms of administering the penalties.

One thing that I do not agree with here is that the fund is used to pay those Law Enforcement Officers. That should not happen. The Enforcement Officers should come under the payroll of the City Council. Do not depend on the fine to pay these people. It does not work that way. It give rise to what we call corruption. It give rise to infringement that these people will be bias in certain situation and circumstances. We must stop this! Do not allow the funds that are collected to be used to pay the Law Enforcement Officers. They should come under direct payroll of the City Council.

Some of the highlights that was made here are very true. Let us go further. This one is for City Council; but we must think of our other provinces as well. The urban centers like; Lata, Kirakira, Auki, Gizo, Munda, Taro. There must be similar kind of a Law that our people there should respect the environment. Do not throw rubbish anyhow, anywhere. We must also educate our people as well. As I have said earlier, this is a learning curve. We are so used to throwing rubbish in the rivers, seas and all over the place, and our backyard. Now it is a learning curve that we should not do that. We must make our surroundings clean. Someone says 'cleanliness is next to godliness'. That is very true.

So the emphasis should go down to schools as well. Starting from primary schools to secondary schools; that they should recognize how to clean their environment. Do not throw rubbish. Education should go down to the students from the teachers, that information should go down and stay there. It becomes a habit. When you go up you will not depart from that habit or attitude.

Some said it is too late for this Bill. I will say this to you. Where there is a will, there is a way. This government has a will to pass this and we will enforce it. It is never too late ever. This Bill comes at the right time that we can display how Honiara is clean and people from the Pacific can appreciate it. Australians and New Zealanders are coming, as are Papua New Guineans, right down to the smallest state of the Federated State of Micronesia, Niue, Tuvalu, and Nauru, and they will appreciate Honiara. We have gone through a lot of changes. Honiara now has a stadium, and we have to look after it too. The new road from Fishing Village right up to Henderson These are new developments that are happening in our city and town, and we should be so proud of them. So much so that we have to look after it. So much so that we do not throw rubbish around, and we maintain its cleanliness.

During our darkest hours, moments like this can help us focus on what Honiara will be. Moments like this allow us to focus on how beautiful this city will be. Moments like this allow us to tell our children and grandchildren that yes, we passed a law that will help us clean our city. That is the message that goes to schools, families, and everybody.

We, the Guadalcanal people, are so happy to host Honiara, and we are so pleased that the Games are here, and our people will come in numbers during November to watch the games because they are on our island.

In concluding, I would like to say, We pass this Bill; it is never too late; where there is will, there is a way. It is a learning curve for all of us, and there is no better time to start with this Bill than now. So that we can go forward. With these few remarks, I support the Bill. Thank you.

Mr. ALFRED TUASULIA (*West Kwara'ae*) (02:06): Thank you for giving me this opportunity to contribute to the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill of 2023. I would like to thank the Ministry concerned, the Bills and Legislation Committee, and other stakeholders for bringing this Bill to this House. Also, I want to thank the Opposition Leader for his immense contribution to this Bill. Thank you to the Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee for the intriguing wisdom shown in his presentation so far.

On the outset, the area to which I would like to allude in my contribution is infringement, notices, and penalties. I know that the people who will be really affected by these penalties or those who will be given notices are people whom I see as private users of our public facilities, their drivers, and their families. The taxi owners, drivers, and their passengers as well. When the Bill comes and the penalties come, whether they are victims or not, I will say that in my conclusion. The bus owners, drivers and passengers, the pedestrians, the people who use the road. If we do not have good time to educate them or to make awareness programs, even those that will come to watch this Pacific Games, they will be victims of this law.

When a passenger travels in a taxi and throws or spits on the road, is it the taxi owner who will be the victim or not? How best would this law addresses on how it will be able to do compliance and due diligence checks on the business houses and their surroundings. The residents and their surroundings. How would be able to catch them whilst the taxi owners or the users in the public facilities would be easier to catch up on them. Every day, the enforcement officers of ours will be sent and it will be very easy for us to penalize them. When the China Town was burnt, the business houses surrounding and around our houses had so many rubbishes. How will this Act best addressed this?

If we come to littering and give a broad definition of what littering is all about, I believe the Minister of Environment had a good definition on whether throwing of plastics, betel nut skins and tissues, is that only littering? What about machineries and the wreck vehicles which are lying across the industrial sites? What will this law going to do? Does it address this?

Mr Speaker, I will conclude. I am cautioning that time is not favorable and I do not support this Bill.

(Speech in reply)

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Thank you Mr Speaker. I rise to wind up the debate of the Honiara City Amendment No.2 Bill of 2023.

First of all, I thank the Chairman of the Bills and Legislative Committee for taking the leadership, time and effort in scrutinizing the Bill. I also thank the members of the Bills and Legislative Committee for their roles in looking through and scrutinizing the Bill.

I also thank the honorable Members of Parliament who had contributed in the debate of this Bill on the floor of this honorable House. All of your contributions either by comments, critics and analysis has refined and prepare the Bill to become an Act of Parliament very soon.

To round up the discussion of the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023, I wish to address each 13 recommendation in order to provide more clarity to the House and also to our people who are listening to our debate. However, before I embark on the recommendations, it is imperative that I revisit the objective of the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023.

The Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023 is designed to amend the Honiara City Act of 1999. It is No.2 of 1999, to

(a) enable the issue of issue of infringement notices to person who allegedly commit offences under the ordinance of the payment of fixed penalties instead of being charged or prosecuted for the offenses and a penalty that maybe imposed on conviction being imposed on those persons. (b) provide for the appointment, functions and powers of the law enforcement officers,

(c) enable the City Council to detain persons.

That is what we asked the Parliament. The laws and ordinances are there but we give the powers to the enforcement where I heard a lot of discussions and so confused. We turn it around and makes it out of context but the object of this Bill is just very simple. We give the powers so that they can enforce the littering.

We have significant problems with regards to littering. I do not know what kind of definition those people are talking about. In simple English, littering means you make a dirt. I do not know what kind of definition and keeping our city clean. We cannot just wait for the miracle to happen but we must take proactive steps to

ensure that we address this problem. We must start now. If we do not, who will do it for us? You and I must take the first step now.

I do not subscribe to the views that we should withdraw, wait, re-develop and resubmit the Bill. Today is when we take the first step to ensuring that the person's entrusted to enforce the ordinances are properly empowered to act. Why is that the opposition is so pessimistic. Cynicism is what has been stalling our development.

The Bill is also a step forward in modernizing our mechanism of enforcement. If we are able to have this mechanism applied as intended, infringement notices will be also employed by the police for minor infringement, such as traffic offences. The Bill repeals Section 37 of the Act and reword the enforcement officer to law enforcement officers. Therefore, we add law to it to become, law enforcement officers.

Having outlined the above objectives, I would now like to address the 13 recommendations that are outlined in the report by the Bills and Legislation Committee.

For recommendation 1 of the report;

a) the current Honiara City Council Litter Ordinance already provides for any breaches of its provision.

b) Appropriate Honiara City Council Ordinances and by-laws shall be enforced accordingly once the amendment passed.

Section 37 of the Honiara City Act of 1999, the Act is on liner and only states as follow and I quote:

"The City Council may employ such enforcement officer as it shall deem necessary for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of this Act and any ordinance it made it"

This is manifestly inadequate and this is why we are here today. They do not even have the power or even request any offenders to provide the prove of identity. This Bill gives the tools to do so with their job.

On recommendation 2, of the report, the Bill as it is now suffices that it does not provide for installment payments. On-the-spot fines are not meant to be paid in installments. That is the nature of this type of enforcement mechanism.

On recommendation 3, of the report the Bill provided adequately for fixed penalties. Now if a person with appropriate reason fails to pay before 12pm mid-day on that day, the person has to pay before the 12pm on the next day.

On recommendation 4, of the report, the Committee fails to understand the principle of accountability to Parliament. Facing an offence and penalty imposes restriction on citizens. Therefore, as Minister who is constitutionally assigned the responsibility of the Honiara City Council, it is the Minister who is responsible to Parliament.

That is why it is reflected as such.

For recommendation 5 in the report, for a start, Clause 55(j)(3b) provides that the payment of fines be made either at

- a) the cashier at the Honiara City Council
- b) the law enforcement officer

However, for a start, all payments are to be received by the City Council office until and unless appropriate mechanisms, including the appropriate training for law enforcement officers, are formulated.

On recommendation 6, the Bill adequately provides for the use of standard penalty units. For our purposes, one penalty unit is equivalent to \$1.

On recommendation 7 of the report, the Bill adequately provides for the Minister as the appointing authority for law enforcement officers because the Minister is the head of the Ministry and he makes representation in Cabinet and Parliament.

On recommendation 8, the Bill as it is now, suffices or adequate because the recruitment processes of the Honiara City Council law enforcement officers will be consistent with the appropriate recruitment guidelines. That is the general orders and best practices.

The training manuals will ensure that the recruitment of Honiara City Law enforcement officers are fair, transparent, credible, and on merit. The RSIPF has recruitment manuals, and there is nothing prohibiting the Honiara City Council from using the same recruitment manual to be modified to suit the Act.

The RSIPF has exam modules. The Honiara City Council, with the permission of the RSIPF, can use the same exams. After all this, it has to be a joint effort by everyone.

For recommendation 9 of the report, the Bill provides further payments of fees from the collections of fines. Now, this is one of the visionary concepts legislated in the Bill, and this is where we look into the future.

In other jurisdictions, collections of fines are contracted to private companies, or individuals. Otherwise normal enforcement officers are recruited and their wages are paid from City Council funds.

On recommendation 10 of the report, the Bill provides for the minimum qualifications for eligibility to become a law enforcement officer. However, the recruitment requirements and processes will be prescribed by regulations, which will include the requirement for medical reports, police clearance, a minimum level of education, etc.

For recommendation 11, the Bill, as it is now, is adequate and Divisions 4 and 5 need not be removed because detention of persons and prosecution of offenses under the Honiara City Council Act of 1999 and the appropriate Honiara City Council Ordinances and the Honiara City Council by law must be effectively carried out by the Honiara City Council Law enforcement officers.

The operations of the detention center shall be governed by an established standard operating procedure, or SOP, consistent with the United Nations minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners.

Recommendation 12 for the report, as I have said, is consistent with the Honiara City Council Priority Action Plan on capacity building and developing training manuals for the HCC law enforcement officers.

On recommendation 13, the Bill is adequately provides that since the City Clerk is the head of the Honiara City Council administration, and acting on the advice of the legal officer within the Honiara City Council, he or she can approve cases for prosecution. For recommendation 14 of the report, the intention, spirit and content of the Bill appear to be adequate and in order and therefore cannot be withdrawn.

That is from those recommendations. If we withdraw this one, during the Pacific Games, we will not control market vendors around the vicinities of the stadium. So we have to pass this.

I must highlight here that the appropriate consultation meeting on the Honiara City Council (Amendment) Bill 2023 were conducted with Stakeholders. Formal invitations were transmitted and those who responded and attended the schedule meeting. Consultation includes representative from the Ministry of Police and National Security, the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Honiara City, Correctional Services Solomon Island, Law Reform Commission, Honiara City Council, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Development Service Exchange responsible for NGOs in Solomon Islands and the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce responsible Business Houses in Solomon Islands. To say that consultation was not done properly, I do not believe that. So consultations were done in accordance to what we have in the Bill here.

The draft Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023 was also circulated to all government Ministries and Stake Holders for comments and feedback prior to the

consultation meetings. We have made available the meeting minutes in respect of the consultation meetings conducted. Awareness in respect of the Honiara City (Amendment)(No.2) Bill 2023 shall proceed immediately once it is passed.

Clause 55(q) of the Bill. The offences under clause 55(q) of the Bill are set high for the purpose. Whilst it may seem to the other side of the House that the level of fines maybe inconsistency with other legislations, it serves as a purpose. A penalty must be seen as a deterrent effect and when implemented impose hardship. It is also imperative to note that the penalties provided are the maximum penalties for that particular offence. The Courts, when handing down sentencing, will impose the appropriate sentence accordingly. The Court, after hearing submissions, may impose a sentence of perhaps \$2,000 or an imprisonment of one month for the first offenders. This is the discretion of the Courts.

It is also in the public interest that officers carrying out their duties be allowed to carry out their duties without any hindrance whatsoever. Our people must not think that they can hinder Honiara City Council Law Enforcement Officers and not be dealt with accordingly.

Before I conclude, I find it quite disturbing that there is a call to lower the penalties so that the penalties are reasonable. Clause 55(q) also provides for the offences of bribery. Corruption offences are serious in nature and by making the penalties intended to stop corruption reasonable. We must in fact condone corruption activities. I find it very hard to see the logic in such a call.

To conclude, I just want to say that the Honiara City (Amendment)(No.2) Bill 2023, once passed, will make the work of Honiara City Council Law Enforcement Officers more effective. The Bill, once passed, will make positive change on littering in Honiara City. The duty to keep Honiara City clean is upon all of us. So my advice is that if we do not want this law to charge us, then we must abide by the law. Do not throw rubbish all over the place; take our rubbish and dispose of it in areas where it is to be disposed of. That is the rule. Everywhere has its own laws. In the village, we have our own laws, our bylaws, that we follow, so why can't we follow them in the city? We must keep this city clean, and that is all I am saying to everyone. Governments will come and governments will go; councilors will come and go; but the city belongs to all of us, and we thank the people of Guadalcanal for allowing this city to be in their lands, and we must keep it clean in respect to them. I think that is my comment in response to this Bill.

With those remarks, I beg to move that the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023 be read a second time.

Questions put and agreed to

(Bill is committed to the Committee of the Whole House)

THE HONIARA CITY (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 2023

Committee Stage

Mr CHAIRMAN: We are now in the Committee of the Whole and we will deal with the bill clause by clause.

Clause 1 agreed to

Clause 2

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Just for the Minister to tell the Committee whether he has any date in mind?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: The answer to that is as soon as it is gazetted.

Clause 2 agreed to

Clause 3 agreed to

Clause 4 agreed to

Clause 5 agreed to

Clause 6

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Thank you. Let us go to Division 1 55(f)(3), which is on page 5 of the Bill. This term 'on or before 12pm on the day on which the infringement notice is given to the person'. Here under 55(f), a law enforcement officer will issue or has 14 days to issue infringement notice but on that day when he issued the accused person or offender, on that day the person has to pay at 12pm or before 12pm.

Does he has an option to pay it immediately to the law enforcement officer, if you had trained them already and has a receipt book or so and pay it on the spot if he has money? That side of it is okay if it works like that.

But in terms of when the person does not have the full amount of money with him and then he infringe after 12 pm, at 1pm, what will happen in that situation?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: If it is not at 12 pm on today then he can pay by 12pm by tomorrow. That is the answer.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Where is that 12pm by tomorrow in the bill? Which provision covers that. You are starting to make your own laws, it is not in here.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Maybe the AG can clarify that good point. I am not making up my own but the AG will clarify that.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (2 :37): The interpretation Act tells that if the time put goes beyond the time that is put, you can go to the next day. That is how we apply this, if it is 1pm then you can apply it to the next day. That is how our Interpretation Act makes the interpretations.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Thank you, that is helpful. Is that just for only a day? or if you miss the next day, you can go for the other next day? Just for clarification.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (2 :38): It is 12 pm the next day. The time is 12 but if the time is after 12 then it goes to the next day.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Maybe for the AG to clarify it a bit more to me. In this clause, it talks about the day the infringement notice is given. So that day, can we interpret it as the following day. So if the date is 14th. So the next day is 15th, so can we assume that this date applies to the date of infringement notice is for the next day?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (02:39): It is because that once the time is passed, it cannot go back to that time. It has to apply to the next time the next day. Say, it is 12pm, you have to put it to 12pm the next day, because it specifically mentions 12pm.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: On the same point, which is a follow up question on 55(g)3(7). It reads 'that the fix penalty must be paid by 12pm on the day the notice is given to the person'. You said that it can be moved to the next day but the wording include 'must' and 'by 12pm' and 'same day' that the notice is issued. If it is issued today, it means that it will not be issue tomorrow or the day after. That is my lay understanding

ATTORNEY GENERAL (02:41): If you look at that section, it is what an infringement must contain. Therefore, if I am a law enforcement officer and give you that infringement notice, but it is 1pm, I will put on that infringement notice that you will pay the fine by 12pm tomorrow. That is what this is trying to tell us. It is the infringement notice that must contain what is specified on 55(g)3(b) 1-XI.

The stated time is the penalty on the day because it already passed the time to issue and therefore it automatically moves to the next day. So I will put on the infringement notice the time that you will pay.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Coming back to the Minister on the policy choice. The issue of the installment payment on penalties. Many jurisdictions do this. The penalty is still relatively high and so it does has a deterrent effect but the affordability of it is that they will give maybe a couple of weeks or days to pay off

this fine so that we do not end up in creating too many cases go through prosecution and to the prison but people will pay and when they finish the installment, they feel that they will not commit the same thing again. Why has that policy choice was not taken up?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I think the penalty fines will not be big. It depends on how much they will charge. It will not be paid in installment. It could be \$200 dollars or \$50 dollars. I believe the fines should be paid. If you fail to pay, then it will result high penalties. The AG can further clarify that in the area of Courts.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: I would like to ask another question so that the AG can clarify both of them. So who gets to determine that when the law enforcement officer issues the infringement notice, he puts the fine on it. If you have the money in your pocket, then you pay on the spot. So obviously, the law enforcement officer is the first point of reference to determine the fine. How can we determine this?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (2 :44): The scheme of things would be that, in the Ordinances, you would prescribe that as the maximum fine. For example, for littering, the fine that will be imposed on you is \$,2000 for throwing rubbish. Now 55(j) says that 'Minister may regulations prescribe the maximum fees on fixed penalties'. So the Minister will fix that.

In terms of the on-the-spot fine, for the \$2,000, it will be \$50 or \$100. That is what the law enforcement officer puts in the infringement notices. So it is the Minister who will prescribe the amount of the fix on-the-spot fine. As the Minister states, if the offender fails to pay this small amount, then they can go to Court so that the Court may mitigate it to whether \$100 or \$1,000; the Court will decide on that. But the fix fine is as prescribed by the Minister under clause 55(j)(1).

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: In terms of the interaction that we just had, the AG is talking about fix penalties and penalties. So I would like to know if this is the same thing? One is clause 55(e)(1)(b), which is penalty. Then in 55(j)(2) talks about fixed penalty. Can the AG clarify if these two are the same?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (2 :47): Section 55(e) sets out the purpose of that part, which says that this division enables the person who commits the offense to pay this fixed penalty. So that gives the reference to the fix penalties that the Minister will make.

The fix penalty is a reference to the on-the-spot fines, where the Minister, for example, might say the on-the-spot fine is \$50 for throwing of rubbish. But the Ordinance will be the one setting the maximum penalty for each offense.

This amendment is just to enable our law enforcement officers to set or give the on-the-spot fine for that specific offense under that specific Ordinances, which we already have, as the Minister stated.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Thank you for that clarification. That is clear. What the Minister needs to make it clear is when the regulations will come. We have the Games coming up and we need the regulations to come quickly. A lot of these things will depend on these regulations that are yet to come.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, honorable member. Just to clarify: Do you mean regulations out of this or existing ordinance, which are already in the Honiara City Council Orders?

Which one of those? Regulations will have to come out from this Act of Parliament, if it is passed. Just for you to clarify so that Minister is focused on specific reference that you have made. Is it on the regulations? Which regulations? From this Act or existing ordinance, some of which were read out today? Sorry, Minister, I am just trying to seek clarification so that you can respond accordingly to his specific request. Minister please respond to the question by the Honourable MP for Small Malaita.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I presume maybe it is in this Act. So as soon as we pass it, we will work on the regulation for the fixed penalties.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Yes, it really would be helpful if the Minister gives the Committee the indicative amounts of those fixed penalties. Surely when you prepare this Bill, you would have discussed what are the penalties would look like as to how much the level of fixed penalties are. If you can give some indication to the Committee.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I think on those fixed penalties, consultations will be done to look at other jurisdictions before we come up with one that will work for us.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (2 :51): Just to elaborate further on what Minister said. The ordinances also need updating. So they are trying to review certain ordinances because some of those ordinances are from 1980s. So the fine that time is not proportionate into what we are experiencing today. So when that is done, then the next step would also be get the fixed penalties. So it would be quite difficult to say at the moment because of that. I am aware that a number of all our legislations need to be updated, that includes all our ordinances.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I do not know where we are, but I want to go to clause 55(f). At the top. Again still going back to this question on infringement notices. I am assuming the Law Enforcement Officers will only work from 8am to 4pm. Is that

correct? Are they going to work throughout the night as well, when they carry out this law?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: The nature of the duty of the HCC is on shift basis.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I am really happy on this one, in case they only work during the day and not night. In terms of the notice, is the officer going to mention the time of the notice in the notice? Maybe a minute past 12. They mix up 12pm and 12pm. These things must be really specified. And I am not sure, and even inside the infringement notice schedule is not really clear. In case, they confused 12 o'clock at midnight as 12pm. No, 12 midnight is not 12pm. I want the Minister to assure the Committee about the nitty gritty of these things because it will be a problem.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I think the Honorable Attorney General has explained it earlier on that even if it does not fall on 12pm that day then it will be next 12pm, on the next day, to pay for the fines. So 12 midnight, no one will be in the office. It is just common sense.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (02:55): Just for clarification. I think the question earlier was whether at night it would be applied. We may go to sleep, but the law never sleeps. Just like the police, when they are doing their jobs, even at night they patrol and such. So they will be doing their jobs as well. But the key is an infringement notice, as you have said. It is a date; if it is more than 12pm., then it goes towards the next 12pm. That is for clarification.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Just on that last bit. If it is beyond 12pm, it is okay if it is 12pm tomorrow. But what if it is just before 12pm? Can that be moved to 12pm the next day? Is that all right? I mean because there might be traffic and such.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (02:56): I was waiting for that question. Our law says that if I give you the fine and the time for you to pay, that is what the Interpretation Act says; as reasonably practical, you must go and pay. So if it is not reasonably practical for you to pay on that day, then it is the next day for you to go and pay. Yesterday, the Member for Small Malaita said that if he is at KG and they handed him the fine, but there is traffic coming down. So you take reasonable steps to come in and pay your fine. If you are not able to do it, then the next day is justifiable for you to come in and do it.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: That is good, but what if the next day is not so practical, then maybe the next day after is good too, because it says 'as practical'. My next question, and it is good that there is no history or policy choice, is that once he has paid the infringement notice in full, there is no admission of having committed an offense, and so there is no record kept of it. When those from the Magistrate Office appeared, they raised the issue of deterrence and repeat offenses. But obviously a

policy choice was made in this matter, so my question is, in making that choice, was this issue of deterrence and repeat offense considered? Thank you.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I think from the nature of the spot-fine, it will be like that, you will pay and if you offend you pay and so on.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: I mean if you pay \$200 and then \$200 even if it is 10 times or 20 times it all goes to the Town Council. So there will be no record or anything of it.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I think the answer to that will be yes. If he commits an offense, he will continue to pay fines as long as he pays for the fines. But if he does not want to pay for the fines, then he will go to the Courts.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (2 :59): The scheme of things is that the on the spot fine is an administrative issuance of fine as opposed to a judicial imposition of the fine. Now, it is when the person goes to the court that we record the fine because it is the court of record whereas this one is an administrative issuance of a fine. So, it is not recorded as a conviction, before you record the conviction, it is only the Court that can do that because you have to go through trial and so forth. But in this case, it is administrative issuance of a fine.

A number of our laws currently are doing that. The Fisheries Laws, we do compounding of offences where the Minister issues the fine. You compound that administratively. Customs, there are a number of fines like that as well. IRD and the Commissioner of Inland Revenue can also do that. So, it is the same principle applied here.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: One comment that came from those from the Magistrate and Law Reform Commission is on the fixed penalty from the time they give you the infringement notice, they put the penalty for you to pay. At this point, we still do not know on how much. But Minister, for you to consider, the point that they have raised is like this, if this is too heavy, it would seem that a lot of people will not be able to pay it. What will happen is that for a lot of them they will go to the court. The detention center will be filled with them. I want the Minister to comment on how practical will be apply this. I am sure that he is thinking a lot on the level of this penalty- we do not make it that so that it is easy for people to break it but if we continue and it is very hard for people, then it will be just like on what we are trying to avoid. In other words, going to the court or not taking it to the court.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I think the Attorney General has explained it that it is an administrative fine. The nature of it is, people will not be overcharged so that they be detained. Unless, they do not want to pay it then they will be detained for the

courts or so. This is just an administration fine, it will be very reasonable. No body will be finding it hard to pay.

You have been paying a lot of fines outside like \$10,000 to do with custom. This will only be a small fine. It should not hold the people longer in the detention centers.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: So, the level of penalty is small to the Minister but for everyone else, that I do not know. Any way, hem must think about it because the ordinance that will prescribe it.

My question is on clause 55(g)(3)(a) on the unique number. For the Minister to explain to the Committee on the unique number system and how it will work.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: This unique number is a notice reference number. It is the reference number of the notice.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: You asked me so, but I am going to 55(m), perhaps to the Attorney General. In the construction on sub-clause 1 of clause 55(m). We are used to seeing when we see this construction 'acting on the advice of..' we are used to seeing ...'the Minister shall...'. In here it says 'may'. If the Attorney General can clarify it?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (03:04): It does connote a discretion on the Minister. Normally, in our other Acts, we put 'acting on the advice', to compel the Minister. With this one, we still retain the discretion, but the triggering of that is that advice must come beforehand from the City Council.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: It would have been better, maybe they should just say 'consult', but in any case, then the 'City Council' would mean the full Council. It means that the full Council must move a Motion or resolution to give the names of the people to the law enforcement. They would have to vote on it or debate. Is it the full process of the Council that is expected here?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (03:05): That is correct. For the City Council, it is a reference to the full City Council and will be a resolution and is passed. The scheme of things would be that be that an exam is held when the recruitment process is made. When it is done, all the names will come to the full City Council and they meet to resolve to advice the Minister to appoint these people as law enforcement officers under the Act. The Minister will then act upon that resolution.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: If I just ask on the policy side on that to the Minister. Why that option was taken and not using the normal option that does not involve debates of the Motion on the floor of City Council.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: It will go through the normal process of recruitment and will go to the City Council and they will look at it and give it to me for appointment of law enforcement officers. It is the process.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: That is normal. I mean you have normalized it in this choice. But it is not a normal situation for recruitments to go through an elected assembly and then by way of resolution, they pass it, and then the list, as explained by the Attorney General, that list will invoke you to say yes or no on the entire list, yes or no to some on those list. That side maybe good. But the other side is that this does not rule out the possibility. They are politician just like you. When it goes to the motion or resolution, the normal process of the recruitment is already done, but one of the campaign manager is missing and one Councilor might want to push that person in. This just opens it a little to that kind of influence.

So that was my question. It is not so much the process proceeding this one, but why you made the policy choice to go through City Council in this manner, as opposed to advertise, shortlist, interview and give awards.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: The normal process will continue, such as advertisement and requirements under the recruitment process and then go to training. After passing the exams, the list will be passed on to the Minister to appoint those that meet the criteria. I think that is the process.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (3 :09): There is a legal answer to that. Because they are Law enforcement officers of the City Council, so in order for them to work for the City Council, the Council must legally recommend them to do this work. In the government sense, it will be the Public Services Commission that will be doing the appointing. In this case, the body that officially recommends to the Minister is the City Council. So legally, they see it fit to leave that to the City Council. According to the City Council Act, it must be done by the full Council. So we follow that pathway.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: So it is the Principal Act that specifies or prescribes that the full City Council makes these kinds of law enforcement or recommendations to the Minister? So in what ways do their current law enforcement done? And perhaps to clarify it further, can the Attorney General explain how our national police are appointed and how that is different from what is envisaged here?

And if I can just go back to what the Minister said. He states that the normal process will be applied. They will go through training and after passing, the list will go to him after it is approved by a full Council approval. So when they go into training, they are still not appointed. So for these trainings, who will be involved? SO there is no appointment before you are qualified to go for training? Do you have some provisional kind of approval?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I think they will first be trained and qualified before we can endorse them as legal officers. If they fail, they will not be endorsed. That is how I can answer you.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (3 :12): It is Section 37 of the current Act that governs the employment of the 'enforcement officers'. It does not say 'law enforcement officers'. Section 37, as read by the Minister, basically says that the City Council may employ 'enforcement officers'. The definition of the City Council is the Honiara City Council, which includes the big list that is pinned, which includes the ex-officio. So that is the scheme, and we just adopt what Parliament has passed. So we do not reinvent other ways.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: Just a question regarding Division 3, 55(m)(2) on training. For those candidates for law enforcement officers, what level of education is required of them? And where will these trainings be held? Or are you going to have your own appropriate training for them to pass before recruited?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I think in every training, it has a criteria. We cannot just enlist someone who has no education because they will not understand those requirements. So the criteria will be set out. So when the criteria for recruitment will be set out, they are going to select it from form seven or maybe students or ex-police officers or whoever. But criteria will be set out so that we can do the selection for the training. It is not hand picked. So there will be criteria set out for recruitment. There will also be training manuals. The police also uses that. Like what I said during my wind up speech, we will working with the police to look at their manual set up so that we can do it in HCC to fit in with the HCC Act.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: So you talk about manual. I heard that the training sounds like the police training in particular. Are we going to use police facilities for training, or will you come up with your own training programs and facilities?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Yes, it will be tailored with the HCC one to look at how we can fit in. They need to know everything in the Act and other ordinances. They need to be well versed before they can pass it before we take them as Law Enforcement Officers. If there is any clarifications, I think the Attorney General can help. But that is how we see it. We look at the police and correctional services programs and tailor it to fit in with the HCC Act.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I am still on clause 55(g) on this infringement notice; because this one is the core of what we want to make-

Mr CHAIRMAN: Just for the record Honourable it is at section 55(g). We are in clause 6 of the Bill.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: So I am on page 5. Am I in the right place Chairman?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Yes

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Ok, so this section that—

Mr CHAIRMAN: If you look at the principal Act, it says after Section 55 of the principal Act, than all the subsequent sections pursuant to Section 55 of the principal Act.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Right; ok so Clause 55(g)(3) is what I am looking at. infringement notice. I asked the Minister today to explain it to me, but I do not really understand what he explained. So I am assuming that those infringement notices they just write it in the office. It is the Law Enforcement Officer, if he or she finds five people that cause infringements, he or she will take note of their names and brings it back to the office before writing the notice. That notice will be issued within 14 days. The Minister did not mention whether it will be issued at that same time or not. I am assuming the notice will be written in the office. So whatever the process is, this notice is what I would like to know some of the features of it.

On Clause b(ii) that says 'name and address'. I want to know what kind of address? P.O Box or village? In Honiara, even though we live along the streets, we do not know exactly the names because people just give directions. I would like to know, minister, which address?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Thank you for the question. For the address, if you reside in the village, then you write the village. If you are in the town then you write the areas in the town where you live. For example; Naha and which house. Currently we do not have this housing numbers, I do not know if Lands have the streets and housing numbers. In overseas, they have house numbers and such. A lot of the properties are being built all over the place and corners and they do not have numbers and no allocation to the house numbers. But the details of the address is what they will collect from the card, the electoral registration cards. We can use that.

Currently, we do not have the national ID cards for us to get information from it. So the law enforcement officers will come with a standard form that will require your name and address and it will also prescribe quickly what your offense is for you to go and pay for. It could be a short thing, it is not like you will be going to Court. Your infringement is only states what you have done and your fine and that is all. If he does not like it, then he will go to Court. But what I am saying is that the addresses is where he resides.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: So the address is, if he is living in the village, for example; Santa Cruz or wherever. That is what the Minister meant. So it is quite important for us to articulate this very well. I do note the difficulty of the Minister in his explanation.

My next question is to do with the next two sub-clauses in (iii) and (iv) that mentions drivers and vehicles. I am assuming that the offenses and infringements, not only the drivers and passengers in the vehicles, is that correct?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Before I answer this question, I would like to go back to the question the he is not clear on. For example; some people from Ngella come across and they caused an infringement, but they do not live here. They come to do their marketing and they go back. Or those from GPPOL come over and so if they do something wrong and they are charged. They do not live in Honiara for the address. That is why I said they must write where in the Provinces that they live at. Can you repeat your question again?

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: My question is to do with (iii) and (iv) that specifically mention drivers license. So I am assuming motor vehicles and registration number of the vehicle. So I am assuming vehicles too. What I am saying is, I am assuming that infringement that we want to stop people from is not to do with motor vehicles only, but people walking on the streets too. Am I correct?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Yes, that is correct.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: So, I am going back to this difficulty that we have with address. Once an offender or a person that a law enforcement officer suspects of an infringement, he is issued with a notice and he is from Renbel. So his address is in Renbel and he goes back. How do we detain or arrest him is what I would like to know, before he pays the fine. This is to ensure that he pays the fine, because we will write the notice and give it to him and gives him until 12 either midday on the same day or the other day. How will be detain him?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I think that is one clause there that mentioned that the law enforcement officer can take from him through on the spot fine on that time because that person will have to go, so he can collect the cash. That is covered there but we said that, he should not take it because corruption can happen. But those are the areas that we are looking at practically.

If the person takes the notice but the he leaves for the ship to Auki, then to fine the person on spot. That is how the clause allows the law enforcement officers to receive there the fine itself.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: So, this point that I had been talking about on page 5 and all those previous pages is still relevant here. And that is to do with infringements. In response to my earlier question, the Minister said that when an infringement is committed, the law enforcement officer will clarify the law and issues the fine, say \$50, and the offender pays. The offender pays and get a receipt. That is how a spot fine works. My question is when it comes to the notice. I am

assuming that if the person fails to pay because there is not money. What will happen? Is that when a notice is issued in order to give time for the offender to pay or just wait to go to prison?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I refer that question to the Attorney General to elaborate more on that.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (03:30): If I may just reiterate that your question is on address, if the offender cannot pay the fine?

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Yes.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (03:30): Section 55(g) specifically outlines what an infringement notice contains. If you see what is outlined under sub-clause (b) on paragraphs in Roman numeral and if you go back at the end of the schedule and in schedule 7, you would see the form. The form is a reflection of what is outlined in the infringement notice.

In terms of having asking for the address. In clause 55(n), you will see the number of powers that we give to the law enforcement officers as well. One is asking you to give your details. If you give a wrong detail and lie, it is an offence under the Penal Code, that you defraud or fraudulent in providing your information.

When we ask for details, that is where it is provide. It is the place where they can be found. Bear in mind that we do not have post codes so that we can identify houses. The law enforcement officer can also ask if you are residing with anyone, so the he or she can write 'care of someone'. Those are the powers the law enforcement officer has. But previously, we do not have that.

The law enforcement officer does not have the power to ask for anything or to carry out searches. We have that here. That is why we fill up the content here and has those powers given to him or her to do what is required to do under the Act.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: The example of the Minister is what I will go back to it. This person is at the Commonwealth street and commit an infringement but he was to go to the ship. It seems that the law enforcement officer will hold him or her if he or she cannot pay this fixed penalty. What does kick in? Is it the arrest or infringement notice?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I can answer the question but it might be different. So I would like to refer to the Attorney General to answer. what I can say is that the fine itself is not big. It is small. If the offender has the money to travel back, then he or she has money. In terms of detaining, the AG can clarify.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (3 :34): Let us look at a practical example. If that offender is about to leave by ship, but before he leaves, the law enforcement officer may form his opinion on that person whom he want to issue the infringement notice to him. This person will likely to be absconded by leaving. And if the offender commits littering offence, then the ordinance has imprisonment fine on it, that gives the law enforcement officer the power to make the arrest. So the law enforcement officer can arrest the offender and detain him. But if this ordinance where the fine is stipulated is just for a fine, then basically the officer can escort the offender to the City Council to pay the fine right away. But the officer needs to form the opinion of the person at that time as wanting to abscond. Then the powers that the law enforcement officer has, as outlined in 55(n), can become effective. So the law enforcement officer has a number of powers here.

He could also, under 55(n)(2)(h), seize or return a number of goods. If the offender may really wants to leave, the law enforcement officer can seize their goods, for example their phones, until the offender pays a fine, then the goods can be returned to them. So those are the tools that the law enforcement officer has to exercise in their power as under 55(n).

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: As a minister, when you say 'small', be reminded that you are a Minister and your 'small' could mean \$1,000. To our people, a 'small' could be \$10 and below. I ask this question because I did not hear you specify the amount, which you say is 'small'.

In my experience, those people who ask me for money, sometimes they do not even have \$10. It is funny, but this is real. So Minister, can you comfort the Committee that when you say 'small', is it \$10 and below? But if it is \$10 and above, then those people will be finding it hard.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The honorable attorney general could also clarify some of these penalties. If you look at Section 55(i) and (j), There is a call to define and take into consideration the circumstances. Can you explain those provisions in 55(i) and 55(j) on page 6?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (3 :38): As I stated earlier on, it will be quite difficult for us to set what is on the spot fine, because the Minister under 55(j) has the power to prescribe the fixed penalties on the spot fine. So currently, some of our ordinances, the fines could be worth \$100 or \$200. So if he has to come up with a spot fine, the maximum he can go to is the \$200. If the fine is \$200, he cannot go over to \$200. The on-the-spot fine would be a lesser amount of that. If it is \$20 or \$50, then that is what is to be prescribed.

Earlier on we said it is quite difficult for us to set that on-the-spot fine because the ordinances need to be reviewed too. Some of the fines are outdated, and at that time

they are not proportioned to the situation today. So it is after those reviews that the HCC may decide to increase the fine, or keep it. That is entirely up to them.

Yes, you are correct. The setting of on-the-spot fine is done by the Minister by way of regulation, but what the amendment says is that you must not go beyond the maximum amount in that specific ordinance that prescribe the fine.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: In the interaction of the Minister and myself in clause 55(f), he explained the spot fine the Law Enforcement Officer looks at the offence and charges the offender. I am look for where it empowers the law enforcement officer to do that, to enforce on-the-spot fine. Which part of these amendments?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Maybe the Attorney General can clarify to me on page 7, 55(j)(3)(b)(2) is that correct?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (3 :42): I believe your question is when the Act or the Bill empowers Law Enforcement to give infringement notices. Is that the question?

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: My question is, when does the Bill give authority to the Law Enforcement Officer to charge this penalty and receive it? Because that is how I think the fixed on-the-spot fine should work, but I tried to look at where will we make this happen? I am just asking the Minister to help me to understand what is my expectation on the spot fine that the law authorizes the Law Enforcement Officer to say that this offence, the penalty is here and you pay it now, or if not what will happen? That is another question I asked today. When will the infringement notice kicks in? Or he just arrest the offender the take him or her to detention?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (03:44): Thank you for that clarification. Maybe I will start on 55(c) so I will take us through the process. So 55(c) says that an ordinance is enforced by enforcement officers and as enforced by in a way specified in subsection 2(a) or (b) of 55(c) so 2(a) and (b) on page 3 on the top says that you either issue an infringement notice or you prosecute him.

The next step is we come to 55(f) which says that if a law enforcement officer believes that someone has committed a prescribe offense in an ordinance, that prescribed offense is as is defined under 55(a) you will see the definition there of what a prescribed offense is. From there, he will say that he is going to give you an infringement notice, that notice is in the content of 55(g) subsection 3 paragraph (a) and (b) and downwards. So it will say the type of offense that you committed and under which ordinance so then it will be outlined in the infringement notice. So then he will tell him (55)(8) about what is he given and he has a time to pay for it which is also included in the notice and if he does not pay it, he will then be prosecuted. As we all know 55(j) is where the prescribed amount is.

So 55(j)(3) talks about the date to pay and either you go to the City Council cashier and you pay for it or you pay it to the law enforcement officer at the time he issued your infringement notice. But as we have heard the minister mentioned in his wrap up speech, he said that at the moment we will only be implementing paying at the cashier because until mechanisms are in place for law enforcements to receive them, we will only be reverting to the cashier. So that is the process for payments.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Let us leave that, I am going to page 10. Page 10 the Functions and Powers of Law Enforcement Officers. So some of the powers there to enforce is quite primitive much more primitive than those allowed under and policemen say, and I am looking at it, especially, for example 2(b) 2(e). So I would like to know, this law and power that the authority that the law enforcement officers have, they do not need the magistrate to give them a warrant, if they want to enter and search premises. The power is given directly to them to do that.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: If I may refer that question to the Attorney General to clarify this.

Mr CHAIRMAN: You might want to repeat the question.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: When we met with the Police during the Bills and Legislation Committee, they were a bit surprised on those powers. Is it true that they do not need a court order to enter and search premises as in 55(n)(1)(b) and as in (e) as well, to search the bags of anyone and everyone. The law enforcement officers do not require any Court Order or Magistrate Warrant or any warrant to do this?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (3 :50): Police also enjoy a number of powers that do not need warrants and it is also the same here. In the criminal procedure Court, there are a number of things that the Police can do. Even the Police Act as well.

In terms of this, for the procedures to arrest or detaining a person, they must comply with the criminal procedure code. It is clear and that is what 55(m)(7) mentions, that the procedure for arresting or detaining a person under this section must comply with criminal procedure code.

In 6, it also says the same, the law enforcement officer who arrest a person under sub section 2 must not do so until or unless in accordance with warrant obtained by a Magistrate. Now, entering and searching premises which is used to commit or prescribe an offence, he can go without warrant because he already had a probable cause to go. It is if you do not have a probable cause, then yes, like if someone commits an offence inside the house, you can go in but if the person goes and hide in another place, then you suspect, then yes, you need a warrant to go and do that. But where offence is committed in that particular place, for that you can go. Power

is given for you to go in because that is the place where the offence is committed. This is because you already have probable cause that the offence has been committed. So, the precursor is, an offence has been committed in that place.

That is what (b) is mentioning, that enter and search premises or vehicle which appeared to be used or have been used for committing the alleged offence. But for any other place to go, yes you need a warrant.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Thank you. So, for this, it is on the discretion of the law enforcement officer. Is that correct?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (3 :53): That is correct, but he must form the opinion around it that an offence has been committed in that particular place. If no offence is committed, he cannot go in or she cannot go in. There must be an offence that is what this section is saying.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Division 4 deals with detention of persons. I want the Minister if he can assure the Committee on the capability and capacity of the Honiara City Council to comply with the standards required under the United Nations Minimum Standard Rules for treatment of prisoners.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: The law enforcement officers, in terms of the detention, they are working with the police and use the holding cells of the police regarding issues on detention. After this, the HCC will be working on how they can build the detention centers that will be in standard, which is required under the United Nations requirements. Currently, they are working with the police. They are using the holding cells at Central Police station or the leave house. On the issues of offence, they arrest the betel nut vendors and put them there. However, there is no law and so they just release them.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: I want the Attorney General to clarify that in 55(r)(1), which stated that 'City Council may detain persons'. Does this become subject to say CPC or any other law that determine the length and how much length of time in detention?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (05:57): That is correct, 55(n)(7) explicitly stated that any arresting or detaining of person must comply with the criminal procedure code, but then when we go and detain them, it must comply with that because the place they stay in is the detention and must comply with the minimum terms here.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: What was the maximum length or duration of time, say under here, City Council may detain a person.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (03:58): My criminal law is a bit rusty, I think after 24 hours you must bring him before a Magistrate to deal with that, then the Magistrate

can officially detain him for remand. I think it is 24 hours. Pardon me if my criminal law is a bit rusty on this.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: On 55(r)(1)(b). The established facilities to detain those persons. When I was debating on this, I asked whether it will be one facility for both men and women, or one for men and one for women. If the minister can confirm that to the Committee?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: The safe house will look after the males and females separately. Males and females will have different areas for detention.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (3 :59): The minimum terms of the Nelson Mandela's rules actually state that males and females must be separated. So we must comply with that.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I am still worried about the UN minimum standard rules because I do not know the state of the facility that the Minister is mentioning. Is it a leaf house or what is it? Can he assure the Committee on that because it is a very important obligation under this law of the Honiara City Council.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: The minimal UN standard rules fits human habitation. So it has standard bedding, which is required under the United Nations Standard Rules of housing prisoners when they are detained.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: In terms of the detention facility, when the delegates from Honiara City Council appear before us and we asked them about it, they said that they would convert one of the rooms on their premises into a detention center. Is that what you also understand, Minister, or is it somewhere else because we are talking about UN standards here?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: If that is what they say, then they will do it. So I assume that they will renovate one of their rooms to detained offenders.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (4 :02): The reference to the minimum standard rule or Nelson Mandela's rules, it is a document that has 36 rules. It covers food, access to a doctor when they are sick, segregation of males and females, must have toilet facilities, respect for the dignity of the person, no torture, etc. These are the minimal terms that everyone can comply with.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: We are talking about people who are yet to go to Court or convicted in Court. In terms of the minimum rules, if part of the rules are not complied with on the part of City Council, would that likely create a liability on the part of Council, if one of the detained persons should turn around and then sue for the City Council not meeting the minimum standards in its entirety? Would a liability be created in that situation?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (4:04): Clause 55(r)(2) explicitly states that detention of a person must be in accordance with the Constitution and the minimum terms. So if that is not in accordance with that, the person who has been detained can apply to the Court for redress, but the onus is on City Council to ensure the person must comply with both.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: This is a big problem for me. We will probably be filling up the detention center with people who commit those infringements and fail to pay, like \$50, \$100. The things that Attorney General read, I do not know the costs. But anyway, the Minister should know.

I would like to ask a different question on page 15, on the meaning of visitor. I want the Minister to clarify this to the Committee. I would like to know why this meaning does not include relatives, legal council, medical officer etc. The detainees will need them. I want to know why do we choose not to include this persons? Is this a policy choice?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: If you look at 55(t), it says this is an inspection of detention facilities. They are the only ones who can inspect the facilities.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Honourable Minister. For the Minister you repeat the response to the question.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: With regards to the question raised by the Member for Small Malaita, 55(t) on the heading says, 'visits and inspection of detention facilities'. So those on a, b, c & d are the ones allowed to inspect those facilities.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: That is also what I read. The visitors means a, b, c, & d. So on sub-clause 2, those are the only people who can enter the facilities. I am asking, what if the mother of the detainee wants to visit. Or if he or she is sick and is need of a doctor or nurse?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (4:08): This section is specifically designed for maintaining conditions and treatment. To check the balance on what occurs in the detentions center. That is why the definition of 'visitor' is limited to a certain person. In terms of the subsection that you rightly mentioned, they are the only ones allowed to enter and inspect. So (3) goes on to say that when you go in and inspect, you must inquire into (a) the treatment, behavior, and conditions of the persons detained and must not interfere.

Basically, they are there to do a report on what this detention center is. Does it comply with what the Act is saying here, to say that you must follow the minimum terms and conditions, comply with the Constitution, comply with the Nelson Mandela rules? So they will do that and then make a report to the City Council.

Maybe also, it is not necessarily that we will establish a detention center as soon as this Bills is passed and come into force. It could be later when we have enough resources to do that. I usually call this an umbrella principle, which is you rather have it and not needed than needed and not have it. So this is the power. It is an enabling power for us to use when we are able to use it.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: About the detention, this person whom they are detaining is diabetic, so in that short time, he panicked and cried for the doctor to see him immediately. Pardon my ignorance of the United Nations standard minimum rules. Attorney General, as you explained, the requirement is there; the minimum standard is there because you are worried about that person's life. Is that situation covered here? How is this person going to be helped?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (04:11): Correct, it is covered in the minimum terms of the Nelson Mandela Rules. It says you provide his health, food, welfare, dignity and his stay there. The City Council must ensure that those things are provided for him. If he is sick and he says so, the doctor must go and see him.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: We are going to spend money to feed these people just to meet the Nelson Mandela Rule, and we might not have any money left to clean up the rubbish that we wanted to clean up in the first place. This worries me. But anyway, we must look after them properly. Just on 55(u), will this be in a prescribed form of some sort, so that there is a prerequisite process that will lead to an approval by the City Clerk for prosecution to proceed or not?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Can I ask the Leader of Opposition to repeat his question please?

Hon MATTHEW WALE: 55(u), page 16 stated the approval of the clerk for whether a prosecution can be commenced. So I am just asking whether that approval will be in writing or some kind of a prescribed form. There is no prescribed form in here, but I am not sure if that is something you would cover in regulations, so that it determines the prerequisite requirements the case needs to meet before approval so that he or she does not abuse his or her discretion.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: He is too fast, so I told him to sit down. For implementation for this one, we pass it and we must start with it immediately. I like the way the Minister is responding and he is very powerful because once the bill passes, work will start.

On the budget, even how the AG explained it, the minimum standards under UN, there will be a bit of money there. In the supplementary in the ministry, the ministry did not send a budget or if the Minister can confirm now, that they must look for

money or they already have the money there because it need money. If he can inform the Committee on this.

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I thank him again and maybe a final one from the Chairman of the Bills and Legislative Committee for this question. It is HCC that will take care of it under their funding.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: 55(u) on page 16- an offence under an ordinance maybe not be prosecuted under this division unless the City Clerk has approved it. I would like to ask the Minister to clarify why the City Clerk has to be involved in an issue or one case that is ready for prosecution.?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I think in my respond to those things, I said that it is administrative process . Here the City Clerk in consultation with the his legal team in the Council, so he is the one that can refer that case.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: In the event that, you know, there is a conflict of interest and good practice would be for the City Clerk to recuse him or herself from the deciding such a matter, who would decide that? Let us say, his son or his wife or her husband. In such situation, who would decide on the matter?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: I will refer the question to the Attorney General to explain.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (04:19): The reference to City Clerk is by virtue of Section 42 of the Honiara City Council Act, which refers to him as the Chief Executive Officer of Honiara City Council. In his absence, the deputy assumes the function of the Chief Executive Officer of the City Council. In the event that an issue arises as to a conflict of interest, it will be the deputy that will sign.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Just going back to that clarification for further clarification. In that definition on the principle Act, it says that in the absence of the City Clerk, his deputy. Although in this matter, it is not about absence, but it is just a recuse or a situation where his present but ought to recuse himself but that definition allows for deputy Clerk to be included?

ATTORNEY GENERAL (04:20): It is in the Interpretation Act, stated that when a person appointed to an office is unable to discharge its duty, its deputy can come in to Act on his behalf. We have been using that all along. In the absence of a person appointed to a position, the deputy can sign.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Just for clarification. May be because it is in the Constitution. Last time we had this issue with the Auditor General, for example, so its deputy could not come and sit at the Public Accounts Committee and so we were troubled. May be that is because it is in the Constitution.

Clause 6 agreed to

Clause 7 agreed to

Clause 8 agreed to.

Clause 9

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: This is on the schedule. I was asking today on the specification of ID on this person who commit the infringement and it was mentioned there that driver's licenses and vehicle number registration was insisted on. The Minister mentioned that this is not meant only for infringements on vehicles or people in the vehicle. That is what I want to look for it, but was not in the form as well. Therefore, when a person is walking and not in any a vehicle, how do you put that in the notice?

Hon CHRIS LAORE: If you see that person walking, just take his name and address, and use those to fill out the forms.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I want to suggest that this form should include the location where this infringement is committed at. For example, at the wharf or Mataniko Bridge. That will be very important when you take that notice up. This is just a suggestion.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (4 :25): As you see in the schedule, it says 'specify' the particulars of the offense. So the particulars of the offense would be time, place, and date. So the information that you want will be included in that part of the particulars. So that person must specify these particulars; otherwise, when we go to Court and it asks for them.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: So the time, date and name are already there, as is the alleged offense. But the location is what still does not have any part for the law enforcement officer to fill up. You must make it as simple as possible so that he can fill it quickly. For example, at the wharf, Mataniko or Lawson. So I think you will just add that to the schedule.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (4 :27): If you look at 55(g)(3)(b)(v), it says, 'a description of the allege offense for which infringement is given'. When you describe the offense, you have to described what, how, why, and when. That is the standard description of an offense.

Clause 9 agree to

(Committee of the Whole House is dissolved)

Parliament is resumed

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to report that the Honiara City (Amendment)(No.2) Bill 2023 has passed through the Committee of the Whole House without amendments.

THE HONIARA CITY (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 2023

Third Reading

Hon CHRIS LAORE: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I moved that the Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023 be now read a third time and do pass.

Question put and agreed to

(The Honiara City (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023)

Motions

MOTION OF SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE (*East Choiseul—Prime Minister*) (16:30): I move,

That at its adjournment on Tuesday 25th July 2023, Parliament shall adjourn to Monday 31st July, 2023.

Tomorrow, we have some meetings that some of the Ministers will attend. In the afternoon they will fly to Brisbane to accompany the new plane. We are buying a new Airbus. This is the second one for the country. It will be led by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. They will travel to Brisbane. Also the CMCC need to meet to clear some matters there, and we have piles of Cabinet paper now lining up that we need to clear. Also, the Minister of Traditional Governance will sit down to look at how we will push the TRC report, which is schedule for next week on Monday. So we need those two days to do those all those things and I beg to move.

Hon MATTHEW WALE (*Aoke/Langalanga—Leader of Opposition*) (16:31): I listened to the reasons, but those two people should not go to accompany the new plane. Parliament is way more important than this new plane. If they want to go, it is just two of them. Is the whole of Cabinet going? There is no need to go. It is just a plane! We are looking for excuses to move Parliament meetings and this is not good.

In terms of work load for Cabinet, surely that is just a matter of course. I mean, you expect that. I am a little disappointed in those two. I did not hear the situation of the Minister of Traditional Government. So it is not quite ready for us to start with that. That make sense. We cannot have a productive discussion on the TRC report if the Minister is not ready. So that is fair for us to move, but the other two reasons are not really good.

On the basis of the third one, it is a reasonable request so that the Minister is prepared and when we come back, let us work systematically through the TRC report.

Question put and agreed to

(Parliament adjourned to Monday 31st July, 2023)

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: I move that parliament do now adjourn.

Question put and agreed to

Parliament adjourned at 4.35pm



Eleventh Parliament

Sixth Meeting

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

Monday, 31 July 2023

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**Monday, 31 July 2023**

The Speaker, Mr Patteson John Oti, took the Chair at 09:58.

Prayers.

Business of the House

ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Minister for Justice and Legal Affairs, Minister for Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening and the Members for North West Guadalcanal, Central Honiara, Malaita Outer Islands, East Are Are, North Guadalcanal, North New Georgia, West Makira, Ulawa/Ugi, West New Georgia/Vona Vona and Aoke/Langalanga.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade Annual Report 2019. (National Parliament Paper No.22 of 2023).
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade Annual Report 2020. (National Parliament Paper No.23 of 2023).

Questions and Answers

BLOOD BANK STORAGE SYSTEM UPDATE

157 **Mr CHARLES SIGOTO** (*Ranongga/Simbo*) (09:59): to the Minister of Health and Medical Services: Can the Minister inform the House on the status of the Blood bank storage system and its management at the National Referral Hospital?

Hon FREDRICK KOLOGETO (*South Vella Lavella—Minister for Commerce, Industries, Labour and Immigration*) (10:00): Thank you Mr Speaker. Let me assure the House that the blood bank storage system is back to normal and working at its maximum rate at the National Referral Hospital. There are three new blood storages procured, as well as donated by a private business house. On behalf of the government, I would like to thank the management of the Pacific Crown Hotel for the donation. The temperature of the blood freezer is carefully monitored and so far it is working well.

The blood recruitment is back to normal. We collect from volunteer donors and family personal donors. The National Referral Blood Bank team usually collects around 20 donors per day or less. We store between 60 to 70 units a day and 120

units weekly. The demand for blood is slightly higher. Around 25 blood units, with gynecology and obstetrics cases accounting for 60 percent of transfusing cases.

Blood are kept for 35 days before expiry, but they rarely reach this date as blood are usually used up very quickly. This calls for more volunteer donors to come forward to donate blood at the National Referral Hospital Medical Laboratory Department. But on that note, the mobile team rarely comes to offices, companies and schools to collect blood from volunteer donors.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: First of all, I want to say thank you, and I am happy with the improvement of our blood bank system at the National Referral Hospital. I am not sure when the improvements started, but it was really bad. It used to be really, really bad. I want to ask a question. I did not hear clearly, but in terms of the stocks, I think the supervisor Minister mentioned that they have collected up to 120 units per week, but most of that, I think 60 percent, is taken up by the gynecology ward, which means just one division in the National Referral Hospital. So how are we keeping up with the demands of other departments that also need blood for operations?

Hon FREDRICK KOLOGETO: As I have stated earlier, 60 percent of the blood storage is used by the gynecology and obstetrics wards and 40 percent by other wards. How they manage the blood storage is that they make sure they work with the various departments and that they go around collecting blood from various places. As I have stated earlier, they normally go around to schools and companies, and volunteers also come forward to donate blood. But in saying that, when family members need blood, their family members come forward to donate blood as well. So that helps manage the blood needs at the National Referral Hospital.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU (*West Are Are*) (10:05): Just a supplementary question: I am interested in the 20 donors per day. I do not know about your colleagues, but my constituents have come to me to pay for blood. So I gave them money, especially those who have patients with diabetes and are ready to amputate, but if there is no blood, then there will be no amputating. So it means that there is an acute need for blood supply there. It looks like these people will have to wait. If there is no blood collected by relatives, they will not be able to go into the operating theater. How many donors per day, Minister, do we need as a minimum to meet the demand and our supply per day? How many donors should there be per day? It looks like if my constituents are coming to me for help to pay for people to give blood for relatives, then it means that we are short of supply. Can you clarify this for the House?

The SPEAKER: Can you just go back to the words you used. For the record and for medical purposes, the word 'chainsaw'. Can you please use the right and correct terminology for purposes of the medical department?

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: I withdraw that word. It is just the word commonly used in pidgin, and those who are sick there use that. But it is those who are ready to go to the operation theatre from the diabetic ward. They are really in demand of blood.

The SPEAKER: So you mean amputation and not chainsaw.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: Yes!

Hon FREDRICK KOLOGETO: I would like to thank the MP for West Are'Are for the supplementary question. As I have stated earlier, NRH or the National Referral Hospital normally take 20 donors in one day. About 60 to 70 units are collected in one day. The blood can only stay for 25 days in storage, after that it must be taken off.

But there is a need for more donors to come forward to help the unit at NRH. Also, have stated, there is a drive in place by the NRH to collect from donors but yet we want people to give back a bit of blood for our people who are in the hospital. So, there is always a need.

The other challenge is because there are different types of blood type so it is hard for a brother to just come and give blood. They must check what type of blood, if it is an A or so forth. But we do not deny it that there is a challenge but there is a drive to make sure that we can manage the blood at NRH.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I want the supervising Minister to assure the House that this kind of system to pay blood for the blood bank is no longer there. I am saying this because some patient of ours bought blood there. If the Minister can assure the House, if this is not happening now, to pay the blood from the blood bank.

Hon FREDRICK KOLOGETO: As we all know, our health services is suppose to be free unless you go to a private firm. The Ministry does not know of this where people are paying for blood. It is suppose to be free as it is a donor and people donate which means it is not for paying. People are giving this free, so I appeal to the public to come and give blood freely and not charge our people who need them staying in the hospitals.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I want to thank the Minister for this one but I think the appeal should go to the staff at the blood bank at the hospital. My question is for the Minister to assure the House and the Public about the quality of the blood bank. I want to think that the assurance he gives both in terms of the stock which does not really reach the limit but he says is challenging. It is the quality of the stock that I would like to know of. Do they depend on power? I do not know but there

are fridges that the blood are kept in. But the frequent power supply does not affect the fridges that the bloods units are in?

Hon FREDRICK KOLOGETO: As I have stated earlier, monitoring of blood bank is for certain temperature as required. They kept the temperature well despite of the fact that we have power outage from time to time. The standby generator at NRH is working okay. The blood is maintained at the relevant temperature required.

On that note, there is a policy inside the ministry for them to follow to identify and screen to make sure that the blood coming in goes according to the processes that they are supposed to so that the good blood is given to the sick patient who needs it. So I can assure the house that the ministry is making every effort to make sure that the right blood is kept for our sick people.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: A supplementary question here; this is a follow-up to my question. I asked for the demand, and I know that my relatives from my constituency know that if they are not providing a donor, then they will be delayed at the hospital, and that is the situation that I assume is there. And in the minister's answers earlier, even in the 35 days, the blood that is being donated cannot live that long; it is used up first. If the relatives cannot pay a person to give blood, then the sick patient will be in trouble. That is my understanding, and I know that means that we are short almost every day because the people who are discharged are lucky to come back with 20, if not 10, but it means that the demand there is very high. So I want the minister to assure the house that we are all right with the supply that is there. My relatives that are coming may be lying to me about me giving money for blood to the donors, not the bank storage, but those people who will be supplying blood. So if the minister can assure us, what is really the minimum? And are we on that in terms of storage and collecting blood from donors?

Hon FREDRICK KOLOGETO: He is telling a true story. As I have stated, there is a high demand for blood because of our population increase and such. But that is why it is important for the drive to collect blood for our blood bank to always be sufficient to give to sick people. But also, I appeal to the public to come forward and donate blood at the National Referral Hospital to help our people.

As the Minister supervising, I will not deny the fact that there is a demand, but I appeal to every strong person to come forward to give blood to help our sick people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr CHARLES SIGOTO: I want to ask, in case the current storage breaks down, do we have a system to support it, or do we have any standby refrigerators that we can use so that we do not spoil the blood if the current one does not work?

Hon FREDRICK KOLOGETO: As I have stated in my response, there are three blood storage units that we have paid for and donated; these three are new. On that note, we also have some storage in the laboratory where the testing is being done. o we have backup up there. The worst scenario is that all will be damaged, but the Ministry does not anticipate that because that is beyond reasonable doubt. But in terms of the three, we will not have any problem with them including the extra ones that are in the laboratories.

So I can assure the House that the ministry is confident that nothing worse will happen where all of them will be damaged because all new ones

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: At what age are you starting to stop donating blood?

Hon CULWICK TOGAMANA: There are criteria that the ministry has to assess people who donate blood. So they will check them to make sure that they are healthy, fit, and have the right blood. In terms of age, I do not really have a definitive answer here, but it might be 50-55 years old. I will ask the ministry to give me the recommended age, and I will leave a document of it in the pigeon hole of the member for Parliament for West Are.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: In terms of the question regarding age, 55 is the age of retirement. Some may be over 55 years old, which is why the blood test is wrong.

The minister has been appealing for donors; what other steps has the ministry taken to bring in blood to fill up the units apart from the public appeals that he is making now?

The SPEAKER: That is another question. Let us allow the minister to answer the first question. If you want to make a comment, then you can raise a point of order after

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: As I have stated in my response, the Ministry appeals to the public to come forward, and the Ministry also goes around to schools and companies for blood donors. This is a good thing. When they donate blood, they are given food.

Mr. TAUTAI KAITU'U: Just to clarify the age group to give blood at National Referral Hospital is between 16 years old and 65 years old, and the individual must weigh 50kg. They would not give blood if you are below that, or if you are younger than 16 years or older than 65 years old.

Mr SAMMY GALO : I just want to know with regards to the new refrigerator for storing blood. I just want to know is that refrigerator being donated is standard to what is usually there for storage blood, because I know that blood storage have certain temperature and the refrigerator specified for that one. It is not just any

refrigerator from any shop. I just want to know if that refrigerator standard for storing of blood in the hospital?

Hon FREDRICK KOLOGETO: First of all I want to thank the Member of Parliament for Rennel and Bellona. He is also a doctor. Thank you for that response. To respond to the question of the MP for South Choiseul, a very good question. Health is a public interest, so when the donors gave it, the Ministry asked them make sure it meets the requirements for doing those jobs. We do not allow them to just get anything and give us. Make sure it meets the criteria for storing those bloods.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU: It looks like you are not really clear on the storage part for the question that the colleague Minister have asked; but my comment or question is; you appeal and then my relatives pay for it. In case those two work against each other. Any comment that Ministry have for that one? because when you appeal you only give biscuit and tin tuna, but our relatives and colleagues when they pay to donate blood is about \$100 to \$200 per person. That is what I mean incase it did not work well for the Ministry. What is the comment of the Ministry on that one?

Hon FREDRICK KOLOGETO: I already said it. Firstly let me answer the previous question because the MP for West Are`Are said that I did not answer the question of the MP for South Choiseul properly. No, that refrigerator has meet the standard requirement that is why the Ministry get it. On the note of the question of the MP for West Are`Are; this story is a news to the Ministry, so the Ministry will investigate it because donation as I have stated earlier is for free; not to ask for money; so I am appealing to the public to stop doing this wrong attitude. We give something back to the nation. We do not always ask what government will do for us. Some things we do it for the nation to help us.

Mr CHARLES SIGOTO: First of all I want to thank the supervising Minister for responding to the questions that have been asked. hank you for answering the questions very well and hopefully some of these things that we asked about will be taken note of by the National Referral Hospital. I also want to thank the Member for Rennel and Bellona and also South Choiseul for asking the questions that you also clarified. Thank you colleagues for answering the principle question.

*Business of the House***STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS***Motions***MOTION NO.35: PARLIAMENT CONSIDERS TRC REPORT**

Hon. SAMUEL MANETOALI (*Gao/Bugotu—Minister for Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs*) (10:31): Thank you Mr Speaker. Sir, I beg to move that Parliament resolves itself into the Committee of the Whole House to consider National Parliament Paper No.5 of 2023, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report with Recommendations (Shorter Version).

First of all, I wish to offer to my thanks to you Sir, and Parliament in ensuring the passage of this Motion is set before the 6th Meeting of this 11th Parliament so that all colleague Members of Parliament can add their voices and contributions on this Motion with particular reference the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report with Recommendation (shorter version).

For the purpose of providing clarity and precision towards the contribution and debate of this Motion, it is important to consider the final key areas:

- (1) Brief situation analysis, the Ethnic Tension.
- (2) Successive governments conflict intervention efforts.
- (3) Transitional justice partway to Solomon Islands peace building and nation building file TRC report with recommendations (shorter version).
- (4) Unpacking the TRC Report with recommendations.
- (5) Oversight government's arrangements implementations. 6) anticipated institutional successes.
- (7) challenges and lessons learned.

Brief Situational Analysis: The Tensions 1998 to 2003

The ethnic tension is popularly know throughout the country and at the regional and international level. It is also fully canvassed by the academia, scholars, researchers, peace builders, the intellectuals, CSOs, NGOs, governments, development partners and donors, a huge amount of literatures and publications have been produced and published both nationally and internationally.

For a ordinary Solomon Islands, at the entire country, this is the most darkest moment, an experience in our 45 years of independence. The economy and the country's social services plummeted to a bare minimum. Enmity and hostilities have

occurred within the warring factions, either directly or indirectly linked to the conflict.

Though the magnitude of our conflict as compared to other similar conflicts in parts of South East Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa, may not be that brutal and destructive, however, at the national and rural level, the past tension of 1998 to 2003 as described by the rest of the country's population, was heavily catastrophic and wide spreading. That is, it destroys the country's national economic development and infrastructure. It shuts down major income revenue and employment generating industries and businesses. Public services, goods and products were performing at a dire minimal level with others dysfunctional insecurity of individuals, wider distrust and hatred between ethnicities and in communities. Sporadic feelings, abductions, forced disappearances, all forms of tortures, rapes and persecutions, destruction of properties, conspiracy to commit all forms of violations and other violations of fundamental rights and freedoms.

All the entire public service, aside of the essential services, undertook long leave without pay in resulting in the inability of officers to pay up bills and other commitments. Schools were closed, the overall machinery of government and its institutions were reduced to minimal operational level enabling the government into huge debts. Families and individuals were also in huge debt with the banks and the financial institutions resulting in some and others with no choice but to forego their properties and assets.

Solomon Islands was plunged into chaos and its impact on the services and the people was in dire state at that time. Even today, its usage and impacts are still being felt and experienced.

At this juncture, I may not have the time to delve in depth into the details of this ethnic conflict, though one thing is surely certain and that is the in-depth details that constituted the realities of this said ethnic conflict are documented in the TRC Report with recommendations. And I suppose during the debate of this Motion, all colleague Members may make that contributions as well.

It will be remised of this House to just ignore or taken lightly the realities and origins that triggered the said ethnic conflict. They are deeply historical, the evolving movements of citizens in search for social and economic opportunities, especially to Guadalcanal Island are related aspects regarding our socio-political dynamics dated back to our colonial era t least fair to say that amongst those other realities and origins, the following are what transpired the most, and that are deeper realities and triggers to this conflict. They are; (1) uneven level of development in different areas in the country; (2) government mismanagement; (3) weakening of traditional

authority and structures; (4) economic crisis; (5) disagreement over land; (6) lack of feeling of national unity: and (7) the impacts since the colonial period.

Successive Government Conflict Intervention Efforts

From the period 1998 – 2003, in terms of past successive governments conflict interventions, the country have witnessed effortful and endless commitments and undertakings by those successive governments, developing partners and donors, all churches and their leaders, the civil societies and NGOs, peacebuilding movements and institutions, women for peace and many others, which all have come-out in finding a lasting solution to this conflict.

Successive government's attempts and interventions to the conflict consists of a myriad of policy delivery, hosting of open forums and meetings, convening of dialogues, peace and reconciliation ceremonies, and institutional state building reconstruction and reforms.

Realistically, during the early stage of this conflict, certain attempts and interventions that were employed from amongst those earlier stated, were carried out under immense pressures and unwelcoming conditions and environment. However, the commitment and pursuance, in this regard is, to ensure that the mounting waves of violence and disorderly acts are contained and stability is restored in the country.

Evident to past successive government's efforts in their attempts and interventions to resolve this conflict is not limited to the followings;

1. In May 1999, a peace and reconciliation ceremony was held at the National Art Gallery between the Guadalcanal province and the Central government attended by Chiefs and Leaders of both provinces including their two Premiers, witnessed by presentations of goods, shell money and other gifts amongst the attending parties;
2. In June 1999, the Governor General back then, declared the State of Emergency on Guadalcanal, with also seeing the same month, the appointment of an Commonwealth Special Envoy to the ethnic crisis; the signing of the Honiara Peace Accord and the signing of the Marau Communique.
3. The Panatina Agreement was signed in August 1999, with seeing the hosting of the second Malaita Conference.
4. In October 1999, sees the arrival of a 20-member Multi-National Police team
5. In May 2000, sees the Buala Peace talks followed with the Auki talks in that same month. In June the same year the first meeting of the spokesperson of both

conflicting parties were held on board the HMAS Tobruk, and the first round of ceasefire talks also on HMAS Tobruk.

6. The major one being witnessed is the eventual signing of the Townsville Peace Agreement in October 2000, and follow-suit with an ensuing national and regional leaders talks, dialogue and engagement that was centered on what is seen as a glimpse of hope to bringing stability and peace to the country.

7. Then eventually, a glamorous moment to what many local Solomon Islanders have hugely embraced was the arrival of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands – RAMSI in July 2003.

8. To the extent of the launching of the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission in April 2009. side of those mentioned conflict intervention efforts, I must reiterate here that there are so many other similar efforts that were carried out at the personal, grouping, community and tribal level; mostly by key women leaders and men representing both parties, the churches, non-governmental organizations, the civil society, bilateral partners, multilateral institutions and donors.

The intervention efforts ensued at different levels by all those being mentioned, I must not turn-away from, in taking this moment to talk highly of them and arraigned the greatest recognition on behalf of the government and the people of Solomon Islands to them. They have indeed been our truly friends and partners who stood alongside us during one of the hardest and darkest moment in the political, economical and social life of our country. It must be echoed here that had it not be for this various initiatives and efforts from all these actors, our resolve and the level of stability and peace that the country is now experiencing may still be, something of a great struggle and challenge.

Transitional Justice Solomon Islands Pathway to Peacebuilding Development and Stability: The TRC Report with Recommendations.

The Solomon Islands TRC was first proposed at the height of the ethnic tension in 2000 by a Peace Committee established within the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA). It was seen as a potential means to build national unity through truth-telling, reconciliation and justice or amnesty processes.

This aspect of transitional justice was the first of its kind since our post colonial era. We would heard, knew and read about this form of justice, only in parts of Latin America and Africa States. Our path to this form of justice is premised on the basis that despite the effects brought about by the tension,

(1) the rebuilding of our national unity, peace and stability, (2) encouraging and permeating the essence of truth-telling to the occurrences of events during the

tension, (3) pursuing the need for reconciliation within the facet of our societies and (4) arresting the inhumane acts to ensure that justice in this context prevails, are exceptionally warranted.

This aspect of Justice, whilst it is a major pathway to our initial peacebuilding developments, it is potentially a significant and dynamic legitimate space that accommodates the initial difficulties of having an interactive, interrelational, meaningful and fruitful discussion between concerning parties to the conflict, in order for them to reach a state that enables them to deal with the unfolding events of the tension.

By this notion, especially reconciliation amongst parties that are associated to the unfolding events of the tension, this form of justice becomes a potential means. Practically, the extent of this form of justice, especially in reconciliation amongst parties over direct atrocities that are inhumane in nature and utterly breached the rights of those affected, is no easy quick fix and one that can be easily forgo and forgotten. However, it is philosophically regarded for as an approach to bring back post conflict societies into the fold of liberal democracy.

it is to be noted as well, in this floor of Parliament that our undertaking of the transitional justice, encompasses and marks the shift towards direct engagement to both the advocacy and institutional reforms in the national policy thinking and making to fully and inclusively ground the democratic and post-conflict betterment of Solomon Islands with the premise not to relapse again in such conflict in the future.

Our Truth and Reconciliation Commission, inclusive of the production of its five volume reports, is a classic transitional justice mechanism in Solomon Islands that was constituted to undertake its appropriate legislative purpose due to the inability of the institutions of the State to afford its citizens the protection of their fundamental rights and freedoms as guaranteed under the country's National Constitution that was infringed as a result of the ethnic tension.

Unpacking the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report with Recommendations

The country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in short, was constituted by an Act of Parliament; the TRC Act 2008. This piece of legislation mandated the Commission to create and device recommendations for the government to consider in an effort to prevent any future ethnic uprising, violence or tension. To this effect, reference is made to Section 16 (1&2) that stipulates the Commission's submission of report of its work to the Prime Minister at the end of its operation; and that report is to state its findings, including the recommendations concerning the reforms and other measures be it legal, political, administrative or otherwise, with the specific

intend on conflict prevention responding to the needs of victims and to promote healing and reconciliation.

The choice of this form of justice and its work that was carried out gives an opportunity for Solomon Islands to rethink society in order to have a clear picture of what changes are needed to create a better Solomon Islands in the future, particularly regarding the conditions that led to the violence experienced in the country between 1998 to 2003.

The complete production of the report of the TRC which is recommendations are built on the spirit of building the a better future for Solomon Islands, with the guarantee that the violence of the past shall not be repeated. The said Commission believed that by learning from the past, every citizens can be able to realize the effects; therefore attain and restrain and as well strive for safety and security for all.

For the purpose of debate on this subject matter in this floor of Parliament, I thought it is appropriate to summarily unpack the report including the recommendations. The Commissions report with the recommendations consisted of two parts. Part 1 and Part 2. It was categorized into 6 categories with 18 major recommendations.

In Part 1, the following categories are enlisted. These are victims, vulnerable populations, former combatants and reconciliations. Under these categories are their specific key recommendations. Under the category for victims are two recommendations; that is reparation and exhumation.

The category for vulnerable population has 3 recommendations; that is women, children and youth and the Weather coast. The category for former combatants has 2 recommendations; that is rehabilitation, which is similarly known as reintegration and judiciary trials. For category on reconciliation, there is 1 recommendation, which is entire reconciliation as a future process.

In Part 2, the following categories are enlisted. Institutional reform and historical outstanding issues. Under the institutional reform category, are the following reform: constitutional reform, land reform, justice system reform, security reform, health reform, education reform, corruption. Under the outstanding historical issues are the following issues: Marau recommendation, Bougainville crisis, and East Kwaio massacre 1927.

These recommendations are based on the true processes coordinated by the TRC and do represent the essential views of the people who have participated into his process.

Ideally the consideration of this report, but especially the recommendation, are twofold in that in Part 1, it is concerning addressing the issues that are detrimental as a result of the tension and the need for progressive and actionary outcome to

those issues. n Part 2 – it is concentrated on institutional reforms – the call to address these reforms that have been long inherent in the adopted governance system that the country had embraced from Great Britain, especially the inability of the State institutions to respond effectively before and during the tension, which indeed have reflected on the weaknesses identified with certain institutions hence the call for their reforms.

our transitional justice was carried out within the lens of peacebuilding as versus state building. Though however, it was actualized more in a two-pronged approach – where the occurrences of the inflictions and such others during period of the tensions are not left unaddressed. But whilst acknowledging this, equal treatment and attention to these institutional reforms remains critical given the underlining factors earlier mentioned. And that they are long-term commitment and understanding to fulfil if we are as a country to achieve and sustain long-term peace and security otherwise

In this juncture, I want to inform this Parliament that most of these Recommendations are ministerially tailored and they sits within different scope, mandate and responsibilities of the ministries of government.

In this regard the designated ministries and my fellow colleague Ministers will indeed intervene to informing this Parliament on the DCGAs progressive contributions towards achieving the TRC aligned Recommendations.

On this note, my Ministry in the most recent periods, had intensify its commitments and actions to the Recommendations on reparations (or conflict prevention and victim's rights for victims of the tension) and rehabilitation or reintegration for those involved in the tension. The state of the art of these two Recommendations, is that Cabinet had already officially endorsed both twin-policies in 2020 and 2022 respectively. The twin policies offers the strategic direction to actualize these two Recommendations.

Recommendation on Reconciliation is in fact on-going. However, over the years specific and requested reconciliations associated to the tensions were carried out amongst concerning parties. The work of Sycamore Tree Ministry alongside certain members of Solomon Islands Christian Associations during those times as core-facilitators to these reconciliations were remarkable.

Oversight and Governance Arrangements: Implementation of Recommendations

In terms of the oversight and governance arrangements of the implementation of the TRC Report with its Recommendations, this is provided for under Section 17 (3) of the Act. Summarily, either a person or a body is to be established in the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet upon the receiving of the Report by the Office of the

Prime Minister and Cabinet. Its membership will be representationed and that will be tasked to monitor the Recommendations implementations across government.

However DCGA had put to task a joint-body with officers derived from the OPMC's Policy Implementation and Monitoring unit (PIMEU) and that of the MTGPEA. This joint-body undertook these tasks that includes; convening a consultative workshop to all ministries and agencies of government who are directly and indirectly responsible to carry-out these Recommendations in 2021, and to report on designated activities, programs and projects that are associated to their specific recommendations which will see the overall implementation of the Recommendations in the country. he government's approach to the oversight and governance arrangements in the implementation of these Recommendations are solely to fully maximize the available resources that is in the disposal of the government; to activate the government's already existing machinery, systems and processes rather than creating another parallel bureaucracy; to ensure cost-effective measures and means are undertaken; to allow for full commitment and continuity on government in dealing with the Recommendations; to be able to centrally coordinate and to determine the needed resources that ministries and agencies of government may require in order to effectively carry out the recommendations that were allocated to them, including soliciting the technical support and assistance from bilateral and multilateral partners if the need for arises; and continual advocacy, awareness and civic education on the importance of what the country had went through more than 18 years ago for future purposes.

Anticipated Institutional Successes

the choice and wisdom behind the decision to formally established in Solomon Islands a transitional justice mechanism is not a body in isolation of the very anticipated institutional successes that such a justice could provide or serve to the victims that their human rights were violated; that their properties and assets were destroyed; that they are being tortured, harassed, brutally bashed up, family members were murdered and killed, and with all forms of cruelties including the bringing to justice those that were involved in the violent tensions. Though central to this extent is the core endeavor to ensure that national unity and reconciliation prevails in the country through the following underlining objectives that is;

- a) To engage all stakeholders in the reconciliation process;
- b) Examining the nature, antecedents, root causes, accountability or responsibility for the extent of the impact on human rights violations or abuses which occurred between 01 January 1998 and 23 July 2003 including the destruction of property, deprivation of rights to own property and the right to settle and make a living;

c) Considering sectoral impacts on health, education, legal and other sectors, without diluting the emphasis on individual victims; and

d) Devising policy options or measures that may prevent similar situations or a repetition of such events in the future.

At the global level particularly countries that have underwent nation-wide violations or conflicts between ethnic groupings, religions and or political groupings and that transitional justice in the form of Truth Telling or one similar to our Truth and Reconciliation Commission, had demonstrated and institutionally benefited from a huge social, economical and political turn-around and are now democratically and developmentally progressive.

The country of Rwanda in the Central Eastern Africa that underwent a massive genocide, is a case in point. The genocide in the country in 1994 according to well documented sources was massive and brutal with huge divide between major ethnic groupings and religion and resulted in the killing of 800,000 Rwandans in just 100 days.

It leaves one to wonder with a question like this - how can a country ever overcome such hatred and horror?

This country underscored and addressed its experience of genocide through transitional justice interventions in March 1999 – which sees the establishment of the Rwanda National Unity and Reconciliation Commission. Having this form of justice through this Commission, according to records, provides the coming out of the country, from ashes of conflict into a democratically and developmentally progressive country.

According to the World Vision in 2014 after 20 years of the genocide in Rwanda, progressive successes of this country has demonstrated impressively. Further official records have also documented the country's demonstration of great resilience of its peoples and the efficiency of their state machinery and policy discourses – bearing successive results, to name a few such as; (1) according to the World Economic Forum 2017 Global Gender Gap Report, Rwanda was ranked one of the top world fourth (4) leading countries in gender equality alongside Finland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland. As of November 2021, the Rwandan Parliament has a 61% women-led majority, the worlds highest women representation in Parliament, and also one of the highest in the women labour force at the rate of 84% in 2019. Whilst compared to Solomon Islands women in Parliament representation, ours is a bare minimum percentage. Successive stories were also seen in their health, employment and economic sectors.

From the above analysis including ours, the outcome of such transitional justice once it is applied prudently and having a full-fledged government resourcing in order to address its Findings and Recommendations can yield both social, economical and political successes in the country.

As acknowledged, despite the systemic challenges that we have experienced with ours, by and large – we have equally witnessed the return of law and order; judicial services are restored to its operationality; at least good governance is seen existed in the entire government machinery and the continual pursuance of peacebuilding initiatives including governance at the community level.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The discourse of transitional justice, in this case, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission cannot be simply overlooked and undermined in terms of its associated challenges and lessons learned. In actual fact – in order to allow or ensure a robust delivery and implementation of the findings and recommendations of the Truth Reconciliation Commission the challenges associated with the recommendations has to be addressed and considered as well.

The evident challenges and lessons learned in association to our transitional justice is both contextual and practical in nature. This form of justice was admittedly the first of its kind in the country as well in our region as was highlighted earlier. Overall perception of it was termed as an outside or foreign idea to the extent that its outcomes may be uncertain though there is value in itself in terms of its undertaking. Its context especially in the area of healing somewhat depends to a significant extent on how those concerned do respond to those stories being told during the public hearings.

In other words, transitional justice in this context would be judged not on whether it achieves the importance of truth or reconciliation, but whether it can create the space for this to occur in a way that is organic to the dynamic of our Solomon Island societies, with cultural traditions that involve Christianity and custom as well as institutions of the state. Otherwise, the search for truth and justice will be far less satisfying than people hope and the seductive discourse of transitional justice will serve only to raise impossible expectations. The essence of timeliness and consequential delivery of the Commissions Findings and Recommendations bears significant challenge, and as lesson learned as well. This form of justice is a means through which government could fulfil its obligations as party to an exchange, acknowledge the stories heard with the Commission, and offer recommended forms of reparation to restore the pre-conflict balance or peace dividend in our communities. Not being able to timely actualize these Findings and

Recommendations risks dishonoring those who have participated in the process and to some larger extent have suffered an injustice during the conflict.

this being the most stand-out reason that the DCGA government sees it ultimately necessary and right to spare this time for Members of this current House to accord this opportunity in sharing their views and opinions through this Motion.

Further to the essence of timeliness and consequential delivery of the said Findings and Recommendations, is the challenge and lesson learned on resourcing aspects and the extent this would fully mitigate or address especially the Recommendations. The specifics of the Recommendations were deeply fundamental, technical and humanistic in nature. Given their nature, most or if not all of the Recommendations that will be implemented may not be achieved in a short period of time.

This is because, in order to effectively implement them and to attain an achievable outcome, there is a need to be equally considerate and attentive to the underlining dynamics and realities that are existed, which has to be reckoned with as well in order to attain that achievable outcome. Hence, in its entirety, this is a long-term endeavour and the level of resourcing will also be somewhat equated to this regard, let alone the prevailing priorities of the government in any given fiscal year

Conclusion

in concluding I would like to reiterate here in recognizing the decision-taken and leadership of the Prime Minister and the DCGA government to allow this space in this current House in having the TRC Report with Recommendations for its debate by the current Members of Parliament

All of us here know it too well that this Report or outcome since it was handed to the Prime Minister back then in February 2012 was not accorded this opportunity of the debate. Since then its intended debate as stipulated in the given provisions of the TRC Act was inactive and unheard of. Today, this will not be the case anymore. Because, as it will set into records, this Motion now will enable all Members of this current House, the opportunity to register their views, opinions and contributions to this important subject matter.

In this juncture too that I would like to recognize all the Development Partners and Donors who in many ways and forms have rendered their technical support and assistance, which enable the said Commission to effectively deliver and fulfil its legislative functions, responsibilities and mandate, which resulted to the completion of the TRC Report with Recommendations – the five (5) Volumes and the Shorter version accordingly.

Also to all the past officers and Commissioners of the SI Truth and Reconciliation Commission and as well the former Permanent Secretaries and Ministers of the former Ministry of National Unity Reconciliation and Peace, I convey recognition to all of your advisory and technical leadership to the Commission and the former Ministry, which eventually enabled the said Commission to fully complete its legislative mandate with this outcome.

And with utmost respect, to certain of the Commissioners whom had passed-on in the past years that had fully and well served the said Commission during their time. Inally to all the citizens of this country, and especially the witnesses that came before the Commission during the hearings coupled with the range of institutional approaches and mechanisms that were carried out in this country during our darkest days by giving the needed space and understanding to the progressive implementation of the Commission's Recommendations.

As a Minister responsible for the mandate of peacebuilding in this country I call on all citizens that with your support, understanding and prayers we will fully restore our resilience and enable our future development potentials and progresses to thrive.

With these Remarks, I beg to move.

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE (*East Choiseul—Prime Minister*) (11:14): Thank you Mr. Speaker for giving me the floor of the Parliament, and I thank the Minister responsible for this Motion to place this matter before the Parliament.

It is a long time coming. Thank you for giving the floor to contribute to the Motion that the Minister of Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs has moved, and that is that Parliament to resolve itself into the Committee of the Whole House to consider National Parliament Paper No.5 of 2023 - Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report with Recommendations(Shorter Versions).

At the outset, I want to join the Minister to express my profound thanks to the members of the Commission for the excellent work that they put into compilation of the 5 Volumes of the TRC report after years of intense interviews with a wide variety of people who came forward to tell their stories.

And in doing so, I want to join the Minister specifically mentioning the members of the Commission, the late Rev Sam Arthur of Malaita Province, as the Chairman of the Commission, the late George Kejoa of Guadalcanal, Caroline Laore of Western Province, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi of Fiji, and Sofia Macher, a Human rights activist from Peru, who is also the deputy Chairman of the Commission.

I also want to join the Minister and to thank more than 2,000 Solomon Islanders who, in the interest of returning our country to peace and normalcy, have willingly

came forward with forgiving hearts to tell their stories. It is not easy to break down once pride and spirit of wanting to take revenge. There are customary norms and sensitivities and barriers that they would not normally allow these stories to be told. But they came forward to make that sacrifice. Sacrifice in the sense that they are willing to forgive, following the example set by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. During his agonizing moment, he said 'Father forgive them for they know not what they are doing'.

As we heard, the report is produced in 5 Volumes, which was already tabled in the 7th Meeting on the eve of the dissolution of the 9th Parliament, as National Paper No.5/12/7 on the 5th of September 2014. Members of that House were given copies of the report. I understand the Members of the 10th Parliament were also given copies. The 10th Parliament was not able to discuss the report because of various reasons, including political instability, which saw a change of government in late 2017 and thereafter the matter went into hibernation in 2018. We are able to do so now after 10 years, which is really unfair to many people who want to see this dark chapter of our history put behind.

Because it would be expensive to produce the hard copies of the report to all Members of Parliament, and I thank the Minister of Traditional Governance who have been giving soft copies of the 5 Volumes, which I must admit that it is not practically possible for all Members of this honorable House to go through all of them given their very, very busy schedules.

The shorter version of the report produced by the Minister of the Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs is a summary of the 5 Volumes. It should capture, in a summary form, the issues, which members of the commission picked up during their inquiry, as issues which are important to address in order to consolidate the country's very fragile peace process. Volume 3 of the first 3 Volumes in particular carries the recommendations of the Commission and as summarized in the shorter version of the report, the Commission after explaining how they conducted their work in the introductory chapter, directed the attention of the government and the by extension to this Parliament to the following areas:

First, the history of the conflict, and they quoted the words of wisdom from one of the former Prime Minister's of this country, a nation conceived but never born. That carries a lot of message and wisdom.

Second, the conflict in the Solomon Islands between 1998 and 2003 and that is the tension period. They also directed our attention to what are human rights and human rights violation so that we narrow down our discussions on those matters. And also report on torture and ill treatments, reports on sexual violence, report on property violation, report on forced displacement, report on impact of violence on

women and children and report on social cost of the conflict and report on exhumations. And of course the recommendations is the most important part, reparations and other relevant issues and the Commission made, as we have heard from the Minister, 18 recommendations which is the most important component of the report as far as we are concerned because it narrowed down the issues discussed in the report to actions.

As can be seen from the summary of the issues discussed, it would appear that in terms of appreciating the vulnerability of the country to uprising, the commission directs our attention to the chapters on the history of the conflict and the conflict in Solomon Islands between 1998 to 2023 and that is the tension period which discuss some background issues and to put to tension into context that is very important. They are lessons that we need learn and as a country, which we did not.

Since that, one of the important tasks of the Commission is to identify the cause of the tension and the vulnerability of the country to tensions and uprising, these sections are very important for our considerations and discussions. They are the basis of the recommendations made.

I want Members of Parliament to share their honest views on this floor of Parliament. Of course, after reading these reports.

The other chapters, and as correctly mentioned by the Minister, provide a descriptive analysis of what actually happened during the tension, and especially the experiences of people who are directly or indirectly affected by the tension. The shorter version of the report summarized the recommendations made by the Commission in the last section. Members of Parliament are also encouraged to express their views, expand the issues raised and make suggestions on the unity of our country within of course the spirit of the recommendations made by the Commission.

With the volume of the information before us, we must be strategic in the way we handle it, that we are not lost in the detail or at worst, over sensationalized the emotional content of the experiences told in the stories reported that we lose sight of what the report is trying to tell us in terms of the strategic actions to take in order not to see the repeat of what happened as highlighted by the Minister.

For the purpose of moving forward, this Parliament would be interested to know what the government has done to implement the recommendations. We will do that during the considerations of the recommendations in the Committee of the Whole of the House and that should be the focus of our task.

What do we do to address the recommendations? The reports of the atrocities and sufferings experienced by the victims and how unacceptable they are, and my heart

goes out to them, are consequences of sad realities. Sad realities of our failure as a country to adopt an development strategy and social economic and institutional framework that would have helped the country together and to guarantee that the economy does not fall to the level we experienced in the year 1998 to 2000 or in fact to now. Taking with it of course the ability of the country to help itself. We were completely helpless.

The statement about our failure. Our failure as a country to adopt the appropriate development strategy is used deliberately here. Because, and I say this because in the final analysis, lack of development outside of Honiara is seen as the major contributor to the uprising. It all goes down to that. The tension therefore is not just merely a conflict between ethnic groups. No! As carried in many descriptive academic works on the ethnic tension and they did injustice, and some of them got degrees and doctorate degree on the tension; something that our people suffer from hey should rewrite those thesis because they are wrong. They look at it as mere tension between two ethnic groups.

That is a very narrow and constricted view of the uprising and has no appreciation whatsoever of the causes of the tension. The is what the Commission tries to lead us to. The tension is caused by this and they take this country back, even way back as 1893, by the way this report is discussed, although they pick some specific events during the course of our 130 years journey as a country, including during our colonial time.

These people are looking at the tension from the perspective of lack of strategic development and strategic locations outside of Honiara and Guadalcanal. The tension is in reality and revolt by Solomon Islanders. That is how we should see this thing. We must not point fingers to anyone. This is a revolt by Solomon Islanders or Solomon Islands as a country. More specifically, a revolt against a very highly central focused development strategy. May I add, the concern about the appropriateness of our system of government, which directly conflict with our traditional governance system, which of course is based on conscious decision making process and the desire to be free from colonialism and know that at neo-colonialism as well, that comes up very forcefully.

If do not learn the lessons from these things, we are yet to read this report. It is just so happened that the indigenious people of Guadalcanal raised it first after independence. It is something that boils up already even before and during the colonial time. It is not only the people of Guadalcanal that raised it. It is already boiling up during our colonial times.

I said that because the desire to be independent from colonial rule was already raised in the 1940s. That acts as a centripetal force, as the Minister said, which tends

to attract and draw Solomon Islanders to where these developments happen. For more than 30 years of our journey as a independent nation, and that is Honiara and Guadalcanal. The runaway statistics of the Census Report for the 10 years period ending 2019 is alarming and confirming the fear that we have on this matter, and especially the people of Guadalcanal and leaders of this country.

The 2019 provisional census report from the Ministry of Finance shows that during 2009 to 2019, Honiara recorded the fastest annual growth of 5.8 percent with an increase of 57,033 people and grown by 5,700 people annually. This is equal to the population in Honiara and Guadalcanal increasing by a whole medium size province like Choiseul and Isabel over the last 10 years. Everybody comes here.

This is followed by Guadalcanal with an annual growth of 3.7 percent. The Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey reported that rural urban migration and natural population increase are together placing enormous pressure for land in and around Honiara, on Guadalcanal. Based on 2019 Census estimates, the number of households located in and near Honiara will rise from 11,500 in 2009 to 50,857 by 2050. This is not going to be far away. This is an increase of more than 39,000 households. If we take six people as the average size of a household, by 2050 the population around Honiara would have increased by 305,142.

Based on these estimates, the urban population of Guadalcanal will actually overtake that of Honiara by 2050, and Guadalcanal Province will become the most populous province of the Solomon Islands.

The message that comes out of the tension is that we must reverse the trend. That is the powerful message that comes from these reports. Reverse the trend! We will be completely irresponsible not to do that. It was already a concern in 2000.

The tension is a call by the people of Guadalcanal to reverse that trend. That call was made public in 1988 and blew up into a full ethnic conflict in 1998 when the governments that ruled from 1988 to 1998 failed to address the call made by the indigenous people of Guadalcanal. We were direct victims of uncontrolled internal migration into Guadalcanal.

Those are the messages, and I am surprised and seriously concerned by the statement made by some politicians on the very floor of this Parliament to the effect that we should not be bothered by their call that Honiara is our home and even if we do not have anything to do here, we can come and do whatever we like. That is very careless.

Unlike other developed Western cultures, we are traditionally linked to our worthy customs, which we would not hesitate to protect if they were threatened. That is exactly what happened in the period under consideration. These issues were at their

boiling point in 1998, and our people were fed up with the disregard of their worthy customs and their rights to lands and had no option but to resort to violence to protect these rights, which is a very sad affair. There was nothing that the government, then ruling, could do to stop it. To be honest, the government was sitting duck.

Therefore, in addition to the objective of achieving national healing and reconciliation through forgiveness, tolerance, and acceptance, the report also directs the attention of the government to the need to put in place policy reforms, as we need them from the Minister, covering institutional, structural, legal, administrative and sectoral development framework of our development strategies to consolidate and sustain the positive outcomes of these short term measures, among which is the relative peace restored by the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands ur objective is to reverse the undesirable trend.

The thinking makes a lot of sense because it is clear from the report, and the various peace agreements that preceded the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, and as we heard from the Minister, that the tension was triggered by feelings of gross dissatisfaction by certain island groups of the way the National Wealth is shared; and the serious concern about the unfair carrying of the burden to create the National Wealth that is very heavy on a few island groups, but they get very little in return. That seems to sum up their dissatisfaction.

As a direct result, Solomon Island descended into ethnic violence between 1998 and 2003. During that period, as we heard from the Minister, respect for one another, respect for authority, respect for the rule of law, and human lives, and all values of a civilized society were trodden underfoot and the continual existence of the country as a worthy member of the United Nations came under serious question.

We only survive because of the grace and mercy of God. Our people correctly raised important questions and expressing concerns as any innocent victim would do, like, and I quote,

"To me, hardship perils and havoc my family and I experienced were something that could have been avoided by the responsible authorities of the government".

And statements like;

"Leaders often take for granted and turn a blind eye to their people when the power is in their hands"

Or

"The people in the rural areas do not understand what is happening in the upper level".

Very true.

Coming out from these statements are understandable reactions from people who ultimately become victims of other peoples actions or inactions. It is a very shocking experience that anyone can go through because they took the relative peace and safety we enjoy for years completely for granted. Completely! So, we can understand the tone and emphasis of their statements.

Another message is clear. It is incumbent upon Solomon Islanders, upon whom the responsibility of leadership is placed to ensure that the government is and should be the last entity in the country that our people must lose their confidence in.

There is too much politics going on in this country in our history, as an independent nation, for no justifiable reasons at all. Not at all! That we loose sight, but that is exactly what happened in the period under consideration and discussion.

It is interesting to note that the path to that reality was already set well before the founding of this nation hat is why the TRC, the Commission, is take us back to see and learn from the lessons.

The primary focus of our attention for the purpose of this exercise is the period between 1893 and 2023. And our recorded history of 130 years can be broadly divided into two periods. The first period is 85 years of our colonial era from 1893 to 1978, when we were declared as a protectorate in 1893 to when we gained political independence from Great Britain in 1978.

The second period that we will be looking at runs from 1978 to the present day, after we gained political independence. Both periods were marked by socio-political issues, and I might add, geopolitics and other events that have direct or indirect influence on the problems we are facing today? The period between 1893 and 1978 was marked by the following events or actions of the colonial government that are relevant to this discussion:

First, is the colonial land reform program. We have heard from the Minister, more specifically under the Draconian Waste and Vacant Land Legislation. The colonial government undertook a series of land reforms from the early 1900s right up to the 1970s. The reform that still haunts this country is the discriminatory registration of acres and acres of land under the Vacant and Waste Land Policy, alienating these lands from their customary owners in various parts of the country for forestry and agricultural purposes. And I am sure, although we say this, the colonial governments may have had good intentions. They did this with all good intentions to facilitate the development by availing this land to investors and, at that time, for agriculture development. For that, I guess we must be thankful to our colonial

masters. Otherwise, we would not have a Minister of Lands to administer government lands.

But the government is able to own land now by operation of law because of that policy. But the point remains that there is only one legitimate land-owning group in this country, and we must not forget that. And that is the land-owning tribes of this country. That is the only landowner group in this country. And if our policies, land reform, and whatever we do are guided by that understanding, we will not go wrong. Land will still be available for development. But lest not forget that there is only one landowner group in this country, and that is the tribal people who own the land. And that raises the question of whether we can accommodate relevant components of our traditional form of governance in our government system. And the answer is yes. The Minister is going ahead, the Minister for Traditional Governance, the traditional governance system is coming up, and the Minister of lands, the land reform that is sensitive to the intricacies of our land tenure system is being worked on.

The second significant event that happened in our history that I think is relevant to some of the things that we do today is the Second World War. The Second World War is a period of significance in our history as a nation. It taught us, among other things, what investment in infrastructure can do for a nation. We also witnessed the struggles and battles for geopolitical and economic supremacy in the world and this is a phenomenon that is still prevalent in the world today through the various military, security and economic alliances and trading blocks, which we must continue to be vigilant about as a nation going forward.

Solomon Islands, among countries and the territories in the Asia Pacific Region, like Guam, Wake Island, the Hong Kong, Philippines, the Dutch East Indies now called Indonesia, Malaya, Singapore, Burma, Thailand and New Guinea become the turning point of this power struggle in the region. In 1942, Solomon Islands was the fear of the struggle and literally became the turning point of the war in the Pacific. We provided the important buffer for other countries. We suffer while they are not.

In addition, to rescuing our country from the rise and spread of fascism, that was the issue at that time, which we must be thankful, I want to thank them for doing that. I do not know how a government or people under the fascism regime would look like. So it is good that we did not go into that. They protect us.

In addition to rescuing the country from the rise and spread of fascism, which we must be thankful, the more than six months for the Second World War was fought in on our shores saw the construction of much needed infrastructures, like roads, wharves, airstrips and buildings that the colonial government used. It was literally a first major infrastructure development program for the country since 1893.

It has to take a war to accomplish that and as a matter of fact, the colonial government decided to move the headquarters to Guadalcanal to take advantage of these infrastructures, like the Henderson airfield, that we have today, the road infrastructures and the concept buildings that are there now. They moved and occupied them.

The lesson is, infrastructure development remains a very crucial program to the progress of any country and Solomon Islands is no exception. As a matter of fact, the key to effectively address the issues we are facing in order to guarantee peace and stability in our country is the construction of game changing infrastructure in the strategic locations around the country. And I want to raise my hat to this government and Ministers for pushing the very important infrastructure development around the country. The lack of these infrastructure in strategic locations saw development concentrating on the island of Guadalcanal for a long time. It had to take a revolt for us to come to our senses.

The other issue is the ongoing silent battle about the supremacy of values that some developed countries continue to advance in the world today. Because we were successfully being liberated from fascism, there seem to be this belief that only they have the right to influence the world into adopting their values on pain of economic sanctions. And I warn the country on that during my Independence Speech. That seem to be the belief that liberal democracy and the values that go with it are the only values that the whole world must adopt in order to guarantee peace and stability. Says who? You only have to see wars, riots, lawlessness, disrespectful authorities in so called democratic countries to make sense of what I am saying here or not take me wrong. I love democracy. It is probably one of the best government systems and I thank our fore fathers for adopting a democratic system of government in this country. But the question is, are there some aspect of governing system in the custom that we can incorporate and adjust so that it fits our situation? That question is now ringing everywhere, including the vast African countries. Leaders are now asking that question. Thank you the Minister of Traditional Governance. There is a big matter that comes in traditional governance and thank you to Kandere Party. Their leader is sitting there. We adopt that policy. It is a good thing that will happen in this country.

The other area is LGBTQ+, For example. This is a barrier that comes with liberal democracy through and through. We should adjust and not just swallow everything lock, stock and barrel. That is the point we try to raise. This belief advanced that the citizens of the country can also chose who and what they want to marry. These values are now trying to penetrate into our country and we must be firm in saying, 'No', because to do otherwise is to insult the God of Heaven in whom we live, move and have our being and undermine our worthy custom and tradition.

The other event that happens in colonial time is that we must learn the lesson from, although it was later on picked up by the people of Guadalcanal, but I want to acknowledge the Ma'asina Ruru. The early signs of revolt against values that are considered repugnant to our traditional values and desire to be free from being ruled by foreign powers, through acts of disobedience in our country were seen establishment of Ma'asina Ruru Movement. We must also learn lessons from this movement.

As a matter of fact, Ma'asina Ruru once a emancipation movement for self government and self determination in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate during the World War II from 1945 to 1950. Ma'asina Ruru was strategic with creating the movement towards independence for Solomon Islands. I raise my hat to the founders and leaders of this movement because they thought us very important lesson of respecting who we are as people. That is being undermined now with values and government system that exist well before we were colonized. One of the influences is said to have been the African American soldiers, whose humane treatment of the fellow workers was mark different of the plantation owners. They spread a message of independence amongst the Malaita soldiers, who began a campaign of non-compliance and civil obedience. I am getting to the point.

Revolution and anti-government movements already exist in the country as earliest as 1939. Interestingly, frontline by missionary such as Reverend Richard Fallowes and apocalyptic movements, such as that of the Priest Notoi. His followers were arrested in 1946. But in 1946 the capital move from Tulagi to Honiara and Notoi joined the Ma'asina Ruru Movement as did the people from that island.

It was already existed, questioning the government system. It is in our blood already as people of this country. Do we learn a lesson from them? No! In 1947, the British Government launched an operation called Operation De-Louse. do not know if you can remember that, but to arrest the leaders of the movement and the nine main chiefs, or *Alaha*, were also arrested and charged under the Sedition Act for organizing secret meetings, and this is despites the fact that Ma'asina Ruru meetings were mass meetings of thousands of people at that time. They were mostly sentenced to six and a half years of hard labor. I raise my hat to these people. They begin this process of questioning in saying that we are Solomon Islanders and we also have values that you must recognize.

While the leaders were in jail, the colonial government gave in. The campaign of disobedience continued with villages refusing to pay taxis, and while many villages were also barricaded against the British, the government launched Operation Jericho. 2000 arrests were made in Malaita alone, and yet the resistance continued. I raised my hat.

In 1951, the British government held meetings with an imprisoned leadership and brokered a deal for self-government in the form of the Malaita Congress. The prisoners were released and demands were met towards the end of 1951. Are there lessons to learn? Yes!

Some of the demands that are placed before the government during these years, including the bona fide demands of the people of Guadalcanal, may raise eyebrows of the people who only see issues from their perspective. That was the biggest mistake made by the government and the advisors during these years.

The leaders of the Ma'asina Ruru demonstrated that they are prepared to go all the way to pursue their convictions. Anyone is bound to be fooled if you only look at these demands as they are. To do justice to these demands, you have to ask why they were made. What is driving it? What are the motivating factors? What policy issues do they generate?

Remember, there are always at least two sides to a story. The lesson to learn here is that we cannot afford to take this issues lightly, including the demand for the country to adopt a state government system.

Black birding is another significant period in the history of our country and predated the declaration of the chain of islands as a protectorate of Great Britain. Thousands, literally thousands, of our people were taken to Australia, Fiji, and Samoa and forced to work in sugarcane plantations. This sad history of our country is under threat of being forgotten, but not the scars that are left behind amongst our people.

There were stories of betrayal, blackmailing, and collusion, which resulted in people having to pay compensation. We only hear the good side of the story, where those who were lucky to return have introduced education, health, agriculture, and Christianity when they returned. But to what degree do these hatreds that I mentioned remain amongst our people can only be known after a full investigation fully concur and agree with the views expressed by Dr Welshman Gegeu on this matter. This is a very important piece of history that needs to be properly documented and taught in our education system.

In addition to specific lessons that we can learn from these events in our history; what is striking is the expression of dissatisfaction and disobedience to authority because our people are not comfortable with the government system and the values it advance is already prevalent during the colonial era. And our people already crossing the system of government. We are still dealing with these issues now. And I would like to believe that we have come to far and therefore are privileged to learn from the way our forefathers think about the foreign system of governance and how they respond to it and how the colonial government deal with them.

We cannot afford to take this experiences lightly and be careless about the call for the introduction of a state government system in the country and the other issues that collapse the country in the year 2000. We would be totally irresponsible; learning from the history on how our forefathers deal with these issues to be careless about these issues.

The founding fathers of our beloved nation had this information in their possession, and therefore are fully aware of what our people wanted. On land, for example, this special Committee on Decolonization recommend that all alienated land be return to the traditional land owning groups. It is understandable that the self governing authority then ruling would find it difficult to implement such recommendations and we would find it very difficult too today. So I do not blame that authority at that time to a little bit cautioned about that recommendation by the Decolonization Committee. But the point remains, that land issues should have been seriously considered before we accepted the offer of independence. In absence of that, we have to learn the hard way.

We will move a little bit to 1978 and the present day and I should be able to call it the day. The period from 1978 to the present day is also full of dramas. It is interesting to note that they are no different from the issues and events that continues to disturb peace, stability and happy coexistence of our people, which demonstrate that as a nation we failed miserably and took nationhood for granted.

The 45 years of our journey as a nation is punctuated by the following sad events, which indicated that we have yet to learn our lessons. In 1978, the drama begins right on day one when we were granted independence. In 1978, it was the people of Western district, which including the islands of Choiseul and Shortland islands that question the system of government we adopted at independence. Where does it started from? Our forefathers already raised those questions. They just raised it after 1978, but it is already an issue in this country. The question that remains to date is whether it crossed the minds of our leaders back then that learning from the lessons highlighted earlier that some serious thought should have been given to reflect certain aspects of our traditional governance system in the system we adopted at independence. No! We swallowed lock stock and barrel. The government system that was given to us or independence, we did not question one aspect of it. We did not; but that is an ongoing concern of the people of this country nd as you all remember right well, our people in the western district demonstrated their concern by refusing to celebrate our independence on the 7th of July 1978. The saving grace was the inclusion of the provision that the new nation was to adopt a provincial government system, which is to be further divided by Area Council and at the Ward level, and it is literally a very shaky beginning for the new nation. The lesson to be learned from that event is that we took the history of sharp revolt by our people

during the colonial era merely as a story, and not events that we should learn not to repeat.

We were careless; indeed, we were careless in not giving enough thought to the question of the most appropriate government system that best accommodates our differences. The standing call now is for the nation to adopt a state-government system. And we cannot afford to be careless about that call. The government is taking both of these issues very seriously and is working on the process to adopt the state-government system and to recognize our traditional governance under the Traditional Governance Bill.

The other event during that period was the Guadalcanal revolt of 1988, and I want us to learn a lesson from that one too. As a response to the call by our people for the country to relook at the question of the most appropriate government system, that becomes a serious discussion already on day one, even 10 years after, we still discuss that point. The government then established a taskforce, which was headed by the late Solomon Mamaloni, the former Prime Minister of this country, to conduct a nationwide consultation to get the views of our people on that question. People already talked about that issue, and they said for us to adopt the state-government system. And we must not be careless about this issue.

Our people overwhelmingly demanded the adoption of a state-government system back then. And the desire is carried in the Mamaloni Report of 1987. And the People's Alliance Party, which campaigned on that platform, won the majority seats, and for the first time in the history of the country, formed a one-party government after the 1988 general elections. But just before the 1988 general elections, the indigenous people of Guadalcanal marched the streets of Honiara to bring their partition to the government then, ruling, raising the same issues that we had heard in colonial times, but were raised back in different ways. They said it in different languages. They are the same issues. The log of those issues is called in the official records as the 'Bona Fide Demands of the People of Guadalcanal.

The other issue is another phase of revolt, and that is the intention that the Minister referred to in 1988. After 10 years of hearing nothing from the Solomon Islands government, the people of Guadalcanal took up arms and effectively took matters into their own hands to implement by force, and the core issues and the spirit of the bona fide demands. These actions begin the period of ethnic tension as we come to know, and these are the things that we want to come and discuss so that we forget about this past. But as the Minister said, let us learn. It looks like we have not learned our lesson!

Again, the message that comes out forcefully from this event is that we cannot afford to turn a blind eye on genuine issues of concern raised by our people. How

the government then handled the bona fide demands of the people of Guadalcanal left so much to be desired. It was carelessness through and through.

The other very significant is yet another story. he call for military intervention in 1998. In 1998, it was obvious, as the events were unfolding that the loyalty of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force to the Solomon Islands Government was slowly and systematically undermined. It was deteriorating.

The two ethnic groups which made up the majority of the force saw no option. Saw no option! They did not see any other option. I raise my heart to them, but to take sides with their respective ethnic group because the government was not able to protect these people. No! You cannot blame them. They were forced into the situation by the negligence of the government.

I was already sacked at that time and I was the Leader of the Opposition at that time. It is then that the late Prime Minister- God bless his heart- the Late Bartholomew Ulufa'alu requested military assistance from Australia under the Defense Cooperation Arrangement, which was current at that point in time. And there are serious explanation on that, which I disagree.

The request was declined. It was declined as an internal matter for Solomon Islands to address. That is the last nail of the years of carelessness and irresponsibility on the part of everybody who could have made a difference to the outcome. Negotiations by special envoys, as we have heard, from the Minister and peace making efforts through series of communique, understandably failed to command the respect of the waring parties. It had reached a point of no return. It was obvious at that point in time that without any credible arm response to the uprising, the country was doomed. That is exactly what happened in 2000 in front of the eyes of the people that said that they would help us. We collapsed.

And then by year 2000, it was obvious to our people that the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force lacked any capacity whatsoever to look after the security and safety of the people or protect government institutions and establishment or function as Police Force. The country collapsed.

I want to move straight to the intervention by RAMSI. I really acknowledged the people of Australia. Any form of credible arms response to the tension happened in 2003. Three years after the country collapsed, in the form of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands. The reason given was, it was not possible under the scheme designed under the Biketawa Declaration. The country of course is forever grateful for the assistance to the people of Australia and New Zealand and the people of the other Pacific nations.

The question, however, remained whether the assistance could have happened before the country collapsed when it was requested. That point will remain a thorn in our memory. It costs the taxpayers of Australia \$21.3 billion. That is a lot of money to rescue us. The program including the permanent presence of arm forces of the Mission for more than a decade and restoring the credibility of the machinery of government in training and mentoring our police force.

The debate as to whether the resources could have been credited and directed to areas that really matter to address lasting peace and stability in Solomon Islands will remain. I am saying that because after more than 23 years, we have yet to consolidate the country's very fragile peace process.

While we may have the issue with the RAMSI, we have ourselves to blame for not seriously taking advantage of the relative peace restored for us by RAMSI to refocus our development strategies taking cognizant of the reasons why we collapsed.

Are there lessons to be learnt? Yes, there are, and that is to do with strategic approach to structure the annual budget over the last 20 years to implement a peace and stability conscious development strategy. The years immediately after the tension were wasted because we were bogged down in politicking and do not know where we were going. It is only 10 years ago that we took some deliberate policy measures to address the issues highlighted by the tension. It appears that we will see mixed achievement on this.

The November riots put to test the preparedness of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force. The claim that it ranks amongst the best police force in the region under the training and mentorship of RAMSI for 14 years. Have there lessons to be learnt? There are many. There are many lessons. The force was poorly prepared, with only 60 officers trained and with as many riot gears to control the riot. The force was literally sitting duck on that fatal day. Thanks to the People's Republic of China. The force was supplied now with 1,500 riot gear and other equipment and vehicles, which means that the entire police force can now participate in controlling any uprising.

After 45 years of independence and 23 years after RAMSI left, the total strength of the force is only 1,500 to look after the security needs of our country with population of more than 750,000 people. We are clearly not taking the security of our country seriously. We are working with our development partners to help us to increase the strength of the force. I think the time has also come for us to establish a full military force in the country and we will working very closely with our development partners on this matter.

I will just quickly leave out some of these. As I have said, we can already see that the 85 years of the colonial era and the 45 years of our journey as an independent

nation were punctuated by events that threatened the unity and stability of the country. As a matter of fact, the writing was already on the wall well before. I know all leaders that leave after each of the events should benefit from the lesson learnt. We did not do a good job of it. Having said that, we struggled with this.

I will leave out the other matter and I will go straight to the areas that I feel that we need look at as Parliament. The observation that we are a country conceived but not yet born is very true and considering the gaps that exist in terms of development as we still dependent on foreign aids and link to foreign security forces for our safety and security. e cannot continue on under this status into the future. The tension is an indirect message to the government to address these issues. We hardly come out of the closet that our former protectors and colonizers placed us in when they rescued us from ourselves in 1893. Yes, head hunting was stopped, and lines were drawn to demarcate our international boundary. And we were eventually recognized as a sovereign nation in 1978 and listed in the United Nations as the Solomon Islands and the 150 member of the family of sovereign nations. At that point in time, we were still struggling to live together as one people and nation.

Honiara and the Island of Guadalcanal, as I said earlier, remained the focus of development since the capital was moved from Tulagi in the Central Province by our colonial administrators because no other centers in country were developed. Honiara was transformed over the years and hosted everything that makes a country, including institutions, economic infrastructures, center of commerce and industries, and the seat of government. We have never got out of the belief that Honiara is Solomon Islands, so all major development is happening in Honiara and on the Island of Guadalcanal.

The question that will continue to resonate in this debate, in the context of a country that was conceived and yet unborn, is: have we become complacent? Have we become complacent too soon and did not progressed this country at the level that we should when we gained independence in 1978 in order to cope with the demand for development by the fast increasing population of the country? This is a probing question and a very relevant one. It gives us the opportunity to take a serious look at every aspect of our development strategies and organization structure as a country, and the list is very revealing very real. We will and should be concerned about and undertake appropriate reforms to address the following and I will just run through the list.

The link between the national development strategies under the economic organizations we adopt independence, then the ideals of national unity, peace, progress, and prosperity, and how effective are these strategies as catalysts for enhancing the effective achievement of these ideals?

The strategy must be conscious of the need to consolidate the country's national unity, peace, and stability. We will also be concerned in this House about the institution of democracy that supports nation-building and how we conduct ourselves within the requirements of these institutions and the laws that govern and regulate these requirements.

Also, the democratic government system we adopted at independence and the values that are considered to be indispensable to the effective functioning of democracy and supporting values that directly clash with other values, we hold with high regard, for example, our Christian and traditional values.

The next one is the effect of colonial government policies, especially land issues and development strategies in general, and of course, the influence introduced religions and how effective they are in advancing the ideals of national unity, peace, progress, prosperity, and happy coexistence of Solomon Islands.

How we relate to and practice our culture and traditional norms in a society that is so ethically diverse, and in discussing this issues, to consider to what extent does culture clash or clashes of values we hold so dear as we contribute to the struggle we are facing as a nation.

I encourage Members of this House to pour their hearts out, and I know that you have already read this report, but the summary gives us some ideas as to what areas you are going to talk about.

Every member of Parliament must talk e want to hear everybody. This nation is looking at the wisdom of the 11th Parliament, for us to come up with ideas to help the government, especially the Ministry to address those issues once and for all, so that we enjoy what is stated in our National Anthem, "peace, progress and prosperity. That man should brothers be make nation see".

I support the Motion.

Proceedings interrupted at 12.28pm

Parliament is resumed at 2.12pm

Mr DOUGLAS ETE (*East Honiara*) (02:13): Thank you Mr Speaker. This is a very important Motion to be considered in Parliament and it would be good for a lot of us to speak. Those of us Guadalcanal people and Malaita people should talk and Western Province as well. You have signed some understanding with Malaita and Western too. The copies are in the reports. So do not turn a blind eye on this very important Motion that is being tabled before Parliament by the Minister. So I am just encouraging everyone to speak.

I was affected by the ethnic violence, partly, because those of us who are part Guadalcanal and Malaita, we do not know where we sit. Honestly, this is by and large a much cosmic problem in our country. It is very difficult for us. We have been affected.

I came to Honiara in 2006. I was not living in Honiara. I came back after RAMSI was already here for a few years. I am encouraging everyone to speak. Guadalcanal, Malaita and Western Province must speak. Please share our views in our Parliament.

I just want to contribute towards this Motion No.35, on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report, together with the shorter version. Let me start here. My discourse here will be short, but I am going to make some profound statements and points here to be considered by this House so that next time we do not destroy our country.

Let me begin. Much have been written on the violence of the year 2000 by so many commentators, including both academics and non-academics, most of whom have felt the hardship and pain of the ethnic violence thank the Minister of Traditional Governance, the honorable Manetoali and the Prime Minister. My contribution to this Motion would be in twofold. First, is within my capacity as the true Solomon Islander, and I am going to do it in the spirit of a true Solomon Islander, observing a matter that had never had a proper funeral. Secondly, as a politician, that is why I am encouraging every politician to say something this week on this Motion. Trying to take the happenings of 2000 by putting tangible influences through it through Parliament on the government so that the government can create a framework for its public policies and establishing a bridge between the warring parties going forward in the future and their respective communities.

Let me start by saying that today marks the event this Parliament will be remembered in paying homage to the TRC Report, forging a funeral to bury the ethnic violence. I am saying this because the ethnic tension was never properly buried. It is still alive. No successive governments have do it. I am going to touch on that later, but no successive governments have seriously thought of it properly to have a proper funeral for the ethnic violence. This ethnic violence claims the lives of around 200 people both Malaita and Guadalcanal, Western Province and other places. It is not only these people that died during the ethnic violence but other people as well, that died on Guadalcanal.

By this Parliamentary process is like a bishop presiding over a funeral in a cathedral with a coffin on the pots near the alter. He is reading from a paper in front of him to comfort the grieve relatives and loved ones attending and listening on SIBC. That is what we are doing here today. The casket is not yet lowered into the ground. I

will tell you today my opinion as to what we should do for us to bury properly the casket so that we forget about it.

Today, as we stand in the Chamber, is like a preacher, like our pastor of the Seventh Day Adventist. We are still preaching. The casket is yet to be buried. That is not what we are doing here. We are like a bishop standing in the cathedral and talking. The casket is still on the ground. We must have a proper funeral for this ethnic violence. It is too bigger a thing that the government must address. When they address it, they must address properly.

The TRC Report is a sad and sobering report. It is a report no one wants to read. It is a sad report. It contains atrocities, children and old people were shot dead. Around 200 or more died. If you read this report and other commentaries, it pointed a finger, not the other four fingers, but one finger on political influence that triggered the ethnic tension.

Therefore, this report or reports, the 5 Volumes plus the paperback 'Risen from the Ashes' reflects the break down in our society, culture and thinking as Solomon Islanders. It is a report that brought this country back to the head hunting days. Some stories here are about people being chopped on the neck in broad daylight.

The good spirit of the Almighty has left. While a lot of people prayed during that time and lot of churches prayed, but the situation was not good. It is not easy to read the report. This report, if you read from cover to cover on the 5 Volumes, it is a report that tears our treasury. It breaks the economy of this country. It is not a good report.

For us who are sitting here, reading this report, we can make something out of it. Those of you sitting on the other side of the Chamber, this is your opportunity to redraw the chart of how things should be done as a nation if we want prosperity in the next 50 to 100 years. However, like I said, the actual funeral to bury the casket, the differences between our provinces will never be conducted properly unless and until we have a Reparation Bill as promised by the DCGA government, which is a good one. always agree on that.

This Bill will be an Act of Parliament. That it will be designed for reconciliation and habitation purposes. Otherwise, those who are staying down there, will keep on asking "when will the government pay us? The government promised to pay us". They have asked me, and I told them that this country does not have money. There is nothing for you in the budget. It is not just one person that asked me. I have been asked by a lot of people. I told them to go and talk to the people that told them those stories.

Today, the people of this country have learned the hard lessons of wrong government decisions by successive governments. We must rewrite a new chapter. Otherwise, in the next 10 years we will experience another ethnic violence. I am not a prophet, but lagging government policies that should have been mended this and when people are grinding axes, they will rubble and we do not want that. We do not want that. We want a nation that is tranquil, peaceful, respectful and harmonious; a country that cherishes the values of other people for the betterment of our children.

If only this Bill could be accompanied by a Reparation Bill, we would have buried the violence of 2000 before we go out for elections and this chamber dissolves. And we will bury this ethnic violence and attest this burial with true reconciliation by different former militia groups, people, and their communities.

Let me begin by highlighting the issues that led directly or indirectly to the ethnic violence that tore this country apart. My arguments will be supported by papers. I stand before you with evidence in this regard also, I will be showing you why, what and how our people wanted post and pro independence that had been taken lightly by successive governments that triggered the violence some 23 years ago. And also why governments after the year 2000 did little to conduct a funeral in this respect, this important issue to which Parliament is now mourning over. A matter that could have been concluded in the first 10 years of the conflict.

Let me start with the bona fide demands of the people of Guadalcanal. I am going to take a deductive approach here. I am going to start with a letter of 2nd November 2021 by the Honorable Francis Sade of the Guadalcanal Province sent to the Prime Minister, Honorable Manasseh Sogavare, and the Honorable Prime Minister's response on the 27th November 2021. In his response, there were three basic issues that prompt up in that letter as demands set out by the Guadalcanal Province. I have the copy of that letter here with me. Two sets of letters here duly signed. It is a good healthy letter, that will take us forward, and I would like to thank the Prime Minister on that as well.

On demand No.7, Guadalcanal Province wanted the process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report to be table in Parliament, which is here now before us. So I am just quoting the Prime Minister;

"The perceived delay in the implementation of the report was not intentional. As you would appreciate the Lilo government tabled the report at the dying stage of his government. No serious action was taken by his government until the DCGA government took over the leadership in 2015. We set into motion a process to implement the recommendation but was frustrated by the ousting of the government in 2017. The Hou government that took over in 2018 did basically nothing about it. The work on the implementation of the recommendation only

resumed on the current DCGA under my leadership took over the government in 2019".

Also in 2019, the State Government Commission Report was presented to the Prime Minister, reflecting that work on it is in progress.

Demand No.6. This was to give greater autonomy to both Malaita and Guadalcanal Province. That was one of the key stones in the year 2000 Townsville Peace Treaty Agreement. In this point, the Honorable Prime Minister referred to the 1987 Mamaloni Report on Statehood. The PAP went to the 1988 General Election as lip service. They went and told communities that they will give them state government. They vanished and went into oblivion. Nothing happened. I feel pity for those kinds of arrangements. This is not to say that Mamaloni himself is not a propagator and big supporter of state government. He supported it, and I will show you in my discourse today. It seems to say that the DCGA government is exerting all efforts to deal with the matter. It is coming today in Parliament. But I want the Reparation Bill to come with it so that we can bury it properly.

My comments on those issues are that the first province to ask for a federal system, or statehood, as it was commonly coined in the 1970s and 1980s, was Western Province. They threatened to cease from this country in 1978. There was a letter written by a person, and that person went to prison for it, which is a bit prejudiced in my view. That letter was called "The Oath to the West Wind". It really propagated hatred between communities at that time, which was seemingly unnecessary. We should not have done that. We should be seeing each other as equals, as Solomon Islanders. Even if we argue and such, we should be seen as Solomon Islanders. That was what prompted the Kausimae Report.

Guadalcanal Province was the second Province to ask for State government in 1981 following the atrocities caused by settlers who had come. Some of the settlers are my relatives, and I must say that. They are people who were living in the plantations. That prompted the bona fide demand in 1981. They reminded the Solomon Mamaloni government in 1988, and PAP promised to grant the system shortly, but as it was using the word of the current Prime Minister, they did nothing about it. Empty promises. These are not my words. The letters say that they did nothing about it. They did virtually nothing.

In 1998, when Alebua was Premier of Guadalcanal Province, the situation was aggravated, culminated in a violence and declared violence. The talk at that time was that the Opposition was behind it. These are not my words. It is stated in the papers. And the politicians were involved in it. I am not saying it but at least four people have been named.

So, that culminated into the ethnic violence. They said politics were involved in it. Whether that is true or not true, it has not been proven. So I will stop here, but I will say that politics is involved. People were pointing fingers at the politicians. They were called Solomon Mafia. It has been welded deep into the establishment of Honiara. That actually propagated that ethnic violence that destroyed this country.

The Malaitans or certain groups of people asked for statehood. But my reading in the archival books pointed to that Malaitans first asked the colonial administration in around 1958. They asked a person called Job Stanley Marksman, Mr Moore, Mr Markwind, that we want self rule. Self rule is not something that just come out of our mouths, or just after independence. No! It came out after the Ma'asina Ruru or Marching Rule. In Guadalcanal, they called it on Marau Hauba. It spread to Makira and now they called it Platform. They still kept the old ideas for self rule. He is my wantok from Makira. I am also from Bauro, my mother from Guadalcanal is from Bauro.

So yes, it spread to Makira and Guadalcanal, Marau Hauba. That thinking of that time is for self rule. So the colonial administration at that time proposed a vote for a president for Malaita Council and they voted Salana Ga'a. That was the first time that voting has been tested in this country. They did this at Ambu and the headquarters in Aimela.

The idea of self rule and independence and so forth were done properly. That is why it culminated into the violence. The violence is just the product of it. The policies and laws, the ambiguous laws of the country made the people unhappy and that culminated into these big issues.

The letter to the Guadalcanal Province. A lot of governments come and go but nothing happened. We come and pay homage to this ethnic violence, at least a few months before this dissolution of Parliament. I would think that it could have come much, much earlier so that we can work on. But in that letter, the current Prime Minister made a point e said that by 2026 or before, if things go well, we will grant the federal or we say statehood to you the Guadalcanal Province. That year is 2026. I was talking with a lot of people and leaders of Guadalcanal Province and are looking forward to that and not only Guadalcanal Province but both the Guadalcanal and Malaita Province the main provinces.

I am going to speak on some issue here, on the Kemakeza Statehood Option. The work on this one started on the new Constitution to replace the Independence Constitution in 2003. If that had passed, it will be the cornerstone of a new nation state. As they said, the independence Constitution was conceived at the Lancaster House in West Minster in London. The new one where Kemakeza had started work in 2003 would be a home Constitution that reflects the aspiration and values of the

communities and reflects the political and social environment of Solomon Islands as opposed to a foreign one.

In the report where they bring, it stated that what the Kemakeza led government was saying is that they were looking at a system that characterize both federal and state institutions that work under same rules on the distribution of power and resources and at the same time advocating for the rights and obligations of the federation and its different states.

In 2003, the Kemakeza Government came up with a Constitutional review project for Solomon Islands in June 2003. In that report, the intention is for Parliament and its 50 Members to formally rectify the current Constitution. They stated that they must exercise vote to actually adopt the new Constitution. With a two-third majority in favor of the new Constitution, hence we will adopt the new Constitution. It is like a child we adopt. Section 60 of the Constitution.

The arguments as to why the 50 MPs need to vote on this Bill in the report, the argument is that because the 50 Members of Parliament and this is a representative parliament representing the people, you are voted to represent the people of this country. That is why you must vote on it and the current Constitution seems to agree with this process. When it comes to that time and the time is ready, that is what will happen. On the other side of the balance, there is an argument here that says, why do we represent them? What about the provincial government? Have they being voted in as well?

But the current Constitution seems to agree with the first option, that 50 Members of Parliament will vote with two-thirds and adopt the new Constitution. That is what the Kemakeza government did, according to their reports. And this too, I think it falls directly inline with the framework of the current Parliamentary democratic theory and more so the system itself, and this is a matter that the current Constitution supports.

As is in this report, there will be no important decisions. One important decision we who are sitting down in this Chamber will make is the process of adopting the new constitution. These are plans, and they are plans, but we must bury the coffin by bringing a Reparation Bill to Parliament so that all the communities in this country are reconciled by it, especially those that are most affected. Apart from that, I do not think there is going to be a true reconciliation established by this Motion.

I want to also talk about the characteristics of the new Constitution. The current Constitution is a system that we have adopted since 1978, and with it makes Solomon Islands a sovereign democratic state. If we adopt this new Constitution, we will become a democratic federal republic, in which we will not acknowledge King Charles as Head of State.

I want to comment on the current independence Constitution . I describe it as independence Constitution because the independence Constitution has been amended 15 times. The first time it was amended was in 1983 because the Teaching Service Commission was not in it. So when they amend it, they insert Teaching Service Commission. The last one is the extension of the life of Parliament, making it the 15th time that this current Constitution has been amended.

But in terms of the independence Constitution, when they signed this agreement at the Lancaster House in London after the negotiation, Professor Yash Ghai commented on, and I want to raise it here in your hearing. Commenting on the British Constitution and the process by which it was drafted, he said "Despite consultations with the people and active involvement of leaders, the Constitution cannot be said to be rooted in indigenous concept of power, authority and decision making that cultural concept is not rooted in it. It is purely British. I always support this idea of federacy. Although I am thinking of having it done slowly, but to be honest, I support this idea of statehood.

The problem is that the small provinces like Malaita outer islands and Renbel where the resources are few. They have resources there but are few. Bigger Provinces like Isabel, Guadalcanal and Malaita and other bigger provinces are okay. The smaller ones are of concern here. I think it is alright.

Ghai said that despite the consultation with the people and active involvement of leaders, the Constitution cannot be said to be rooted in indigenous concept of power, authority and decision making. Once we have it on the table by or before 2026 as stated in the current Prime Ministers letter to the Honorable Premier of Guadalcanal Province, when it comes here, those who will be here or those to be elected in the new House, we will try to look at it and work on it.

There are two distinct changes on those two Constitutions that I would like to raise here. One is that the King is no longer the Head of State, but we will have a President. Secondly, the structure of the federal system will have two chambers; federal Parliament and the Congress of Governors. Those are the conflicting ideas.

Much can be discussed here, but I will stop here. 'Rising from the Ashes'. The title of the summarized paperback extracted from the TRC 5 Volumes seemed to reflect a summary; but that summary may not be reflective of the 5 Volumes.

This ethnic violence is a reflection of a nation that has failed in its leadership; and a nation that has failed in State building, a nation that has failed in nation building efforts. The system that we have now will resonate with ethnic violence all the time. I am giving you the reason for it because the Constitution itself does not reflect the customs and culture of our people. Violence will not stop. It will never stop until and unless we adopt a new Constitution, then I promise you, it will stop. Violence

will stop in this country because now provinces and states will better look after and manage their people. But with this Constitution? No. Yash Ghai already said that it does not reflect our customary practices, customary usages, our culture.

On Independence Day, I was here in Honiara, and I was around 11 years old. Jubilancy was in the air in Honiara, and people from all over the country came to Honiara. Foreign dignitaries came. After the jubilant, criticism of the Constitution started on day one, no government has properly addressed it for the last 43 years. And Mr. Prime Minister, I am asking you, that by 2026 you give it to them, to test it out. That is not a bad thing; you know it, and I know it. If Maelanga wants to be Prime Minister, give it to him. If somebody else becomes Prime Minister after the elections, then try and work on it. This is an effort for all of us, even us sitting on this side of the bench. We will be helping you in this important regard. This is an important issue.

What are the issues that they want addressed? What do our leaders want? I am going to point them out here. Just a few: When they criticized Western being the first and Guadalcanal Province and Malaita Province being the three main provinces, their leaders, Warren Paia and all these educated guys that came out of University at that time, Honorable Danny, and these people, Talasasa and former, wanted the federal system of government that recognized customs principles and laws, together with the participation of local chiefs and leaders in the governance structure of the federal system the second thing they want is decentralization of powers to the current provinces. They did not get that 10 years down the line. No one had listened. No one. The devolution powers, devolution orders were given but then then hold them back. This is for the provinces to have a portion of the revenue that comes out from its resources and the protection of landowning groups, with the amendment of the Forest Act, amendment of the Mining Act, amendment of the Fisheries Act and amendment of the Land and Titles Act. The portions that are ambiguous on the pieces of legislations that are not cleared and they wanted to throw out must be done.

Little have been done., by all of us, including politicians. The return of alienated land policy. In 1999, there was a return of land alienated policy that came out during the Ulufa'alu led government. It was short lived. It has not been followed.

Policy is only good if it is put into legislative work or legislation. If it remains as a policy, it is just a piece of paper. The return of alienated land policy, they want an amendment to the Land and Titles Act 1979. The system of land tenure that is reflective in the Land and Titles Act is more or less foreign.

I thank the DCGA Government led by the Prime Minister. They worked on this. I understand that there are nine reports that came out and then it stopped there. We

do not know where it was heading towards, but probably the Minister may want to tell the Chamber when he has the opportunity to say something this week.

I am saying this because when we look at other countries like Fiji and Vanuatu, Fiji has a five land tenure systems. It has native land system, the Qoliqoli one, Methodist has its own register, the waste land and Housing being one of the highest and free hold, which is the torrent system, like what we have here. They have their own register. We a foreign one. Since independence, criticism was on it. That too, in a big service, culminated into the ethnic violence and the violence of 2000. That too was what they wanted.

This is so that it separates the ownership of tribe and ownership of an individual person. Another person registered a land at Noro and it belongs to him only o we all agree with this. We alienated our tribes with the systems. All of us are doing it. I think the neatest thing to do is to review these things. It is a long way to go, although I am happy that this government has a basis to work on probably in the next House.

Ten years after independence, some of the things they wanted were written down in agreements between ethnic tension spill over effect of Malaita and immediate development option were signed between the ethnic groups. In 1999, the Honiara code, Panatina code and Buala code are piece meal things. The basic thing to do is within this House of Parliament. The laws of this land need to be reviewed. There are roughly still around four to six hundred pieces of legislation. Some of which are old laws and need to repealed. We know that and I need not to tell any one about it.

They want to see cheaper electricity today. So they opted for a project and is a distant dream. The Lungga-Komaridi Hydro. Cheaper power has failed. The livestock and cattle industry in the country. There is a lot of paper going on this. It has collapsed. You cannot make money on building houses.

The money for the economy needs a wider and bigger range. In Italy, the leather they used for their suits. This is made from leather from Italy in Europe. They have lots of bigger ranges of cattle. The leather jackets they sell are Italian. The cocoa development plan was really missed 10 years down after independence. That is why when we account for cocoa in the country to subvert our economy in the country, it is only around 3,000 to 4,000 tons per annum. As opposed to prior to the ethnic violence, it was around 28,000 tons. Its peak was 28,000 tons of cocoa being exported to Europe and the Asia.

They want to review the Forestry Act because they get nothing from their resources from their trees. Today, the code of practice of forestry under Timber and Utilization Act is not working. They know it as they are on the ground. They tell their representatives that they want this and that. We want saturated powers in the

Forestry Act. If they break the laws of this country, they must be deported or penalized. They have to be fined. People are tired. There is no proper calculation as to their royalty in terms of logging, a new management initiative needs to be imposed, fostered, and established by the government to sort it out. If not, we will have another ethnic violence. We will come back with another reconciliation because islands are fighting each other. I was in Western Province when fight broke out. They chased us out. My house in Munda was looted. This is not a minor issue.

One thing is that, when we settle another person's home, we must respect their customs. Seriously, I am saying this because we cannot stay another person's home and think that they are happy with the little things that we do.

Ten years after independence, they want to see the maintenance of new roads. If we take stock here today as to how many new roads have been built in the last 20 years in our country. It is good that we give machineries to honorable Members construct roads. The state must be serious about doing this.

People want marketing of produces. There was work on CEMA and I thank the government for this. But let us build proper infrastructure for the mobility of our goods and services.

Transport and Shipping needs for connectivity. The model that we adopt is that we are giving ships to constituencies, which is good, but there are better models that we could do. Sometimes people may be frustrated by a former Member who still claims ownership over a ship and they go to Court.

Balancing and development issues and not one-sidedness. These are not my words. It is written in the papers that I have here with me. They complain that only certain group of people have wharves. This is not an idea in the 11th Parliament. This idea emerges after they come back from signing the independence, which culminated in ethnic violence. We must not turn a blind eye to these things. These are real things and issues. When we do development projects, sort them out properly.

In terms of the South Pacific Games, it is just East Honiara that is being developed. What about Central and West Honiara? But I am happy.

There are a whole bunch of issues here, and I do not want to go through them all the last issue that I want to go to is of significance. It is the issue of nation building and its identity. It is probably the hardest and audacious task on the menu. My cousin Tara, writing from Hawaii, said "*Nations like States have to be made. They cannot exist naturally.*" This is true. You just got to build a nation to the best of your capability. And who is building the nation?; It is here in this Chamber we build the nation. We make laws to build this nation. We moved Motions to build this nation. We influence Public Policy. One of the seven constituents that influences Public Policy

is Parliament itself and the constitution itself that we want to sanction. They influence directly public policy. We make a slight mistake here, violence will be on the street. Nation building and its identity is probably the hardest and audacious task on the menu. Nations like States have to be made, and they can never exist naturally.

In the Provincial Review Committee Report, there are number of issues that brought forward. But I will leave it there. This is something for another time. But since independence, as the Prime Minister said this morning, we have always turned a blind eye to it. We disregarded it. We are worried about our day to day and forget about the bigger cosmic issues.

The 1981 Provincial Government Act; this Act did little to address the decentralization of powers and authority. So in 1996 a new Provincial Government Act was passed in Parliament to address this. What happen to this Act when it was passed? Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly took a case to the High Court and they won that case in the High Court. That is the 1996 Act, which was passed in Parliament. It was null and void. The matter was brought to the Court of Appeal, the Court of Appeal. The Court of Appeal said what government did was correct.

So in 1997, we hung on the balance. We were panicking on what to do. Election was a few months away in August of 1997. They did changes to the 1981 Act and brought it to Parliament and passed it to become the Provincial Government Act of 1997. We went back to square one. We achieved nothing. Our leaders wanted to move forward with good thinking but we came back to square one from 1997, we did nothing to the Provincial Government Act, except for amendments. Section 9, Section 11, Section 12, and Section 15 of the Provincial Government Act were amended. That is all we did. We did not address what the people wanted. The people wanted devolution powers that would go down to them. It culminated into the ethnic violence.

As I have said, with this current Constitution, we will have ethnic violence often. This is a global environment with a look-down generation. Everyone is looking down at their mobile phones. When they see riot somewhere, they want riot in Honiara too. The look-down generation.

Prime ministers after 2000; let me say something about this. This will be the last issue that I will talk about. Sogavare came in as Prime Minister in 2000. And in 2000, he was handed the Townsville Peace Treaty Agreement on his plate to look at. And in this Townsville Peace Agreement, there are numerous things there, some of which are the return of alienated lands, devolution, decentralization, devolution issues, federal government statehood, and equal sharing. It is in the book, and I will not go over it. It is in here. But he has less than one year, with elections in April 2001.

Repatriation issues, the repatriation payouts; we still have copies of them. They are not lost. Some claims that people were making were unjustifiable. Statehood and equal sharing of revenue from provincial resources have never been addressed, but they were on the plate in 2000 or after 2000. My good in-law and honorable Prime Minister was a few months before the election. Decentralization policy, return of alienation land policy. Kemakeza came in, and we should give credit to his government for kick starting work on the federal government Constitution in June 2003 and the invitation of RAMSI under the International Facilitation Act 2003. e established a Constitution Review Committee to undertake work on issues pertaining to the TPA. One year later, in 2004, the first draft of the Federal Constitution came out as a result of the need to do so under TPA. We should give credit to the honourable Kemakeza led government.

In 2006, Sogavare became the Prime Minister and worked on the things that Kemakeza did. At that time as well, the country was having a cash flow problem. It was on its knees and the Prime Minister then was worried about the economy. So a lot of things that we should have been doing at that time were done by the Kemakeza led government and when Manasseh came in, he propagated through this.

The Sikua led Government came in early 2009. At the end of 2009, the second draft, which was left by the Sogavare led government came out in 2009. The Federal Constitution second draft came out during the Sikua led government. The Danny Philip leg government came in 2011. I was a Minister then, but we were worried about the economy of this country and trying to move forward in trying to see that reforms are carried out both in institutional and development reforms. The TPA was left untouched until the 11th of November 2011 when Gordon Darcy led government came in.

Gordon came in December of 2011 till 2014, when Parliament dissolved in September. The actual date was September 8th. In 2014, the final draft of the Federal Constitution came out, and the Solomon Islands joint Constitutional Congress and Eminent Person's Advisory Council plus an explanatory note is attached to it. You have seen it, so I need not tell you. But it came out during the Gordon Darcy Lilo Government.

Sogavare Government was from 2015 to 2017. I was Deputy Prime Minister for that government for a year in 2015. And not too many tangible issues have been taking place, although there was a review of the Statehood Report was mandated by the Sogavare Government at that time. The paper that was mandated on them to bring the report was presented to the government in 2019. ithout discrediting any former government led by the Ministers that I have mentioned, I want to say that all of them have worked in one way or another up until today.

I felt pity for the Hon Rick Hou, because he has only less than 12 months. He actually mandated that review to be delivered to him but could not be delivered to him because of elections. It was delivered to another Prime Minister, the Prime Minister who actually started it, the current Prime Minister. I thank him for that.

This is going to be like what we had in 2014. We see these thing at the 11th hour. The timing of this is good. The timing during the Gordon Darcy Lilo Government when he tabled the 5 Volumes of TRC Report was one week before the Parliament dissolved. I did not accept it. How can you do it in one week? With this one, we have a few months. Although I would suggest that it came two or three years before, but we had COVID-19 as well and so we could not do what we wanted at that time.

Those are my views. We waited for 23 years before we bring this. It is virtually too long. We could have dealt with it 10 years after the ethnic violence and do away with it. Get a Reparation Bill so that we properly burry it. This is like a preacher. It is like when a Bishop stands up and read the some instructions from a piece of paper. We have not buried the coffin. It is still on the floor of Parliament.

Until and unless a Reparation Bill is brought before this House in Parliament before the people will carry the coffin and we buried it and will forget about it. For this one, it is not, the coffin will still stay here in the church, at the cathedral. I see no option to it. We want people to truly reconcile, like those from Weather Coast can shake their hand with whoever they fight with them and communities in Malaita.

I want to make a recommendation here in conclusion and I have only three. Do not worry as it will come.

1. I request a proper burial and funeral for the violence of 2000.
2. I request a Reparation Bill to be brought to Parliament for the entire processing of this funeral.
3. Proper reconciliation between communities, people, and families of those affected

Lastly, we as national leaders, when we do this, we need to involve the church leaders, community leaders, chiefs, provincial leaders, and our political leaders in this whole process for us to bury this thing properly.

My final one is that any promises of rehabilitation of ex-militia or ex-militants, to which me and my brother the Deputy Prime Minister and Member for East Malaita have relatives involved in the ethnic violence. I have relatives from Guadalcanal who involved in it. They have been asking me as to when they will be rehabilitated with projects. I do not know whether that is part of the TPA, but I am posing it to you.

Those are my only recommendations and I support the Motion.

The SPEAKER: I will now call on the Minister to adjourn the Debate.

Hon. SAMUEL MANETOALI: I move that the debate on the question be now adjourned.

Question put and agreed to

(Debate adjourned)

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: I move that Parliament do now adjourn.

Question put and agreed to

Parliament adjourned at 3.45pm

[Edited]



Eleventh Parliament

Sixth Meeting

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

Tuesday, 1 August 2023

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

(Subject to Revision)

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NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**Tuesday, 1 August 2023**

The Speaker, Mr Patteson John Oti, took the Chair at 09:51.

Prayers.

Business of the House

ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Minister for Communication and Aviation, Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources, Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Minister for Justice and Legal Affairs, Minister for Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening, Minister for Education and Human Resources Development, Minister for Health and Medical Services, Minister for Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification, Minister for Police, National Security and Correctional Services and Members of Parliament for Aoke/Langalanga, North West Guadalcanal, Central Honiara, East Honiara, Malaita Outer Islands, East Are Are, North New Georgia, East Makira, North Guadalcanal, West Makira, Ulawa/Ugi, South New Georgia/Rendova/Tetepare, West New Georgia/Vona Vona, West Kwaio and West Honiara.

The SPEAKER: Honourable members, in the public gallery are Scouts from Mbua Valley School who are here for a visit. Please welcome them.

(Applause)

Motions

MOTION NO.35

The SPEAKER: Honourable members, it seems there are no members prepared to take the floor.

I will suspend Parliament to 1.00pm to continue with the debate.

(Proceeding interrupted at 9.54am)

Parliament is resumed 1.50pm

Hon HARRY KUMA (*North West Choiseul—Minister for Finance and Treasury*) (01:50): The honorable Speaker. Honorable colleagues in Parliament, fellow citizens of our beloved country, Solomon Islands, ladies and gentlemen. Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank you for giving me the opportunity, on behalf of the people of North-West Choiseul Constituency and as the Minister of Finance and Treasury, to very briefly

contribute to the discussions and debate on the important Motion before this honorable House.

I initially thought that the TRC report should not be discussed in public, at least at this point in time, because, first, I sort of do not see any good reason for repeating the chorus of atrocities, violence mistreatment, loss of loved ones, and loss of property that were committed at that time.

Secondly, I simply refuse to hear any reference to the millions of dollars claimed in the report while we are currently experiencing financial difficulties. That was my perception then. I now believe that we must come to terms with the truth. We must join hands in the true sense of the many reconciliation ceremonies that have been conducted, and we must embrace each other as Solomon Islanders and move this country forward.

For this, I must thank and acknowledge the wisdom of the DCGA government, in particular the honorable Prime Minister and the Minister of Traditional Governance, for bringing the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report for debate and discussion in this honorable House.

What has happened during the ethnic tension has resulted in violence and destruction across the country. The TRC report shows that more than 200 of our people, most of whom were innocent civilians not involved in the conflict, were killed. The report also showed that scores of women were also raped, and thousands were displaced, and widespread destruction of property and house burnings happened.

Let us be honest with ourselves. Indeed, what has happened during the ethnic tension period was all criminal activities that no loving and Christian country can ever tolerate and accept.

The TRC report made a range of policy recommendations based on its inquiry into the tensions and the contributing factors to the violations. I would like to discuss some of these recommendations and offer some views on lasting reconciliation and peace.

Up to the end of the ethnic tension of early 2000, we further had a couple of riots and ended with the November 2021 social unrest that resulted in mass looting. People everywhere are questioning our current system and what else could exist to combat rampant inequalities and form a just and fair society.

The tabling of the TRC Report in this honourable House is a timely reminder to ask ourselves, what is reconciliation? What is the intention, the meaning of this word? Where has it come from and where is it meant to take us to? For any reconciliation process to be meaningful and lasting, it must involve genuine reparation and true

forgiveness. It must involve humility, letting go of the desire for revenge and embrace comradeship.

The distinction of forgiveness from reconciliation is important. Forgiveness, unlike reconciliation, is not always mutual, but is most constructive when mutual, particularly in post conflict situation when victims and perpetrators continue to live next to each other. In our case, it is crucial that forgiveness is genuine and mutual.

The promotion of true forgiveness does not mean that we condoned or accept criminal behavior. The long arms of justice must continue to reach out in pursuit of peace, security and transformation in our society.

As a Minister of Finance and Treasury, and from experiences of similar global situations, I can confirm that the task of true reconciliation and peace building is hugely challenging and costly. It may take decades to achieve. Indeed, one of the lessons that outsiders in particular are often drawn from those processes has been the need to be cautious and take time. So it is also important that our reconciliation model and processes are approached from multiple angles and over an extended period of time.

The TRC recommendations are well known and accepted. However, we must also accept the fact that policy interventions, with these goals in mind, are usually constrained by time and inadequate resources. There might also be a tendency on the a part of policy makers and donors in particular to consider that because reconciliation is a long term process, it is not something that requires immediate attention and that the mere passage of time will ultimately heal social wounds and in justice. This is simply not the case.

As Christians, we all know that peace and reconciliation is not cheap but very costly indeed. As we all know, it costed the son of God, Jesus Christ, for us to be reconciled and at peace with our Heavenly Father again.

I note from Rising from the Ashes Report, that the TRC has recommended a range of policy measures if our reconciliation process is to achieve the ultimate goal of strengthening a true unity, reconciliation and peace in the country. Successive governments have addressed this policy recommendations and reforms that would help transform our nation into a vibrant and truly happy society.

I would like to briefly touch on some recommendations, which in my view, are critical for the government to continue to pursue and to ensure better results and outcomes are attained.

Recommendation on Youth. Instilling tolerance and understanding amongst our youthful population is essential through civic learning, sports and cultural

exchange. Under the promotion of sustainable investments and creation of job opportunities, will engage and raise youths' positive contribution to the society.

Recommendation on infrastructure. The construction of roads, wharves and airfields, the development of renewable energy, the extension of communication coverage, for example, are pre-requisite to development and diversify economy which our society desperately need.

On Constitutional Reform. The priority reform, in my view, for us is to review the Constitution so that discrimination and domination and/or are punishable.

On land reform, the return of alienated land to land owners could be a challenging exercise. Under this situation, a proper land restitution policy for alienated land and the current legislative reform of customary land recording and registration is relevant and ought to be brought to Parliament as soon as practical.

A simple reform in the register of land and title department that can accelerate property development and business investment is to ease the process of taking charge of a registered land or property when one is given a loan. At the moment, the time taken to secure this charge is an necessarily long and delays investment.

On Justice reform, I do not have any specific issue with recommendations in the report. However, critical to the development of commerce and instilling confidence and certainty to genuine investors and general public is the adequately resourcing and strengthening of the justice apparatus to be more independent and be able to clear backlogs of important cases.

On a security reform, I conquer with recommendation in the security space. Two, of course, have been achieved. The patrol boat outpost in Shortland islands is an important component to strengthen western borders security. The work needs to be stepped up to have this outpost completed. The best approach to secure our own security is to be responsible for our own security. However, given our resource constraint we will continue to depend on our friends for support. For this reason, I acknowledge the DCGA Government for taking the leadership state to diversify our policing and security mix. This is the best way forward for us in the foreseeable future. We must not only relying on a single coalition, a partner or a friend alone for our security needs. We must maintain friends to all and enemy to none and be able to call on any of our friends whenever we need assistance.

On health reform, I appreciate the emphasis to strengthen the capacity of our National Mental Health Services emphasized in the report. Our health system is over stretched while NCD could become a national security concern. As in policing and security area I urged development partners and friends to also continue to assist

us in our primary health care improving provincial hospital and expanding the existing National Referral Hospital in Honiara.

On the education reform. A reform that in parts universal values of tolerance, understanding, respect and promotes human rights to our youthful population is important. It is far more important to commence this at the primary level and to ensure just as we do in formal education that youths have greater access to options of technical and vocational education.

On corruption reform, I believe we have the right institutions in place to deal with cases of corruption in the country. This is important. We have existing anti-corruption and law enforcement agencies such as the director public prosecutions office, criminal investigation department of police, audit and investigation agents across government and the anti-corruption commission. What needs to be done is for this institutions to be resourced, strengthen and well remunerated. I believe continued donor support will be necessary to strengthen these areas. As we all know, the tension period from 2009 to 2011 between our brothers in Guadalcanal and Malaita was not the only tension that adversely the people and country. In the western part of the country, militia was also triggered caused havoc in the lives of ordinary citizens.

The other tension that had also severely affected our people in both Choiseul and Western Provinces was the Bougainville internal crisis in the late 1990s. For years, my people of Batava communities in North-West Choiseul in Choiseul province have been knocking at the doors of successive governments for recognition and assistance for what had happened to them as a result of the crisis. Their concerns are also recorded in the report.

I am pleased that the TRC report is brought and debated in this honorable House, not just for my people but for the entire nation. Once the report in the form of a Motion is passed, the necessary institutional arrangements will be further established to deal with claims and concerns once and for all or there may be a call for government reparation and to be responsive. It is equally important for us, the people, to exercise understanding, tolerance and demonstrate true Melanesian heritage of respect.

Finally, as the Minister for Finance and Treasury, our peace processes and model are needed for the rebuilding of the Solomon Islands economy. Because building long-term peace is part of a long process. Analysis has concurred that no intractable conflict can really end without some kind of reconciliation process if the parties to the conflict are going to interact again in the future. If they do not, the conflict is likely to recur in another form even after a settlement for a particular episode is reached.

As I said earlier, reconciliation and peacebuilding are not cheap exercises. It costs lots of resources and time. However, it can be done. What is important is that all parties support peace as something from the heart and not only from the head based. In other words, reconciliation and peacebuilding processes must be voluntary, must cultivate understanding, and be based on reparation and true forgiveness.

If the patterns from the past that produced and sustained violence during the 2009 and 2011 periods remain unchanged, they will eventually produce the same outcomes again. Peace must therefore be supported by a gradual sharing of power, honoring each other's political commitments, the creation of a climate conditions for economic justice and the willingness among the population at large to accept responsibility for the past and for the future. As this honorable House will agree, political, social, and economic justice is a foundation for durable peace in the country.

As a Christian country, we all need to be merciful, forgiving, and loving towards each other in whatever situation we face. We acknowledge that we are all sinners and do make serious mistakes that lead to our own destruction and death in some cases.

If Solomon Islands is to grow and effectively address the social ills of underdevelopment, then we all need to rise from the ashes, beginning with all of us in this honorable House and map a development path that is inclusive and based on true mercy and forgiveness from the heart.

As Christians, we need to rise from the ashes, from tribal and provincial hatred and focus more on developing the Solomon Islands as one people serving one God and from shore to shore.

Finally, on behalf of my people of the North-West Choiseul constituency, I wish to acknowledge and thank the regional peacekeeping assistance through RAMSI in finally responding to our request for help in our time of great need during the ethnic tension.

With these brief comments, I support the motion and resume my seat.

Hon. MANASSEH MAELANGA (*East Malaita—Minister for Infrastructure Development*) (02:09): Thank you Mr. Speaker for giving me this opportunity to share a little bit on this Motion that was moved by the Minister for Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs. This is a very important Motion that was moved for us to share our thoughts looking forward.

I also have the heart, like the Minister of Finance said in his speech, to come back and talk about the past is not something we should do; but I think it is good to see

that way forward in terms of what will happen and how we look at it and can address some issues so that they do not occur again.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Minister, and also I would like to thank the Prime Minister for making it through Parliament. Through your leadership, Prime Minister, it makes it possible for this motion to come, through our government, the DCGA, and I would like to thank you and our government for bringing this Motion to Parliament.

I only have few thoughts. I would be brief because listening through the Prime Minister's debate on this Motion, he really covered everything that this side of the House stands behind it. I just want to be brief on a few thoughts that I have in looking forward on how we could address some issues, that can get us forward, so that we cannot go back to what had happened during the ethnic tension. I know some of my thoughts have been addressed by this government already. The government already worked on it, and that is why I want to share and thank the government for continuing to work on it.

Firstly, is on land reform. It is good that this government is now working on land reform policy. This is one of the things that contributes to the downfall of the country. I thank the government through the Ministry of Lands that is working on it at the moment through this government.

Another thing I am looking at is the decentralization of the projects. I think this is very important and we are looking at getting things down to our Provinces. We have to start working on bigger projects that will also go down to the Provinces, that our people can take part on those things. That is one of the thoughts I have in mind, and I know that government is working on these things.

Another thing that came up to my mind is revenue sharing. This is a very tough issue to our Provinces. This is a very important thing. If we would like to see a way forward, I think we should start looking at those things because it started to build on issues like this. When you give more, you expect more. So it is a fact, and I believe this. Sometimes, politics disturbs those areas. I think it is good; and this government is looking at this revenue sharing issue. This is one thing that was voiced out as well from our premiers from the provinces. I think it is important that we look at some of these issues. Another thing is that when we talk about decentralization, this government is working on upgrading roads between our provinces. This is very important because these are some of the areas that came up in the TPA. And I would like to assure you that this government is working on building the roads in our provinces, especially within Guadalcanal and Malaita, where the TPA covered. So I would like to assure you that even though we are looking through this report, the government is already working on some of the areas within these reports.

I am also looking at some amendments to the Provincial Government Act. I think it is time for us, and the government to have a look at it and to allow some of the powers and functions to our provincial governments. We need to look at certain areas. One of the issues is that it is difficult for provincial governments to do things. I think these are some of the areas that we should try and open up through our amendments to the Act or review of the Act, so that they themselves can do something. For example, if they want to get a loan, I think they can get a loan of \$20,000 or \$20 million. This is holding them back. They can get money through loans or other means so that they can develop other areas within their provinces through projects. We need to look at some of the areas that we need to give them power.

I thank the government's DCGA at this time for having concern in terms of security. This is the first government that takes the security of this country seriously in enforcing police capability strength and plans. This is because security is responsible for looking after the country, property, and everything else that the police are responsible for looking after. I thank the government for that. We will continue to strengthen our police force so that they can look after our country to ensure there is peace.

When we look at the federal state government system, I think it is to live as one people. To live in unity with one another. Our forefathers have brought this country as one Solomon Islands. I think this country should live as one people and one nation. You have your own view of state government system, but to be frank, I have seen this draft federal system, and personally, it does not fit the Solomon Islands, to be honest, but it is up to each of us to share his or her view on this. We have lived for 45 years as a nation. I do not know if you can live by yourself and can stand and look after yourself. I do not think so. Everybody have their views on this. This is my view. It would be good to look at it first and think about it. But I have my thoughts and I think this is not the right time.

We need to live together as a nation, and respect each other. To live in harmony with each other, live with kindness with each other. I think when we live together with all these things, we can stay together as a nation. If we do not have this mind or in our hearts, then that is where we would to split up. Divide! Sometimes when you divide, you will fall. Sometimes when we live together, you become strong.

I would like to thank the government through the Ministry of Peace. The Reparation Policy is passed by Cabinet and I thank the Minister and the Reintegration Policy which were passed and they will come. I heard some of my colleagues from the other side talked about this. But I think to assure them, the government is working on these policies and they are already approved. When the Minister winds up, he will touch on these policies. That will help us as we go along to settle and see how we can address the issues when we go through this Motion. I thank the Minister

and the government for your own preparations towards this and how we can or the government can look to help out to deal with the issues that happened.

I would also like to thank the previous governments and this government for getting the programs on reconciliations that had happened, which brought peace to this country. This is very important and I thank the Prime Minister and your government and the past governments up until today. There were many programs of peace that had happened, reconciliations. Through this process, which comes with this report that we are talking about, a lot of things were done already. I think this is the process towards this Motion.

I have seen that the Motion that came, the TRC Report that we are looking at is for us to find a way forward on how else to address the situations. It is also to prevent such situations from happening in the future. Addressing things that our people want, so that people do not take the law into their own hands. I see that this Motion is good for us to talk about, to find ways to address the causes of the ethnic tension. As I have said, we will not blame anyone for the situations that happened. I will not blame my brothers from Guadalcanal and Malaita as well. It is us here to try and settle these issues. We are the leaders now and we have come here to see how we can address these situations and making sure we make some policies that can help our people to be happy to avoid such issues happening again in the near future.

I just want to thank the government of this day, the DCGA, that whatever we have discuss here, I know that the government is taking steps already. This is the first government that works on this one. You see that it brings the report here. I have been deputy to three or four Prime Ministers already. Today I thank the Prime Minister. The people have been talking about this TRC Report as to when it will be brought to Parliament. I thank the Prime Minister, the government, the Minister of Peace who brings this Motion to Parliament to be debated.

I do not have much to say, but as the representative for my people of East Malaita, I want to stand and also share my view, thoughts and remarks to the debate on this Motion.

With these few remarks, I support the Motion.

The SPEAKER: The floor is still open, however I will call on the Minister to adjourn the debate on the question.

Hon. SAMUEL MANETOALI: I move that the debate on the question be adjourned.

Question put and agreed to

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: I move that parliament do adjourn.

Question put and agreed to

(Parliament adjourned at 2.28pm)

[Edited]



Eleventh Parliament

Sixth Meeting

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

Wednesday, 2 August 2023

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

(Subject to Revision)

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NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**Wednesday, 2 August 2023**

The Speaker, Mr Patteson John Oti, took the Chair at 09:54.

Prayers.

Business of the House

ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Minister for Health and Medical Services, Minister for Forestry and Research, North West Guadalcanal, Central Honiara, North New Georgia, East Makira, North Guadalcanal, West Makira, Ulawa/Ugi, South New Georgia/Rendova/Tetepare and West Honiara.

Motions

**MOTION NO. 35 – TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION
REPORT**

(Debate continues)

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA (*Small Malaita*) (9:56): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to first of all thank my colleague and the honorable Minister for Traditional Governance, Peace, and Ecclesiastical Affairs for bringing this report to Parliament to be debated.

Whilst I acknowledge the Minister and his staff, I would also like to acknowledge the many people who have contributed to this work over a long period of time. It is a huge assignment but also important as it establishes a very important record of our history, the saddest page of that history.

Also, I would like to join other speakers who spoke before me to acknowledge and thank the many people and groups that have come forward to tell their individual stories before the Commission, which enable the Commissioners to make this report.

Also, I would like to thank the Commissioners, their secretariat, and the partners that have supported the Commission and the work in putting the report together.

Successive governments have made some efforts in trying to address the situation and we have to acknowledge that, and the development partners that have stood by us, especially during the period of 1998 up to the ethnic tension. One that many

of us on this floor have acknowledged their staying with us during this dark period, is the Republic of China, Taiwan. This is something which many of us, including the Prime Minister, have said many times before, on various statements; even on the international stage at the General Assembly. So I think this is important to just remind all of us.

In terms of government efforts, I think the people have seen the shimmering of this tension quite sometime before the outburst in the middle of 2000. But like the Prime Minister said on Monday, no one did anything really to address it. Together with the partners, like the Commonwealth Secretariat, we reached various agreements, such as the Honiara Peace Accord, Marau Peace Agreement, and various others. The Prime Minister sighted an event in 1999. I remembered that very well. This is the time where the leaders of Guadalcanal and Malaita came together. All the leaders, community leaders, traditional leaders and of course the political leaders, came together. They cried. What everyone, or I suppose the government was trying to do is to try and mitigate.

I think there were some efforts that were made on the part of successive governance, but of course that went out of control. So we want to acknowledge the partners in this Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), who came to restore our country, literally. I think the Prime Minister said it very well. They came to save us from ourselves. I will talk more on saving ourselves.

Of course, as all know, that intervention was comprised of military component, a police component and a civil component. They came to try and help us to not only resuscitate, but also help building our institutions in the country.

The Prime Minister, in his statement on Monday, made it very succinctly; when he said that we had to be saved from ourselves. When I heard what he said about this thing, it happened long time ago as well. It is not during the ethnic tension only. Someone had to save us from ourselves. Another body, another country. It is correct that the successive leadership have been found wanting. The political leaders, in his word, have not taken heed of what he referred to as "the writing had been on the wall". This is very true. He made the point that successive governments have failed us. They have not addressed our vulnerabilities. And we have seen it. Development was uneven. It only focuses to some selected regions.

In fact, we see that Honiara receives probably 90 percent of every development assistance and the government budget, while the rest of the outside of Honiara, Guadalcanal, and Western Province and everyone else are trying to share the 10 percent. That is a fact of our history.

And he spoke about the problem of land, which he pointed out correctly. The administration then, and I am thinking about the colonial administration, when

they were trying to set us up with a system to help us. So they came up with the Land Act and other regulations in place to try and help us. They were trying to build an economy. They were trying to stitch together a country that is made up of all sorts of tribes.

So yes, maybe the Land Act and other pieces of legislation that they put in place were definitely foreign. They were definitely not from us. But with the land, because this was a big chunk of the Prime Minister's deliberation on Monday, and correctly, we use the laws, and in terms of the land, we use the laws, and eventually, I think the unintentional outcome came out as a result.

Some very important or premium land tracts here in Honiara, Guadalcanal, Malaita, and elsewhere in Western Province end up in the hands of foreigners or people not belonging to the tribes. It is a huge problem. As a result, resource owners, landowners, and tribal groups are now on the periphery of the economic system. They have become spectators and are now on the margins. We are seeing this now. I do not want to say this, but it looks like the way we are heading, we can, before we realize it, become beggars in our own country, beggars in our provinces, and beggars on our own land.

So the Prime Minister put it rightly. A lot of events, which he listed, and I will not go over everyone, but a lot of events, a lot of happenings, where these should have provided clear signs, clear signals, and warnings from successive governments. He correctly cited that from the time of the British colonizing these islands, the writing has been on the wall. Colonizing these islands, to me, is like stitching all the different pieces of a cloth. It is hard to stay together and the colors are definitely different. The material quality probably is different and all those things. Someone had said that the Solomon's is a country made of many nations. Probably true but when I tried to think about this statement, it is probably true because the differences between our island groups and even parts of one island can be quite different. The northern part, how they deal with land and tribal issues, how they deal with community issues, probably will be different from those from the southern region from the same island. There are so many fault lines that make this very real. The cultural practices, traditional beliefs, tribal rituals, land ownership rules are very different.

But the other thing which makes it hard to put us together is, there are lots of tribal fighting. Those tribes that are sitting together are fighting each other. That time when the British were trying to stitch us together, people were not only fighting, they were head hunting. In some places, they did not only do head hunting but even ate humans. So it is hard to put such people together. One person wants to eat another person. How would you do it? It is hard. You put them together, you expect

them to fight. You would be looking for missing limbs that might have already been eaten.

One question, probably an academic one is, whether Solomon Islands was meant to be sewn together as a nation. And why are the western powers wanted to do it? I do not really know and I suppose the answers that we might have will be as many as how many people that you ask. The answers will be different.

But for me, for better or worse, in my thought, it was for our good that they put us together. They brought in of course a system of government and system of laws which is different but they are not familiar with any other laws. They do not know of any other thing that will put people together. So they used the laws that they know to try and put us together. As a result, we became a British Protectorate (BSIP). To my mind, that was an attempt to protect us against ourselves, to hold us together, to protect us much more than protecting these islands from outsiders. That protection came in handy many times. One I can think of is, because they came, a lot that we know, such as black birding. As a result in 1901, due to British leaning on the Australians, the Australia Government enacted the legislation that put a stop to the black birding scheme, in which many thousands of our people were recruited to sugarcane plantations in Queensland, Fiji and Samoa.

Yes, there were a lot of resistance locally since then. I remember somebody told me the story about the murder of a District Officer, Mr Bell, 1927. That is a signal. People did not like it. I suppose, probably part of it is that we do not understand or maybe they did not properly explain it to our people.

The Prime Minister cited the example of Ma'asina Ruru. That is also a reaction to the form of government that was imposed on us, but an outcome of it is the introduction of the called the Local Council. This is where they elect or chose delegates to represent communities. That is what they tried to do. They tried to elect people to represent these communities by way of a voting system. Again, that is a foreign idea. I do not know other cultures, but for us, they do not go to the election for the chiefs. The chiefs remains the chiefs, even if they became thieves.

A District Officer talked to me about how they conducted the voting. He worked under British Colonial Administration. One of his duties was to run the elections. At that time, probably 80 percent of our people are not literate in writing and reading. So when you go to the booth, there is no ballot paper. You just walk up and whisper in the ears of the person manning the station. You mention the name of the person that you prefer. The person manning the boot writes down the name and puts the ballot into the box. There was a lot of trust on the person who administers the election. Those were the things they were trying to do. These were attempts and I supposed were experiments that were tried by our earlier administrators.

Traders came and government allowed traders to come and the idea is to build an economy. So traders who came mostly involved in coconut plantation. So we had plantations in mostly in parts of Guadalcanal, the Russell Islands, and Western Province.

The recruitment was from other islands, especially Malaita. Putting these people on this plantation is quite difficult. They fought over all sorts of things. I remember someone telling me a story about how language groups fighting. He told me about Russel Islanders fighting with Kwaio and South, I think Tikopia and South fought. They used rocks during the fight.

Again, we assert the point that it is hard work stitching us together and the point that since day one, since the time that we came together under our colonial administration, it has been a difficult thing putting us together or uniting us.

The Prime Minister said it well. Even on the eve of this country gaining independence, we were not united on this very issue. Some did not like it, as he stated, and there was this move by the Western District block that did not want to be part of the independence. And I know that the provincial government system was kind of compromised to try and solve this. Of course, then, they were not asking for a provincial system but rather a state government system.

But at the political level, they were not many and not united as well. The late Bart Ulufa'alu was the leader of the opposition then. He stood against independence and actually persuaded four others who were on his side not to go, and eventually they did not do. The entire Parliament did go, except for four or five of them.

I was on a trip in 1998 with this man, and I asked him why he did not want independence. We sat for two days as he was trying to talk about this views. He was probably 28 years old at that time, a very young man.

According to him, he said that independence was a plan, which he thinks was initiated by the British, and when we heard it, we liked it because we wanted to look after ourselves. According to him, we should not be doing it. Because it is not the right time, and we are not ready. So I asked him why, and he said that we need the British to build the economy. We need the British to build this country. They must not go. Do not allow them to leave. In fact, according to him, he was saying that it is really what the British administration, the foreign office, wanted to hear.

These are things they really want to hear. To him, Ulufa`alu, the BSIP was to the British- that is how he said it- was a difficult and expensive outpost to the British Foreign Office, an outpost of little or no strategic relevance, on of lesser importance, if any to the empire. So he insisted that if we consider independence, we have to compel the British to build and secure a national economy; establish a strong public

administrative system. This would be supported by decent infrastructure throughout the five districts. He wanted to establish public institutions and a strong administrative system throughout this country. He wanted the British to build high schools and colleges within the five districts. He wanted airports, ports, and roads within the five districts. Those are his ideas. He said that if we want them to go, that is what they want to hear.

So he asked me, why do you think they moved this capital from Tulagi? I said, I do not know. He said that it is because they saw the roads and buildings built by the military. They just moved the administration to Honiara because of those infrastructures. That is also what the Prime Minister said. It should be very clear that our independence at that time, we are playing into the British hand.

As history would attest to it, our Solomon Islands independence or the route to independence for Solomon Islands had been compared or unlike every other places in the world. Ours was the quickest, the smoothest and the easiest to attain. I wonder whether the late Ulufa`alu was wrong in his assessment or in his position at that time. It is for every Solomon Islander to judge.

On Monday this week, the Prime Minister was correct to sight that only 10 years after gaining independence, in 1988 the people of Guadalcanal made their bona fide demands on the government. As he informed the House, Mamaloni, one of the architecture of this nation, was assigned the task to investigate these claims; with which the Mamaloni Report made a number of recommendation. The core one was that the state government should be adopted. In fact as the Prime Minister also informed the House, this policy was a platform for Mamaloni and his party. Of course, the National General Elections, subsequent to that report, gave a landslide victory to Mamaloni and his party. Of course, he became Prime Minister. Like the Prime Minister Sogavare said, after 10 years, nothing happened. So the outburst of the ethnic tensions on June 5th, 2000, was, I supposed, a culmination of this simmering that had been going on since the British were here.

Like me, most Solomon Islanders who were adults then would recall where they were on June 5, 2000. This was the point where our vulnerabilities were severely and truly exposed. Solomon Islands had been branded a failed state, and in my mind, I think that is true. A failed state, because there was no leadership when there should be. The government then could not govern. The political leadership could not lead. There was no law and order, no economy, no government services, and the next five years were spent just meddling around. That was all that we did.

Yes, the Prime Minister was correct in saying that it was by God's grace that this nation was saved! Yes! But the grace of God does not come just like that. It is not a miracle. It had to be other people that God used them. So, God used our partners

and other people to help us. However much we love to hate these partners, those were the people that God used to save us, again, to save us from ourselves.

When I was looking at our situation, sadly, not much has happened. Again, the sad reality is that our vulnerabilities continued to exist or have worsened. We have not really learned. One of the things that I noticed that had changed since that time was the change in the name of the Ministry, the Minister's Ministry. The Ministry now does not use the word "unity". It is not longer there. Is it still there? This is where our emphasis should be. Unity is where our problem lies. We cannot unite. Since the British came; that was what they tried to do. But it never happened. We tried all sorts of things. This is probably the core, because it cannot dismantle us.

Of course, there are people who would want to secede; one province wants to be independent, and another also wants to be independent; even an island wanted to be independent. Who do you want to be independent from?

Unity is a big issue. That is our challenge. Keeping together and putting ourselves together is our biggest challenge. Yes, we tried, we have a flag, but some people want to burn it. Yes, we have a national anthem, but probably 80 percent of our people do not know what the song is. They do not know the lyrics or how to sing it, much less the meaning. We even have a currency. I do not know what they did to the currency. it is not good. These are things that other countries hold dearly. For us, that is not the case. Something is wrong with uniting ourselves.

We tried other things or some people tried a national language. Why do you have to look for another language, just do use Pijin. What is wrong with Pijin? Write the books in Pijin, teach the Pijin in the schools. What is wrong with it? That is one issue that disunites us. We have a lot of different language groupings. Even some of the islands, like in Malaita, those from south cannot understand what those from North are saying. You can swear at them and they would think that you are saying nice things to them. Just recently, some people tried to work on a national dress. That one was really a disaster.

But the point I am making is that if it is one thing that we have missed, we need to work on things, policies and issues that unite us. Some people seem to think that it is the colonial administration and the system that they had put that is to be blamed. Some people seem to think that it is the expatriates. I differ on this stand. I still insist the blame must lie squarely on our shoulders; we leaders from the time we came together as a nation until now. The system, any government system, any administration system, is just a system, but it is the people who manage it, the people who operate it, the people who look after it, the people who oversee it that will make the difference. The Provincial Government System, State Government

system, federal system and any system cannot work until you and me truly work for the benefit and the intended purpose of this system.

We cannot continue to mourn and cry over this country being conceived but not yet born. Difficult as it may, this country and these islands is what we have as a sovereign nation. It is how to shape it now that will make what it will look in the years ahead. If we allow corruption, it will continue to be what it is. It is a feature of the government and this country because we allowed it. If we allow civil disorder to continue, that is what will mark this nation in the future. It is us the people that operate it, that manage it and oversee the system that will make the difference.

Some of us in this room, in this Chamber have been in government at one stage of our life. Some much, much longer. We have been in leadership positions that would have enabled us to make some change. As I have discussed earlier, the Prime Minister make reference to land as a pertinent issue to our vulnerabilities. To that, I totally agreed. Land, whether under this current legislations and regulations, we need to address it. I am happy with what the Minister of Lands, Housing and Survey is doing at the moment. He is using the current Act to try and resolve this. We need to work. Let us use the machinery or the legislations that we have. That is what the Minister of Lands, Housing and Survey is trying to do. To all the Ministers, you need do what the Minister of Lands is doing. Not his ways, but what is doing in his work.

It is a clear example that we can do it. Yes, we cannot resolve everything, but do something and keep chipping at it. That is what we fail to do. We fail on the problem of unity and land. We cannot just continue blaming other people. Work on it and we have been in positions to do that. I am talking about the land and we messed it up. We are the ones who did all these things and causing these problems for ourselves.

The Kukum High Way, the Commissioner of Lands told me two years ago, that they tried really hard to re-acquire the land. All the land reserve for the road, the Commissioners are the problem. We put people that we trust them to do something for our benefit. They sold the lands to just anyone. You will know this Sir, because you also wanted to buy land. I was told that there was a certain Commissioner within Lands Department, who already left, like the year before, but still signs papers and has a stamp. He did this at his house.

Of course, the law tell us that we should not do it. Those Solomon islanders bend the law. That Commissioner, I was told, sold the same piece of land one, two or three times. The stamp is with him. So there are several people claiming the same piece of land. How can you all own the same piece of land?

There was a time in the 1990s when the government then puts a policy. That policy is to help public servants to own a house. If you are staying in a government house, you can claim it. The government values the land and property and you look for money to buy it. It was a very well intended policy, I think. But what happened was that everyone the government gave houses and lands to sold them to just anyone. We wonder why lands in Honiara end up in foreign hands. You cannot blame the Asians, Australia or anyone. It is ourselves. That is the point. The intention of the system was good, but we are the ones causing the problem for ourselves.

So, of course, the government has a huge problem housing its workers. An attempt that the government is trying to do is the Mamara Housing Project. I do not know whether that is the answer to the current problem of government housing, but so far, I think the situation has worsened for the government.

Selling of land is not restricted to Honiara alone but outside of Honiara too. The rest of Guadalcanal, Malaita, and other provinces are doing this as well. The practice of selling of land involves government officials, and leaders. When I am saying leaders, I am referring to government and political leaders and also community and tribal leaders. These are the parties who are selling the land and allowing this to happen. We need to have a very thorough internal search because this is to do with us.

Now I want to come back to the issue of new government system. As I said before, I do not think any new government system will do the trick for us. It is neither the culprit nor the answer.

I want to tell a story to illustrate a concern that some people have on the proposed federal system. I was in a meeting where Ministers of Finance attended in Palau in 2012. So I got into a very long and good conversation with my counterpart from the Federated States of Micronesia. They have a federation that is similar to the arrangement that we want to adopt. We talked for quite a long time. At the end, he told me two things. He said, my brother, there are two things that you need to watch very carefully. One, this is very costly. You must prepare for it. The other thing he said was that with this system, the vulnerabilities that you have, for example, the development stage, will be very much worsened in those states that are already vulnerable. Those are the two things that he told me to be careful of.

When I was writing my statement, I was thinking that, yes, this new government system that we try to adopt, can we adopt the approach of the Minister of Lands with the Provincial Government Act? I know work has been done on some amendments that will help us address our current problem, especially in terms of revenues for provinces.

So, I know that the Ministry of Provincial Government has been working on the revenue sharing idea, which I know for a fact that they have already submitted to the government. So, my question is, why have we not done that at the first place? What were we waiting for? Let us do it. If there are any benefits, we reap it. If there is still need for any changes to the state government proposal, then we can do that. But even on the proposal of the state government, I know for a fact that the Commission is working on this. They already work on it. In fact they presented their final report immediately after the current Prime Minister was elected in 2019. So the government already has this proposal. My question is, why are we still sitting down on it? Bring the State government proposal so that we look at it. Why are we still sitting on it? Parliament is about to dissolve. I do not know about you, but some of you will not come back next year. The state government proposal has been with us since 2019.

Yes, the Prime Minister is correct. We have been complacent. We are just sitting down, and watching. We pretend that nothing happened, or we did not understand it, or we could not see, or could not care less. I do not know which one is true, but we have not acted when we should have. As I said, some of us in this House have been in this House for as long as we can remember. What are we going to show?

The Prime Minister suggested three areas as the way forward, and one is about land, which I totally agree. We need to sort out land. We need to play by the rules. We must stop what one of the former Commissioners Lands used to do.

In terms of the State Government that he proposed, that is the way forward. Yes, bring it here and let us look at it. Whether we do not know what it will cost or whether it will create a miracle for us, that we will see once it is applied. But why is still sitting down and no body did anything about it.

Another issue that the Prime Minister also highlighted as an issue to look into is security. He made this as a priority issue, which is true, in as far as Honiara is concerned. I am saying this because the sort of security issues we are talking about is only for Honiara. It is a situation, like last time when Honiara was burnt, those in the provinces heard about it. But they went on with their normal lives. It has not affect them. So it is something here in Honiara.

Like everything else, I heard the Prime Minister mentioned that he was thinking very seriously about this idea that Australia discussed with him, a military force. I do not know if it is a good thing, but bring it in so that we can have a look at it. Let us dissect it. It has to be brought under strong scrutiny before we do anything about it.

But I want to add another one to the three areas that he has mentioned. Unity is something we need to work on. We have to work extra hard on this issue. That is

one of the issues that I would like to add to the Prime Minister's list of issues for us to address.

Finally, I would like to say a little more about the recommendations in this report. I would like to say that it would really be good if all the Ministers would speak on this. The Minister, in his moving the Motion, has asked us, pleaded with us, and the Prime Minister as well has pleaded that we talk about this, and especially, I want to emphasize this, especially the Ministers. Ministers must say what you have done with the recommendations. I would like to say that these are good recommendations. In my view, some of these recommendations are probably already out of date. It has been more than 20 years. But still, it is good for the Ministers to tell us what they are working on, what is still ongoing. For example, on page 104, it talks about the two key recommendations for land reform. Minister of Lands, the reforms that you have been doing were good ones. Tell us more about them.

The TRC provides three recommendations on justice. The Minister of Justice tell us about what you are doing with these recommendations. The TRC provided five key recommendations for security. Minister for Police, what happened here? TRC provided three key recommendations on health reform. Minister of Health, bring it in. What are you doing with these proposals by TRC? TRC provided three recommendations to education. My colleague Minister, please tell us what is happening here. And many other recommendations. I lost count because there are so many recommendations, but the point I am making is that Ministers, please, take heed to the call by the mover of the Motion. He is my brother, and if you do not inform us about what you have been doing, you are letting my brother down. Tell us all what you have been doing with these recommendations.

So that is what I wanted to say in support of this Motion. I want to say thank you for the opportunity, and I resume my seat.

Hon. REXON RAMOFAFIA (*Fataleka—Minister for National Planning and Development Coordination*) (10:58): Thank you Mr Speaker for giving me the opportunity to contribute to this Motion. As the Minister of National Planning and Development Coordination and also MP for good people of Fataleka, I would like to contribute to this debate on the TRC Report, basically highlighting five key elements. These key elements include Truth and Reconciliation resolution, Ethnic Tension experience, root cause of Ethnic Tension, Significant needs and aspiration and the governance policy alignment.

Before that, let me start this way. First and foremost, we acknowledged the divine provider for his wisdom, love and peace. For all have sinned and fall short of God as reflected in the Romans 3:23. I am not preaching but I would like to highlight this

reflection in this House as we continue our debate. Hence, true forgiveness is acknowledging God's faithfulness and justice to forgive and cleanse us from all our sin and unrighteousness and our shortfalls. That is on 1 John 1:9 reflects that.

Secondly, I would like to sincerely acknowledge Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission, its members for the tireless effort in carrying out the mandate and Act of Parliament in 2008. I must acknowledge the TRC Members for working together from 2009 to 2011.

Thirdly, I would also like to thank all our leaders, including you, Mr Speaker, during that time when the country was going through that. You were part of the team that played a very important role in trying to negotiate peace between the warring groupings. And on that note, including others, I want to acknowledge you Mr Speaker.

I also join other colleagues for acknowledging the Regional Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) for the work to bring peace and unity or law and order back to our country. Also, strengthening government system in place to deal with how to recover the economy after the years of ethnic tension.

Let me now turn to the TRC Report. The general objectives of the TRC was to promote national unity and reconciliation by engaging stakeholders in the reconciliation process by discovering and helping to understand what happened in the tension and why. It was to examine the pattern of human rights abuse and intervene and cooperation with other initiatives and strategies being implemented in the process of reconciliation and peace building in our country. The TRC was to investigate and fully report on the root cause of the tension. The human rights and international humanitarian law of violence and abuse, which occur and those responsible. Whether the government or group of people or we know that we can name them, but it is not right to continue to try and pin point on anyone or any group.

It was also to report on the raid and police armory and the distraction or damage done to public property or properties around Honiara and Guadalcanal. The TRC is also to work to restore human dignity of victims and promote reconciliation by allowing victims to tell their stories and promote reconciliation by victims and also the suffering they experienced during those dark days or years. As we can see from this report, there are stories that are really sad.

Attention to this report, let me highlight key subject of truth and reconciliation resolution. The ethnic experience. The root cause of the ethnic tension, significant needs, aspiration and governance policy alignment. Like my good colleague has highlight, that we must continue to contribute to this Motion, especially the request made to the Ministers.

It is time to confront the truth for better Solomon islands. It is time to rise from the ashes. It is time to reconcile our lives, and it I time to resolute for a better and brighter for our country, to achieve a stable, peaceful, harmonious or progressive future, a future that our generation to come will enjoy to live as Solomon islands is a good country.

The truth and reconciliation is a way forward to resolute and reunite the social values, believes, norm, attitudes including those related to Solomon Islands. True reconciliation is about deep understanding of Solomon Islands cultural values, diversity, identity and rights. I will touch on each of the areas that I have highlighted.

Culture is more than arts and literacy. In its wide sense, culture embraces everything from your choice of what to wear each day to tradition, beliefs, values of our families and communities and where we come from.

Of course this include all forms of architects, expression and creativity. It is also the language that one speaks, place of ownership, things that move one emotionally and the source of meaning in one's life. Cultural diversity plays an important role in sustainable development because it fosters economic growth, helps individuals and communities to expand the lives that they choose. Therefore, it is important to adopt, change, and build a resilient social and economic system. It creates a rich and varied range of choices and nurtures human capacity and values. Therefore, it is a main spring for sustainable development for communities and people.

Cultural diversity and cultural participation strengthen democracy, tolerance and social cohesion. It is an investments in the future as well as a driving force for sustainable development since enhancing people's choice and responsibility are key to human development. This is also highlighted in the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Let me touch on cultural identity. Noting that culture is at the heart of contemporary debates about identity, social cohesion and development of knowledge based on the economy. But in our increasingly diverse society, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups of people.

The Member of Small Malaita have pointed out that, given our experiences as a nation, especially how our people interact, sometimes it is hard for us to see ourselves as one people. He also highlighted, especially from colonial times and onwards, that even language groups can be hostile to each other. These are challenges that we face as Solomon Islanders. But our richness in culture is an area where we could build as a strength to deal with the differences and challenges that we continue to face or experience in our country.

Cultural rights are also integral parts of human rights, which are universal for individuals and even particular groups or tribes. As it is covered in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Articles 13 and 15.

Let me now move on to touch on the causes of the ethnic tension, mainly from the TRC report findings.

The root causes of the discontent of the people of Guadalcanal that led to the violence that started at the end of 1998 include the impact of the British colonial period. As lack of feeling of national unity, disagreement over land, and even level of development between areas or provinces, government mismanagement and weak systems, as well as a lack of understanding for traditional or cultural structures and our way of life.

As we can see from the TRC Report, by 1990, Solomon Islands had not created a strong sense of one nation, but rather was a collection of different local identities bound together by a system of government that had been largely imposed from outside. Other speakers have already highlighted, especially how we came from being a British colony or protectorate.

As a result of increased tension relating to land that was caused by large number of people moving across or around Guadalcanal, it started to cause disagreements among the people. We know that in 1988, a petition commonly referred to as bona fide demand of the indigenous people of Guadalcanal was submitted to the government by a group of politicians and some public servants.

The demand include action relating to killing of 15 local persons, allegedly by a settler, repatriation of settler especially from Malaita, and also the need for equal distribution or development around Guadalcanal.

Ten years later, the Malaitan settlers were evicted from Guadalcanal and especially around February of 1999. The born of high demand with some changes were again presented to the government. The TRC found that government promised to hand over some shares and portion of national government revenue to Guadalcanal Provincial Council.

Some have touch on this and the Prime Minister also stated that the number of submissions of the demand from our good people of Guadalcanal has not met, or those ruling government in the past not taking this submission seriously. Those things continued on up until today.

In the sense to understand the origin of the tension, the TRC also found that the root cause also related to lingering of impacts of colonial period as well as limited feeling for national unity. The Commission has also convinced that the critical reflection on the historical evolution of country and creation of national memory by Solomon

Islander is a crucial step to the process of building unified and peaceful Solomon Islands. That is the way forward. Despite whatever disagreements, or whatever caused us problems, whether development or politics or whatever we can name it, we must continue to embrace Solomon Islands as one nation, and one people so that it continues to ring in our hearts as Solomon Islanders. Although Solomon Island diverse cultural practices can be useful, it is also harmful. It is important to consider some of the ways in which it can be an obstacle to the process. The common obstacle people often encounter is a misunderstanding of history and culture.

Similarly, historical evidence shows that those who have no knowledge or appreciation of the past are condemned to repeat it. As such, the country's ethnic tension from 1998 to 2003 relates to the conflict of interests that brings about disagreement and disunity due to misunderstanding of culture and lack of involvement in development. Unfortunately, killing, abduction, illegal detention, torture and ill treatment, sexual violence, property violations, and forced displacement were all experienced during the tension.

To me, I feel like everything was falling apart during those days. It was heartbreaking to see men killed and women raped for no reason. Actions that were unacceptable in our society happened. I say that this is not the kind of history that we want this country to experience again.

It is therefore imperative to ensure the involvement of our people and also listening to or hearing what our people want. This is very important to any government or ruling government.

I think the point that the Member for Small Malaita highlighted might be important because if we look at the causes of what happened in 1998 to 2003, he said, what if we did not give it at that time or we did not do those things? Maybe it will be good if some of these things have already happened; maybe the experience that the country is going through might not happen. And so up until now, some demands and calls have continued to come to us. And so maybe it is important for us to listen to the call of our people, not only our people from Guadalcanal, Malaita, or Western Province, but continue to listen to the call from our people of the Solomon Islands. And if we are not able to do everything, let us do some of the parts or some of the things that need to happen.

We start to debate this idea of state government that is starting to rise, and we do not really have a clear direction as to how it will happen in the Solomon Islands. A number of provinces are submitting their submissions to the government to consider with some timing. I think while the processes might take some time or while it is part of our preparation towards some pathway that we will take, but it is also important to look at how it will help our country as Solomon Islands is a diverse

country. Let me now move to significant needs and aspirations especially from the TRC Report. The TRC mandate related to tension which engulf Solomon Island, though mainly confine to Guadalcanal and Malaita from 1998 to 2003. And then RAMSI came in. One of the significant needs and aspirations of Solomon Islands, especially government and our government system or our traditional system is that it is important because it is also covered inside Townsville Peace Agreement, and that is to strengthen our traditional system.

This is also one of the strengths of this country and this is for us to strengthen our traditional governance system. Whether it is in the societies or in the communities and up to the government level. And to recognize it well. Some debated that this sometimes is unwritten but it is a system that we are part of and it is very powerful. That can connect us to our identity, whether it is language or land or even those that are part of Solomon Islands.

The Townsville Peace Agreement that was signed in October 2000 recognizes this and one area it highlighted there is compensation. Now compensation for us in Solomon Islands, it does not follow our traditional system. We have started to move out from its context and then we practice it and applied it in another way. It is important that we protect this values but we practice it in a way that it will help us.

I would like to highlight again this aspiration on the Marau Peace Agreement. The term of community based customary practices and law is also recognized in this peace agreement in Marau. I would like to highlight those areas from this report because it is important and are powerful values that hold us. Maybe, we continue to acknowledge that dealing with our issues or dealing with problems or that we need support to continue to help us. But within ourselves, we have powerful ways of how we deal with us. That is us the Solomon Islands or Solomon Islanders.

Our cultural system is a necessary part of governance our society. We have just passed the amendment to the Honiara City Act to try and address some issues in Honiara. You will notice that our cultural system and governance started to become lacking within our places. It is important and maybe good to introduce to our schools or places where it is easy for the people to understand and learn, and not to study the history of another country, war and conflict of another country. I think it is good that some of these things are part of us, it is important for us to continue to teach them in our schools and institutions. That is highlighted in Marau Peace Agreement 2001. Mr Speaker, you are part of that, in fact you led that team, in trying to negotiate between the conflicting groups. I really thank you because these are important values.

Let me now move on to another aspiration, and that is good governance. It is participatory because we try to do it in relation to our aspirations as Solomon

Islanders. Good governance involved full participation of government and stakeholders. That is important because we want to deal with disagreements or issues that continue to disunite our country.

We notice from this report that the causes of this ethnic tension happens because the economic crisis in Asia during that time started to affect our economy. Therefore, when the country goes through certain economic crisis, it will also affect the system we are doing. We started not to follow the right thing and we tend to do the wrong thing. We saw practices that we called corruption practices happening in our country through the government system. Thus, good governance is really important for us to deal with ways to address the situations that affect our lives especially our people.

If we go further, we will say that good governance is accountability, transparency and many more. That is quite important to us. That is strengthening our governing system and it is really important because government machinery almost fell apart during those ethnic days. In those ethnic days, there was no rule of law. So the effect of that may have continued through the government system until today. So we see from the recommendations in these reports that they highlight a number of reforms that government machinery, especially Ministries, to strengthen the governance system. It did happened. We did a number of reform, we set up the Anti-corruption Commission, we passed laws to try and address the recommendations in the TRC report.

I think it is also important for us to acknowledge that we need to align our development strategy well with these recommendations and also our policies on the challenges that we continue to face. Also we align governance policies to address these recommendations.

Here, good governance is important in driving management, vision, or cultural policies, structures, and processes in the government machinery, because it started during the height of tension, which is not a good experience. As we have heard from a Permanent Secretary who told his story, that they pointed a gun at his forehead to sign.

So the practices during that time affected government machinery. Elements of it continued on up until today. And when we do not address it well, we might cover it up by saying that it is part of our culture or in order to do things, one needs to appreciate it, but it may not be the right thing to do.

So strengthening government machinery is important because it was collapsed during the ethnic tension. We can name them as security issues, financing, our justice system, health, or education where it affects the whole system.

We try to get the support of our development partners, like the World Bank, the IMF, or different partners that continue to support us to strengthen our governance system because of our history, which affects us.

During the ethnic tension, I know that the Member of Small Malaita was the Governor of the Central Bank. The elements of experiences during the fall of our country continued to be in the system until today and when we involve wantok system in it, nothing works well. There is a need for strengthening our governing system and it still remains a challenge and that is something we need deal with. We go into establishing some institution like SINU in education sector. We tried to come up with health to try to address the needs that affected our country; but we continue to inherit these practices during those times. That is why it is important through reconciliation for us to totally clean out those experience. It is important for our country.

Let me now close by highlighting some recommendations from the TRC report that are directed to the Ministry that I am responsible for as Minister. The TRC Commission contribute and mandated by that Act has put a number of recommendations that are important for us to consider, as it is also helpful to our pathway towards how we want to deal with development in the country.

As the Minister for Traditional Government, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs has moved in this Motion, recommendations has come in two parts. Part 1 and 2 are further divided into six categories and 18 major recommendations. The category Part 1 has listed that the Minister has listed victims, vulnerable population, former combatants and reconciliation. Recommendation related to repatriation and ex-humanism and women and children and youth. These are important recommendations.

Part 2 recommendation is related to pillars of institutional reform, whether constitutional reform, land reform, justice system reform, security reform, health, education and corruption. When we look closely at these recommendations, they are all important to deal with. Let me highlight the recommendation to do with development, especially in Guadalcanal and Malaita. My Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination have worked closely with the line Ministry, especially, to come up with areas that was targeted in this recommendation, and that is mainly road around Guadalcanal, Malaita and Western Province. The Ministry has worked closely with the Ministry of Infrastructure to come up with the National Transport Core Initiative Phase One. The goal of that is to connect three-quarters of the provinces, especially connecting Malaita with Guadalcanal and also Western Province.

The intention of this policy is, as we see, that although the focus of the National Transport Core Initiative was to connect Malaita, Guadalcanal, and Western Province, part of that too is to also cover around three-quarters of the provinces. And it is something that we continue to work on to address the need and also the recommendation from the TRC report.

Currently, the National Transport Core Initiative is also merged with our key pipeline infrastructure projects to address the road network around the country.

We also reviewed our national development strategy because we were affected by a number of things, including this COVID situation that has affected our country and a number of economic shocks that are experienced around the world, including here in the Solomon Islands.

So our review of the national development strategy helped us set some clear pathways forward in terms of how we want development to happen in our nation and also helped us communicate clearly with our development partners in terms of how we want to address the road network of the country.

We continue to acknowledge that there are reforms that we are doing, but to really align well with the recommendations or policies that others have already highlighted, I think we are not doing enough. And the call from a number of our provinces as one of the areas that is highlighted that uneven distribution of development across the country is something that is important for us to align ourselves well with the number of recommendations from this report and also come up with policies that will help us to see that implementations clearly help the country move forward. These are the areas that continue to affect our nation.

Recently, we called for the deferment of our graduation from 2024 to 2027, and now we are requesting the UN system to defer our graduation because a number of things that have helped us as a country reach that level of graduation are not met. The number of gains that we have gained over the years whether from period after 2003 until today, we have also lost it because of our climate impact over climate change. We are hit by number of earthquakes and cyclone, even tsunami and so disaster is one area that also continue to affect this country. Gains over the years that we have reached, we have also lost them. The challenges facing our country continues to remain. We see that this TRC Report is a reminder to us as it is also a call on how we find possible solution for this country.

Some speakers have highlighted that we should not have been independent, the Member for Small Malaita mentioned that during the British looking after us, we should not have agreed to be independent. These are the questions that continue and we are questioning us until today. I think to me, especially from my heart, I do not want to see Solomon Islands a divided country. That is the number one thing in

my heart. I would like Solomon Islands to remain as one nation, one people and them we call us Solomon Islanders.

Before I close, eliminating sub culture grouping and conflict in our society is very difficult. It is impossible and sometimes can be dangerous and risky. Because of group of people that we called ourselves Solomon Islanders, it is time for us to continue to embrace our national unity. We must see people of Guadalcanal, Malaita, Temotu, Choiseul and whatever tribal groups or provinces that on come from, we must see ourselves as one Solomon Islands. That is an area that I would like to call on and that the experience that we faced from 1998 to 2003, we saw us as an enemy, it is not a way for this country.

Today, we stand here to see that Solomon Islands still remain as one nation despite the experience that we had gone through in 2000. It is really important and call especially on us, whether to us as leaders here or leaders in the whole of society for us to continue to strengthen this country as one people or one nation. This is because we have experienced this in year 2000 that despite those situation and experiences that we faced during those times, today we see ourselves as one people, as one nation. I think we must continue to strengthen that amongst ourselves, including us, the leaders. Sometimes our political differences can divide us and we only see ourselves as Solomon Islanders when we go out. For example, when we are in Australia or New Zealand, we become very close. But when we are here, at our home, like if I am from Malaita, I would refer to others as from Baegu, East Are'Are or South Malaita. It happens at the provincial level. In town, we refer to others as from Isabel or from Guadalcanal.

I am started to question the federal system, if it is a way forward for us. But my colleague from Small Malaita said that we try it. It might be a risky for us. We have strength within us. When we do not recognize the values, practices and norms within Solomon Islands, we tend to think that it might be better to allow Australians or Chinese to deal with us.

If we strengthen the values as a way of life and to be part of us with the church, then comes the true reconciliation. As a result, you will not need any compensation. Because I do not worry about the compensation. I just want us to pray together. This will also help the government. When practices came and it is number one, we will find it hard for the reconciliation and with other demands, the church will find it very hard as well.

It is important to continue and remind us so that it becomes part of our lives and practices. When it becomes part of our lives, we will have true reconciliation. It is reconciliation from the heart. It is reconciliation as Solomon Islanders. But if we put our demands first and add compensation to them, I am not saying that

compensation is not a good practice, but we pay a compensation that fits us as Solomon Islanders. Some compensation is very expensive. And if that is the kind of compensation that we want from the government in terms of reconciliation, then the country will not move forward.

This country needs true reconciliation and let us have a proper funeral of this issue as stated by the Member for East Honiara. This is all part of how we want to do these things. But it must come from our hearts first. There we can say that we are true Solomon Islanders, one people, and this is what this nation needs.

Thank you.

Mr. SAMSON MANEKA (*North Guadalcanal*) (12:01): Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to contribute to this important debate on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report.

In doing so, I am happy to add the voice of my good people of North Guadalcanal to the debate of the TRC Report. My people experienced atrocities and suffered greatly during the sad period of our history covered by the TRC report. I will say more on this later.

At the outset, I wish to commend and congratulate the ruling Democratic Coalition Government for Advancement (DCGA) for taking the TRC Report to be debated in this honourable Chamber. This is a responsible decision by a responsible government.

Commentators and critics of the government, as well as the various groups representing diverse segments of our country, had been calling on the government to table and debate the TRC Report in this Parliament.

The ruling DCGA government is now taking the unprecedented and bold step of allowing the National Parliament to debate the TRC Report. This is truly a bold and courageous action in view of the sensitivities of the TRC Report. I congratulate and commend the incumbent Minister for Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs for moving the Motion to debate the TRC Report in Parliament. This is the way forward, colleague Members.

You will be remembered for allowing Parliament to debate the TRC Report. As a former Minister for National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace, I initiated the process to review the TRC Report with the intent to present to Parliament for debate back in 2016. The Democratic Coalition for Change Government, which I was a Member of, has seen the importance of debating the TRC report in Parliament. However, the complexity and sensitivity of issues covered in the report require more research on the contents and recommendations of the report.

On this I must commend the Minister for partnering with the United Nations Development Programs to engage consultants, who review and summarize the TRC Report into a form more compatible for all Solomon Islanders to understand and accept.

Like some of my colleagues who have contributed to the debate before me, I do not wish to dwell at length on what causes the ethnic tension, the atrocities and crimes committed and the effects of the ethnic tension. The ethnic tension, has clearly and adequately explained by Minister. The TRC was established to investigate, report on and make recommendations on the impacts of the ethnic tension.

The period of civil unrest and violent conflicts or ethnic tension, as it was commonly known in Solomon Islands, between late 1998 and mid 2003 was a dark chapter in the history of Solomon Islands. The complete result in the death of more than 200 people; the destruction of properties, the intimidation of civilians, the rape of women and girls, the weakening of State institutions, and the near collapse of the country's economy as discussed in the TRC report, and there were wide spread of human rights abuse.

The Solomon Islands government was unable to maintain law and order, manage the economy, pay its employees and provide services to citizens.

Men who assumed the title of militants took control of some state institutions and ruled in many communities, especially on Guadalcanal and parts of Malaita. Consequently, the foreign media, policy makers, and academics dunk Solomon Islands into a failed state.

The conflict was the result of a complex state of interrelated issues that include land, rapid rural urban migration, and increasing squatter settlement in major urban centers, especially Honiara, a fast-growing population, especially youths; slow economic growth, low employment, and weak state institutions.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established following the Solomon Islands conflict of late 1998 – 2003, which left more than 200 people dead. Serious human rights violations, weakening state institutions, and a national economy on the verge of collapse.

As a the results, in 2003, Pacific Island Forum sanctioned Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) on the invitation of the Solomon Islands government. In 2008, the Solomon Islands government established the TRC following the enactment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act 2008. It was a non-judicial commission tasked with finding the truth about what happened and who was involved in the nature and dynamics of the conflict. The Commission

was also required to write and submit their report to the Prime Minister, which would then be tabled in Parliament.

The 5 Volume reports submitted in 2012 were comprehensive and provided a number of recommendations that would hopefully contribute to post-conflict peacebuilding. Implementation of the TRC recommendation is important to post-conflict reconciliation and rehabilitation in the Solomon Islands. The ultimate aim is to build sustainable peace. So it is therefore vital that these recommendations are implemented.

Peacebuilding is about increasing conditions and processes that minimize the negative effects of the conflict and support long-term peace. It is about transforming relations in society to decrease the likelihood of future conflict. This is everybody's business and generating peace at a period of violent conflict such as the social crises experienced in Solomon Islands requires the efforts of all status of our country.

The peace development should be the critical factor. The paramount objective in our development strategy. The recommendation of the TRC Report are important and could be integral part of the development agenda and landscape on this country. Why RAMSI was relatively successful in restoring the law and order and rebuilding and strengthening state institution, the task of building sustainable peace much more complicated. It requires rebuilding, strengthening relationship, providing reparation for the victims of the conflict. Rehabilitating over militants while at the same addressing the underlying causes of the conflict. These requires short term and long term planning and the allocation of limited resources. It will also require the management of public expectations.

As alluded to earlier, my people of North Guadalcanal suffered to great extent during the ethnic tension. I cannot find words to express how my people were treated and suffered. You talk about the crimes and evils committed during the crises described in the TRC Report, people of Northern Region of Guadalcanal went through all these. It is in this regard, that I fully support the debate of the TRC Report in this Parliament which should hopefully lead to implementing the recommendation.

The recommendation concern the reforms and other measure whether legal, political, administrative or otherwise needed to achieve the objective of providing an impartial historical recount. Preventing the repetition of the violence or abuses suffered addressing impurity must be according to the need of the victims and providing healing and reconciliation.

The TRC Report includes addressing the need of number one victims, vulnerable population, former combatants, reconciliation process addressed, institutional reforms and historical understanding of issues. While all these recommendations

are important, I want to see the government and its stakeholders to put in place immediate or short term measures, which will address the reparation and rehabilitation of victims and reintegration of ex-combatants.

The recommendation pertaining to reconciliation is also vital. The recommendations of the TRC Report are clear, articulated and achievable if there is political will to prioritize and implement. The victims have been waiting since the completion of the report for any government plans and programs towards reparation and rehabilitation. Some victims have unfortunately passed on after waiting in vain for years.

The government needs to act fast in designing reparation and rehabilitation plan and programs for victims. By working through sectoral Ministries, annual work plans and channeling funds through their annual budgets is an option. Another viable option is to utilize the constituency development system to support the victims of the ethnic tension. Ex-combatants have been demanding the government for their reintegration support. Their calls continued to vibrate through the government machineries.

I believe the government can address the reintegration of ex-combatants. The ex-combatant are organized and establish their own organization in anticipation of the reintegration plan and program of the government as recommended by the TRC Report.

Going forward, I believe that implementing the TRC Report is crucial for sustainable peace in our beloved Solomon Islands. I want us to appreciate that sustainable peace is more difficult than attaining peace. We must design and establish mechanisms that prevent our country from erupting into another conflict.

The peace development require analytical framework, he budgetary arrangement, resources and capacities that help the government and stakeholders understand and anticipate potential sources of conflict. This calls for closer partnership under collaborations between government agencies, other stakeholders, like non-organizational and faith based organization and with the support of our development partners. The most successful prevention is indigenous and local, and it is undertaken by local and national actors through an internal political process. We have to own the strategies and actions developed to build and sustain peace. We cannot rely on others to tell us what to do and how to do it.

Before I resume my seat, I want the government, through the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, to consider including peace studies in the national education curriculum, perhaps in the senior primary grades 5 and 6, or junior secondary grades 7 to 9, so that our children learn about peace and conflict resolution at an early stage.

The TRC report can be reframed and rewritten into the Solomon Islands History Book so that students can learn about the conflict and local peace work instead of learning about crises in overseas countries. I am grateful to add the voice of my people of North Guadalcanal to the debate over the TRC report.

I Support the Motion, and I resume my seat.

Parliament is suspended at 12.26pm

Parliament is resumed

Hon FREDA SORIACOMUA (*Temotu Vattu – Minister for Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs*) (02:12): Thank you Mr. Speaker for giving me the opportunity to respond on behalf of my people of Temotu Vatu constituency and my Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs to the Motion statement on Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report with recommendation by the Honourable Minister for the Ministry of Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs on 31st July 2023, during the 11th Parliament, 6th Meeting.

I thank Honourable the Minister for Ministry of Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs for tabling this very important TRC Report with its recommendations for discussion in Parliament. The TRC law required that this important Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report with its recommendation be presented to Parliament since it was completed in the year 2012.

Therefore, I wish to also take this opportunity to profoundly thank the Honourable Prime Minister and our DCGA government to bring this important TRC Report with its recommendation to Parliament for discussion, which was delayed for 11 years by other governments. I thank Minister of the Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs to outline the seven important key areas on 31st July 2023 during his Motion.

Truly, the tension was the darkest moments in our country, which we ever experience and witnessed in our 45 years of independence. The country has experience a failed economy and social services failed to its lowest point. Although the extent of this conflict was not very serious as compared to the other countries mentioned by the Minister; however what the population of Solomon Islands felt and have experienced during the tension of 1998 to 2003 was disastrous and were felt throughout the Provinces.

Words cannot express the physical, mental and social disadvantages that all of us went through this tension; but the most affected ones are the vulnerable groups, and they are our dear women, girls, children and disabled who have been seriously affected and yet they are not compensated.

Apart from the destruction to country's economic development infrastructure, major income companies were shut down, revenue machineries were closed, the hatred between ethnic groups and communities, properties and houses were burned and destroyed, people and youth were abducted, and forced disappearances. All forms of tortures, persecutions, killings. Many women and girls were raped, and all forms of violation of rights of our women, girls and children. Our vulnerable children were immensely failed and affected, too.

I want to share the challenges or experiences that I faced when I was working at a private company. I was really afraid when they pointed a weapon at my head, and I recall being traumatized. During that time, I was so lucky that the gate was opened and I was allowed to go out, and the way I ran to the road, I just ran over the stones, but I believe and I thank God that this country must not repeat this kind of challenge that we faced in 2003. There are a lot of challenges that we met that really affected our lives, so I always pray and ask God to forgive those who were doing those kinds of things during the ethnic tension, and I too forgave them. When I meet them on the road, I see them, and I always think and believe that we, as human beings, must forgive each other.

The impact, or mental effects, are still felt and have stayed on until now. I wish to particularly dwell on the TRC recommendation that was specified for my ministry, the ministry of women, youth, children, and family affairs, that one on vulnerable persons. TRC provides four recommendations on women 1.1 as well as part two. TRC to provide four key recommendations on constitutional reform and specification on three percent women's seats in the parliament, but 30 percent reserve seats in the parliament for women, and are committed to full, free, and equal participation of women with 30 percent quarter of women in parliament.

This equal participation in decision-making is a call from our national institution. The national development strategy, our policies, and lots of frame work have emphasized women in leadership and decision-making, but there is less progress in those areas. It has been proven that countries that implement these temporary special measures have progressed well because women are involved in decision-making. Take Rwanda, for example. Today, they do not need the TSM; currently, 61 percent of their parliamentarians are women leaders. We need not look far in our region, like in New Zealand, where more than 30 percent of women are in parliament.

Due to this recommendation and our policies, the call was made in 2009 by the ministry, and NGOs as well as the women's rights movement have tabled at the CAUCUS level for 10 elected reserved seats in the parliament. But there was not much awareness, so it was delayed. It was recommended by the PM and the Opposition group in one of the parliaments sitting a few years ago that we start

from provincial assemblies. As such, we are thankful to the DFAT, UN Women, and RAM, who have helped the ministry raise awareness in the communities in all provinces as well as provincial assemblies.

What resonate from the six provinces which we covered on the wider awareness and consultation to the communities have overwhelmingly showing over 99 percent of the people that they are supportive of the temporary special measures for women in Provincial Assemblies. Three more provinces will have to complete by August and September and by October 2023, the Cabinet Paper will tabled in the Caucus Meeting.

Furthermore, eight of nine provinces have already passed in their provincial assemblies their full support for temporary special measures to eventuate in their respective provincial assemblies. As such amendment would eventuate to provincial government Act to accommodate reserve seats for women in provincial assemblies.

Still on part one, vulnerable persons 1.2 established a national steering committee on gender equality and women's development to ensure the implementation of annual work plan of the Ministry of Women. The Ministry has already formulated the National Steering Committee, the Committee is called Gender Equality and Women's Development National Stakeholders Task Force. It was established because we are also mandated in our gender equality policy and women development policy revised vision 2023-2028. That our National Steering Committee must be establish to govern the implementation of our annual work plans.

This gender equality and women's Development National Stakeholders Taskforce ensure that the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children and Family Affairs as well as other SIG Ministries and NGOs who work in the space of gender must implement annual work plan and all activities to promote gender equality.

On vulnerable recommendation 1.3-Empowerment and legal protection of seat on plan property. The Ministry of Women is working closely with Ministry of Traditional Governance and Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs in recommending two traditional government bill to increase the voice of women to inherited the land. Also, to promote to own land where matrilineal culture are practiced. In addition, we work with Ministry of Lands and Gender Mainstreaming where Ministry of Women has nominated women member representing women in the land housing board.

Additionally, training on gender main streaming on land holding group was conducted. On 4th recommendation, on women as vulnerable, Legal Framework and enforcement to protect women against violence. Ministry of Women has Family

Protection Act 2014. It also has Family Protection Advisory Committee which consist of all ministries and NGOs as well development partners who advocate in trying to address violence against women and girls. The Ministry also have national policy on ending violence against women and girls which we are implementing with government ministries and NGOs, faith based organizations.

We are also a member of Safe net which provides services for referral of survivors or victims of violence for accommodation at Christian Care Centre, Family Support Centre for counselling and legal support. We also have established a counselling guideline which is the first in the Pacific. And we have trained and registered 8 counsellors who are qualified to counsel the victims.

On three key recommendation of youths, the government to strengthen youths participation in decision making. Youth Development Division has two policies. The National Youth Policy 2017-2030 and Strategic Framework for Youth Development and Empowerment. These policies are to empower youth, such as we have established the National Youth Congress at the national level and further, revitalize six provincial youth councils. By the end of November we should revitalize the other three provincial youth councils. Bear in mind that we are a youthful nation. About 70 percent are youths and if do not support them enough, they would resolve to riot and conflict again, which we do not want to experience the dark ages again. So we must be careful in handling them.

We are now building youth and children centers in Temotu, Western, Isabel and Malaita and hoping within four years we should complete their infrastructure for them to congregate, learn and empower themselves and to make decision to excel in all facets of life.

On the second recommendation for youth, there are two points. This is for the government to create 5,000 jobs each year for the next 10 years. We do have a youth policy, which is on employment and entrepreneurship, which addresses employments and job opportunities, but it is yet to be endorsed by Cabinet. We will try our best within one or two months to table it in Cabinet. However, we seem to be implementing it already.

The Ministry has small development grant that funds and support youth groups to generate their funds and create job opportunities. The Ministry Foreign Affairs and External Trade has really taken this recommendation to engage these youths into seasonal workers as well as youth mobility labour in both Australia and New Zealand. I trust we are doing well.

In part one or two vulnerable groups, which are children. The Ministry has the legislation to protect children and family and it is know as Children and Family Welfare Act 2017. We also have a governing board of Children and Family Welfare

Act 2017, which is National Advisory Action Committee on Children. We also have a new revised National Children's Policy and Action Plan 2023-2028. This is one of the policies with costed action plan particularly to prevent violence and abuse of our children.

The National Advisory Action Committee on Children consists of multi sectoral groups; SIG Ministries, NGOs, churches that are working in the space to protect our children in Solomon Island. I wish to thank UNICEF for the funding and technical support to help the government of Solomon Island implement activities and programs to reduce high incidents of violence and abuses of all forms in Solomon Islands and help us revise our Children Policy 2023-2028 with plan and cost activities.

I hope with the legislation and policies in place and coupled with better economy will in fact structure development, it will help empowered our 500,000 youths, which is 70 percent of our population, so that they contribute to the development of our nation and bring back the happy isles that we were known for, so that the most vulnerable, the children, women and youths can live free of violence and abuses.

We the women, girls, boys and children do not want this tension to happen again, because the suffering, which was on us was unbearable and has affected the minds and bodies of our women and men today, who were children during the tension period. Are we going to compensate our women, girls, children, and disabled? No! It will be too much in terms of funding. The best compensation would be to give us peace, unity, love, and respect, especially better security.

We do not want another tension, but give us a strategic development by helping our youths become entrepreneurs to widen the private sector for economic development and growth. Give us a conducive environment for learning. We need more colleges and higher learning institutions. We need better transportation and better means of communication. Give us a better economy. Give us the happy isles and no more tension. I repeat, no more tension!

I wish to conclude by reading a quote from Mr. Philip Yasi, a spirited American writer, and I quote;

When suffering happens, it forces us to confront life in a different way than we normally do.

So let us do things differently from now on, after the suffering that we have experienced. More importantly, let us put God first in our lives in whatever we do so that all these things and blessings will be added unto us (Matthew 6:33).

Thank you, on behalf of my constituency of Temotu Vatu and My Ministry of Women, Youth , Children, and Family Affairs.

I support the Motion, and I beg to resume my seat.

Hon. STANLEY SOFU (*East Kwaio—Minister for Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology*) (2 :34): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time that you have given me to make my voice heard in contributing to this Motion that was raised by the Minister.

As you rightly said, there are relevant Standing Orders that you can waive within your powers, to allow me to make my contributions this afternoon.

I thank the Minister who brought the TRC report for consideration by Parliament in this House, Motion No.35, for us to consider the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report with Recommendations (Shorter Version).

Mr. Minister, I thank you because if you do not bring this report into this House, we will not contribute to this Motion. Thank you Minister and thank you Ministry.

On the outset, during the ethnic tension, all of us know that it is really painful and nobody would like to relive that situation. It is a painful part of our history, as we heard from other speeches earlier on.

I want to pay respect to families of our people that lost their lives as a result of this violence during the ethnic crisis. I also want to pay respect and thank the peace loving people of our country, that the ethnic tension caught them by surprise. Some are traumatized and even lost their lives during due to criminal activities that came out from this crisis.

I also want to thank the warring factions for setting aside their weapons and allow peace to come in and prevail. Thus, I would like to say that from now and into the future, we do not want to repeat what we have gone through.

I also wish to pay my respect and thank you to the peacemakers that have come in numbers, like tribal leaders, church leaders, community leaders, women and mothers, and senior citizens of the government that have gone already, international peace keepers, the NGOs, development partners and RAMSI. Your efforts have contributed to move this beloved country out from the darkness of the ethnic tension.

The commitment for peace, reconciliation and forgiveness has to be on a personal level, from deep within the heart. After pursuing the report, I recon that this level of commitment is in our hearts. To the TRC Commissioners and their staff, I thank you and I pay my respects to the TRC members, the chairman, and the Commission for carrying out a comprehensive and a very challenging mandate of inquiring into the ethnic tension or ethnic crisis and putting out the very report that forms the basis of this Motion?

I submit to this august House and the people of this country that addressing the TRC Report and its recommendations must be done in the interest of this country as a whole and not to any persons or subsections in our society. It is absolutely critical because the source of this report is purported and catalyzed by a very few. This is true. If you listen well to the Prime Minister's speech and the Minister responsible, they highlighted many things. It was not started by the warring parties. They were involved in it.

On the academic people, the needs of the majority and the interest and good of this country must be at the forefront. This is important for this country to go forward. It must be at the forefront, at the back, and at the center of the approaches that we take with the recommendations in this Truth and Reconciliation Report.

I am talking as the Minister for Environment to lead the preparation and responses to disasters. No one will deny the ethnic tension, but to me, in this case, we were in disaster. Nature induce earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones, but this is man-made disaster. It is well planned. Those that were supposed not to be involved have been involved. In other words, it is our own doing, but the advantage that it has in contrast to nature, it is induced and can be completely preventable. We have not paid serious attention to address its root cause, which are clearly outlined in the TRC Report. We have been busy dealing with superficial output of the root causes and even employed ill-conceived and maladministration of our customs by paying compensations that have no meaning or impact whatsoever in addressing the root causes.

The Prime Minister and the Minister responsible said a lot of things. Customary reconciliation no longer has any meaning, or even money. We have to address the root causes before we can experience a lasting peace in our beloved country. We need to stop degrading our customs and cultures.

Our cultures have values. In Kwaio, when you lift a knife to chop someone, if he surrenders, you have to stop. That is my culture. We all have cultures. Stop degrading our cultures. We need to address the root causes of the problems.

This disaster is a man-made one. It is destructive. A disaster is also an opportunity for us the people living in this country. Those who are educated and those that are not educated and leaders of this country. There are three things. This ethnic crisis happens for us to rethink, reset the course that we take, and the thirdly is to redirect our country forward. Let us capitalize on the TRC Report to set the foundation for rethinking, resetting and redirecting our country into the future.

I am an optimist. I believe we can do this work together as opposed to addressing it by way of factions. We may even need to take a bipartisan approach to address the TRC Report in this august House. The inspection of the recommendations

indicated that it does not have specific ones for the Ministry that I have the honor to lead on behalf of the people and the government. Nevertheless, we see that in the overall scheme of addressing the TRC Report.

The MECDM has its roles to play within the bound of its mandate on environment, climate change, disaster management and meteorology, in short. At the beginning we are also committed to addressing the TRC Report for the good of our people and country.

Since this TRC Report came up, promises has been made already to some of the recommendations and these have been summarized quite effectively by the honorable Minister of Traditional Governance and have been elaborated on by Prime Minister of this country and other Ministers in the past three days and I will not repeat them all. However, you allow me to elaborate on how I see this country moving forward to address the root cause that had been identified in the TRC Report by addressing two foundational issues that cut across the root causes. These are governance and development.

Like other Ministers have already touched on. They talked on the issues highlighted in the recommendations. I will not dwell on them.

To me, addressing these two issues with a national perspective driven by a long-term vision for peace and stability is the best form of reparation for this country, as opposed to cash-hand compensation, which has a proven track record of being abused and failing to bring peace and stability to our country.

I have already stated that what our chiefs have done is a big thing, but nothing happens. We have to come to the root cause before we address the issues. So I wish to thank the Minister and the government for presenting this TRC Report for us to deliberate on.

The question of the most appropriate form of government system needs to be addressed. In this concern, another significant piece of work that has been done is the one on the proposed federal system of governance. Without undermining the wisdom and desire that could be expressed there, we need to interrogate the question of decentralization of governance, power, and resources, equal to federalism or a form of it. Can this be achieved in the short term by revising the current Provincial Government Act? We need to answer this questions with facts and figures. In addition to the desire for federation, provincial, or any other forms of governance. These questions must be answered now because taking this country forward is what is important.

Regarding development, it is to be implemented based on actual needs informed by paper analysis and evidence comparative, advantageous of a location and

underpinned by deliberate decentralization of basic economic environment and social infrastructure from Mono in the West to Tikopia in the East. We ourselves must first meet the cost on decentralizing our development, so that when we reach out to our partners for support, it is only for supplementary. This is true. Our partners will certainly help us, and we are also taken to be serious about development because of our own investment for our betterment.

The development I am talking about here also needs to be informed by science as well as our engineers knowledge system. In this connection this country is in a dire need for research to suffice our overall development. We need a significant investment in the higher education sector and the capacity development of people, especially our youths who formed the majority of our population.

Let us support Solomon Islands National University to drive research and development and employ science and technology to address our development challenges. We definitely need to step outside our usual comfort zones to ask serious question about what, where and how we are going to rule development to support peace and stability in our country.

I want to talk on the TRC Report concerning my people of East Kwaio. This is on the 1927 massacre. On this note, I am fully aware that the government led by the present Prime Minister, set a Task Force Committee to look into the issue, to enquire into, with the support of the government, to have discussions with the representatives of the British Government and other development partners to reach an understanding.

This is a matter that was done in the colonial days. The TRC report stated 1927 massacre. That is what I am talking about. The government tries its best to being chiefs of East Kwaio and rent a motel for them, and give them allowances. I want to inform the honourable House about this because I am also included that time when I was a Member of Parliament for East Kwaio. I am also aware that there have been similar events in other parts of our country in the colonial period, and this also needs to be addressed. Not only East Kwaio, but other parts of the country that have the same issues.

As I rightly said today, I will be brief because the Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs asked us to help him in this important TRC report As the Minister for Environment, I have the bound duty to help the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs and contribute.

In conclusion, let us address these TRC Report recommendations and the root causes of the ethnic tension in the national context, as opposed to addressing them from a factions point of view. We should also address the foundational question of the appropriate type of governance system and decentralized development that is based on the need grounded with proper analysis and employ science and

technology to address our development challenges and bring about peace and stability in our nation, the Solomon Islands.

With these few remarks, I fully support the Minister and the DCGA's government for the TRC report. I thank you and I support the Motion.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU (*West Are Are*) (03:09): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the space to add the voice of my people of West Are'Are to the very important Motion moved by the honorable Minister for Traditional Governance, Peace, and Ecclesiastical affairs.

May I also thank the honorable Minister of Traditional governance, Peace, and Ecclesiastical Affairs for the Motion, that Parliament resolves itself into the Committee of the Whole House to consider National Parliament Paper No.5 of 2023 - Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report with Recommendation (shorter version).

On the same note, let me thank the honorable Prime Minister and the DCGA government for enabling the TRC report to be debated on the floor of this honorable House. It is a very important report that is brought to us on the floor. I join my colleagues who have already spoken to express my heartfelt gratitude for giving us this opportunity to deal with this report. It is our report, and we are responsible, and it is a report that our people are waiting for with heavy hearts. On that note, I sincerely thank the government for the report tabled and now debated.

I want to pay tribute, honor, and respect first. My profound gratitude goes to God Almighty for His continuous love for our country. He has restored our country from the ashes of the ethnic tension of 1998 to 2003. My prayer is that the Lord God will strengthen us to continue to love Him boldly and wholeheartedly. We must not lose sight of that. Even if we fall short of it, God's intervention holds our country together. I thank God, on behalf of my people of West Are'Are constituency for what He has done to our country in this TRC Report.

I would like to pray at this time for the souls that are covered in the report that have gone before us. They are with God. They belong to Him. That is their appointed time. They are singing Halleluiah in heaven. The report stated that they are in heaven, because of the way they die. I wholeheartedly believe that.

At this juncture, I wish to join the Solomon Islanders that continue to pray for the proper repose of the souls of those that have departed because of the ethnic. I also extend the same prayer for the blessing to their families, the loved ones they left behind. I also pray the God will touch their hearts and give them comfort and peace.

I would like to thank the men, women, boys and girls and children of Guadalcanal and also those from Malaita that are highlighted in the TRC Report, that came

forward to allow peace to reign in our country. We went through dark hours, days, weeks, months and years. Without their commitment, we would still be in the dark hours. I sincerely thank our brothers and sisters from Malaita and Guadalcanal, to which this report is compiled from their submissions and interviews.

I would like to thank the men and women, boys and girls from Western and Choiseul provinces that are also highlighted in this report, who submitted sincerely to TRC to get their stories. I pray that God will continue to bless all of them, from Guadalcanal, Malaita, Choiseul and Western province.

To all the provinces that were also affected and also came forward, I also thank them. They are also reported in the TRC Report.

This is what this country is all about. This is the Happy isles. This is what we represent and stand for. Our people, despite what they went through, they came to complete the report so that we continue to address.

I also want to join the Minister, the Prime Minister and the rest of the colleagues who have already spoken to sincerely and profoundly thank the TRC commissioners. The Late Fr. Sam Ata from Malaita, I want to thank him and his family for the work he did as the chairman. I want to thank Sofia Macher, international commissioner from Peru for her contributions to the TRC as a commissioner. Thank you to Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, international commissioner of Fiji, and thank you to his family for his involvement in the TRC Report. The Late George Kejoa of Guadalcanal Province, I would like to thank him. May his soul reach its place as he worked hard. I pray that God will bless his family for the input in this important work. His replacement, the Late Kamilo Teke, from Guadalcanal province, I pray that God bless his family for the inputs into the TRC Report. Last, but not the least, I want to thank Karen Laore for her greatest contribution on this report.

It is a very good report and it detailed the issues we see as the causes and give rise to the ethnic tension. I am really happy that they report it to us. I am also happy because they take us back to the history of our problems, as far as 1567 and 1568, when Mendana explored our islands. That is how depth this report is and I am grateful with the commissioners and those who involved in this report.

I also want to thank church leaders throughout Solomon Islands, that during the dark hours that we experienced, it was reported that they have been praying for our country, brothers and sisters who are affected.

To the friends of Solomon Islands, in this darkest hours, and colleagues have already made mention of them. I want to thank the RAMSI, our regional friends

who helped us, and as we know, it is in the report. They came out and stayed here for 10 years.

I want to thank the People's Republic of Taiwan for their contributions during those dark hours.

I thank our donors and development partners for their help in the time of need. Also to the private sector companies throughout our country and overseas that also helped us in one way or another, particularly the communities that need help and received help. To anyone I missed but had played a vital role during the ethnic tension, I also want to acknowledge them.

As we know, this national public hearings were held from 2009 to 2011. We have seen the summary of it, containing the details and statements and submissions. There were more than 1,000 voices of the victims and others who have involved in the ethnic tension were listened to by the TRC. Interviews and written submission provided by more than 2,400 people. We thank them for coming forward to be interviewed, listened to, and recorded on these important hearings conducted by the TRC.

I want to, again, thank the honorable Minister, the mover of the Motion, and the honorable Prime Minister for the invitation of the 50 Members to contribute and to sincerely express our views on this report. It is time that we come together and share our views from the bottom of our hearts on what we have observed during the term or terms that we served in this Parliament. That is important because we will follow the recommendation going forward, as already expressed by the honorable Minister and Member for East Kwaio.

As we already know, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act 2008 gives the legal framework for what is done. On that note, allow me to pay tribute to the late Honorable Samuel Sam Iduri, who was the Minister of National Unity and Peace, for introducing the Truth and Reconciliation Bill to Parliament in August 2008. I want to thank him and I pray that his soul receives proper repose in heaven, as he also contributed to this report and addressed the ethnic tension and the dark hours that our country had gone through.

As we know, the Act had already passed, and the TRC began its hearing on April 29, 2009, a year later.

The title of this report (Shorter version) is very interesting, which is "Rising from the Ashes". As I ponder on this, it is a very beautiful title given to this short report. It basically covers the human rights violence that the TRC considers, including mass killings, abduction, torture, sexual violence, destruction, and deprivation of the

rights to own property, settled and living. These are the things that we come up with, and I thank you, Minister.

We must come up with these things. When we reflect, how have we gone through the ashes and why? This is also the reflection that I also make, and the speakers before me. It is just unfortunate that we have such a tittle on this important report that we have to come out on it. It is true that the dark hours that we have recorded in the TRC report of those years of 2003 to 2008, were true. And if you expand on it, sure, we have a lot of ashes, like the burning down of buildings and families. So it is true.

So when I look at it, I agree that it is high time that we come out on this, and we thank God that he never abandoned us. In those times, he still leads and stayed with us during those dark times. I would like to remember our brothers and sisters who have gone before us. We must continue to assure ourselves. As Christians, we are transiting. They already transited, and we pray for them, that they will pray for us too. We continue to pray for their families and family members.

I want to reflect on the timeline of the conflict. In 1567-1568, Mendana explored Solomon Islands. If you read the books those who fought against Mendana are from my tribe. All of them died. They were shot and killed at Uhu. That is a history, but also a dark history for us. They came and kill my people. My people came with bows and arrows but those foreigners have guns. The colleague Minister of East Kwaio also talked about what had happened to his own people in his constituency as well.

In 1978, we gained our independence, and then 10 years after, in 1988, the demonstration of Guadalcanal people at the government house as a follow up to their submissions that was done 10 years previously. I want to take us through this, so that when we move forward, we have a true reflection. Then, 10 years later, in 1998, rumors of the formation of militant groups. Then in 2003, the RAMSI. The TRC completed its final report in 2012.

We already know this, but I am trying to take you through my reflection. 2012 was when the TRC final report was done. Report was presented to Parliament and it was tabled as Order Paper NP 05/12/7 on the 7th Meeting of the 9th Parliament on the 5th September 2014. I was with the government. It was just a week before Parliament was dissolved when the 5 Volumes were delivered here. That was in 2014. Then the TRC Final Report (shorter version) Motion No.35 NP Paper No.5 of 2023 is what we have here now.

If you followed my timeline, No.10 starts to pop up. Every 10 years something happens. You minus 1567. I want us to pray about this. We pray over it and put in place actions and implementation of the appropriate policies to address it. That is

what I am leading us to. We must watch the 10 years popping up here in our history. It can mean something.

The history of the conflict and nation conceive but never born. Again, the Prime alluded to in his intervention. Our nation is still in the womb. If we take this metaphor by the late Solomon Mamaloni, he said that we are a nation conceived but never born. This means that we were conceived, which means created by fertilization, but we are still in the womb. Solomon Islands is not yet born.

The way I see this, this haunts me because I do not want this. If this continues on like this, then we must erase it. Let us get Solomon Islands as a conceived nation to be born. If it is a child, then it has to be born.

If we go back in time to when this statement was delivered by Solomon Mamaloni, it will be in the year 1981, because this was the time that he was Prime Minister, 31st August 1981 to 1984. From the time that he said this to now, it means that the child is 42 years old, but is still not yet born. What does this mean? When will the happy birthday be? What day? This is giving me a very deep reflection on this. A nation conceived but never born and now it is the 45th year of its independence.

Through our leadership, we have been through 18 Prime Ministers who has had a term. If we count by names, we have had 12 Prime Ministers in these 42 years. And so if we continue to wait for another 42 years for the birth of the Solomon Islands, then I will have a lot of questions. Why are we continuing to wait? How long are we going to wait if the Solomon Islands have not been yet born?

If it is a human child, he will probably be dead already; it must be through God's intervention that he is still living in the womb and has not rotted. And the mother has been carrying him for 42 years. The name Solomon Islands, what kind of child is this if he has not yet being born?

This has led me to ask this question: is this the federalism government that our people are crying for? Maybe that is why he has not yet been born, so that when he is born, we can name him federalism. He is not yet born because another name is being used by the state government of the Solomon Islands to change his name. I am thinking about these on reflection, and if that is the case, is it deliberate? Is it intentional that very important issues that are highlighted in this TRC report came and caused the darker hours, the ethnic tension in our country?

History is recorded in this report of the conflict: colonialism endangered labor and land grabbing, and that is number one. These are the things that cause the conflict. Big man politics and wantok system. World War II happened because of nationalism. Fourthly, migration and land. fifth, a weak sense of national unity. I

agree with these things. They are well documented in the report. The core of these issues is land. It spill over to other issues and resulted in the ethnic tension.

Why do we not address these issues appropriately in time? If we had seen that these will cause the conflict, the question is, why we have not addressed them?

I would like to thank the government. I heard from the presentation by the government Ministers that there is already plan rolling. That is good, but the timing is of concern to me. We have to address these issues. We are now 45 years since independence in 1978. If these are the issue that caused the conflict and we have not address them, then this is not good.

If the interest of this nation is of concern to us, we have to address it. We must allocate budget for it. We have not addressed these issues. We must change and repent. We take a U-Turn, a 360 degrees.

If need to take stock of our actions, let us start focusing on a way forward. The main issue that caused the ethnic tension is land. It spills over to other issues and ended up in the ethnic tension.

On traditional and customary land reform, I would like to thank the Prime Minister for acknowledging the traditional governance of the Kandere Party. I am happy that the government continues with the policy for this country. It belongs to the country, not mine. That policy is one of the answers. Customary land reform is also another important policy. They are in the report. These two. Our brothers and sisters from Guadalcanal, it is true that we come from ethnic tribes in our provinces. It means that we own land from in-land right to the sea. That is my customary land. We live in Honiara and we have to know customary and tribal land.

Therefore, the policy of traditional governance that is with the Minister in the form of a Bill that they are working on, I am happy with it. I want the Minister to quickly do that so that before we finish, we pass it. The amendment on the Land and Titles Act is what we should address. You must not forget that this belongs to foreigners. What belongs to our people must be included. Traditional governance must be included. Women must be recognized with their powers according to our custom. That is the law we must make. Do not come up with an amendment to foreign laws and we continue applying it to our people. It must be in the party policy on traditional governance. I must highlight that as the wing leader. I am the only one left in this Party. Everyone else left, but this is their policy. I congratulate and commend them for moving and advancing this policy to where it is.

We must recognize all our chiefs and women leaders. The call now is that we change the law. We must amend the Constitution, and that is simply what Kandere Party stands for. If you look at the Honiara City boundary, it continues to expand,

especially the land. If we do not address it, I join the statement by the Member for East Kwaio, moving forward. People of Guadalcanal continues to give and we continue to settle. That is basically what I want to highlight. We must urgently address the land registration.

Thank you to the Prime Minister for pointing out Ma'asina Ruru. It touched my heart. The Are'Are Chief, Michael Alick Erehau Nonohimae was the paramount chief at that time. He submitted the traditional governance proposal to be included in our national Constitution. They took it to the UK. All the chiefs from East Are'Are and West Are'Are met at Kiu. He submitted it to the Late Sir David Kausimae, their honorable Member at that time, to bring it to the Late Sir Peter Kenilorea. They want traditional governance to be included in the Constitution for Solomon Islands.

On the return from the UK, the Late Sir David Kausimae went back to the chiefs at Kiu. They met, and Late Michael Alick Erehau Nonohimae stood up and asked the Late Sir David Kausimae if their request was included in the Constitution. The Late Sir David Kausimae replied and said, 'no, it is not included'. He was so emotional, and he gave a parable, saying "bottle has already broken". Why? Because the leadership and governance traditional to the Solomon Islands is not in the Constitution. We have 100 percent adopted a foreign Constitution. He was so emotional and as a result, he pulled up his lavalava, put it around his neck, and walked back to his house for a kilometer, fully naked. He did not say a thing. Other chiefs tried to comfort him, but he refuses. He said the bottle has already broken.

I have seen that the core issue that that they want to address to the entire Solomon Islands is that Solomon Islands must have its own Constitution. No!, Through our traditional governance and leaders, I want to highlight that.

They invited him to represent the chiefs of Ma'asina Ruru on the Independence Day celebration. He did not attend. He protested. These are the things that happened with the Ma'asina Ruru chiefs in my constituency of West Are'Are. It represents what we have come across.

In 1974, he gave prophecies to the chiefs and this was recorded. Allow me to read his prophecies.

In his first prophecy, he said "We will receive independence in peace and harmony, but afterwards two islands will fight and will fall after 18 years". That is what we called ethnic Tension. Then he continues to say "After that, we start coming to a peaceful reconciliation". This he refers to land reform and traditional governance policies.

In his other prophesy, he said "The law of England adapted during independence; if not change, will destroy us". This is also his prophesy that we recorded in 1974.

His third prophesy, he said "Solomon Islands has no monetary reserves, capital but already acquire independence". This is what the Member of Solomon Malaita talked on. Allow the British to build our place before we allow them to go. But unfortunately, our leaders at that time with their wisdom, with due respect, had taken us to independence.

Prophecy No.3 said that we will be poor because they do not build our infrastructure and reserves.

Prophecy no.5 says that "Despite land tenure and genealogy recording in customary land, the government will acquire the land by its law". That is what we are doing today. The tenure is there, genealogy and boundary are there, but the law is taking over. It is a problem to us now. I am happy that a Bill is in progress.

Prophecy No.6 says "If our house of chiefs is not provided for in the government, we will not know anything within the government of Solomon Islands". If we are not connected, we will not know what is happening in our country.

These are the proverbs of wisdom of the late Michael Alick Nonohimae, which he left with us.

With the Vacant Land Policy of the colonial era, if there is any vacant land, the colonial masters will take it. That is what they wrote in our books.

Ma'asina Ruru was a great wisdom. People sit down and talk. It allowed people to own land up to 3 kilometers into the sea, from the shore. That is how Ma`asina Rural Movement addressed that policy at that time. In Are'Are, every land is occupied by people. There is no vacant land. That is one action to address and counter that policy. When the officers came, they found out that West Are'Are is all set. Every land was occupied with people.

I just want to say that we often say that we are land owners. Are you sure? That question, the Are`Are people already dealt with it. Are you sure? Next question is, when did you produce the land? If that question is not answered, then we go back to the story of creation in the book of Genesis Chapter 1. God is the land owner. God created the land. He made it for us; and today we are mere custodians. We are not land owners, no. We are looking after His land. There is more to that, but I want to leave it like that. You read Genesis so that you to see the story of creation.

We at West Are`Are are surrendered on that. We are custodians of the land of God. We still have a lot of work to do. Therefore, we need to start work and I encourage the government to speed up and continue. We should already do a lot of things during the past years. It will come around the corner again.

I just want to talk a little bit on land that highlighted the issue that causes conflict to our people of Guadalcanal on land, which is true. Land issue is for ethnic tribes. When we come to our Provinces, you know where your land is. Just put ourselves in the same picture here in Guadalcanal. We live here, and we are like land owners here, as if this is Are'Are. No! It belongs to the Guadalcanal people, but our government took it, and that is the work of the government. You must go back to the land owners, do it properly because that is where we will sort out our problems and issues on land because ethnic tribal land custodians are there.

With the sense of national unity, failure to the great value of diversity is true. This sense is with us. The lessons from the tensions show that sustained peace in Solomon Islands requires the government to ensure that there is a good distribution of development opportunities across the country. That is the role of the government.

For West Are'Are, the government is not on our side. You will not distribute anything to me; over and above, there is nothing. You are just the government of the constituencies of the Members that are in the government. That is a true perception of our past governments. When I am on this side, I must share this with you because I was once on the other side. So I know. I sat down quietly and humble with those things. That is an important message that we receive from this TRC report.

It also requires specific steps to be taken by all sectors to create asset to be nurtured and celebrated rather than an obstacle to overcome. This is true. This is Solomon Islands in unity, one people, one nation. That must be in action. That must be in implementation of policy, as simple as that; and then there will be no problem in our country. at the moment, people do not feel a sense of belonging to the government. It is your government, no! It is the government of the people of this nation, but action, implementation, and policy will speak loudly about it, and the people are waiting on this. This is what I want us to reflect on. For this to be achieved and to be achievable, tolerance and respect of all people in the Solomon Islands are required. That respect is something we need to nurture, and it will go to our ethnic groupings. It will provide good coverage and guidance in recommendations. If we follow it, but if we do not follow it, then it will not work. We will come across similar problems if we do not address the recommendations by the TRC for the nation. That is why we must know that we are the government for the people and by the people, and that one must always be in front of us so that unity in this country and the sense of that national unity can be maintained and seen in us.

Government actions and implementation of development policies as well as essential service policies speak volumes about the unity of this country. Government programs and projects from the provinces speak volumes about

uniting this country. They call continuously for one nation, one people, from shore to shore, which must be demonstrated in this action and policy implementation.

Federalism and state government—I would like to say this about that: which one is the better one? Which is the better of the two? Some speakers have mentioned this; if there are reports on these, bring them in so that we can give our blessing to them. blessing in the sense that we accord what is the right decision in parliament for the reports when we sit with them like this TRC report. Let us do it because we are looking for a way forward for our country and the future of our children.

I want to share my honest opinion on this federalism and state government. We must think harder about it first so that we do not jump too early. In my reflection, I ask what is wrong with the current system that we have the province there? What are we not doing? What are we doing wrong? We must bring the report for this system that we have now to the provinces; we contain it in the report.

Actions and implementation of the revenue shared plan are what I want; let us give them. Let us do these things first under the current system. The Minister of Provincial Governance gives it, and cabinet approves it, so that we empower our provinces so that they will begin to look after their people and their services. Please work on this revenue sharing plan quickly for our provinces.

Immediately review the constituency funding and resource sharing to be reflective of our population, and I have already spoken about this one. The constituencies with large populations are poor. You must look into it because it will bring peace to the constituencies. Some of our constituencies, as you know, have more than 20,000 or 25,000 voters. And the fact that we have to share equally the cake for the 50 has done them injustice. And on that one, we must give them justice, and I join the government in urging us to quickly look into this. If not, then we split some of the constituencies that are really big. Some of the ministers are staring at me; I will not mention it in case you think I am campaigning for them. Look into that and give them new constituencies. We still have number there. Again, it is in the hands of the government. I just want to flag these things when we look at which system of government will work.

Recommendation from pages 96 to 105 is well documented. I am happy that the government starts to implement them. We should start investing in them. Allocate budget for it. Set up an office to do the work. If we fail to do it, it will repeat in ten or fifteen years.

Let us change and do something different this time around. I would like to ask the new government come 2024- this report comes too late. Those that will come back in 2024, please make this a priority. If we fail to implement the recommendations of this report, we will certainly go into problems. I urge the new government come

2024, please commit to this as the most important policy to implement. We ask God for His guidance. A lot of things are not done properly. Millions of dollars have been sent to restore peace, but it does not work. We cannot repeat those. I entrust my faith in you, the government as you start to implement the recommendations.

With those, I ask God to bless Solomon Islands from shore to shore. I support the Motion and I resume my seat.

Hon MAKARIO TAGINI (*Mbaegu/Asifola—Minister for Public Service*) (04:05): Thank you Mr Speaker for the opportunity to share my thoughts on this very important Motion moved by the Minister responsible for tabling this Motion No.35, National Paper No.5 of 2023 for debate on this floor.

I will be very brief with my contributions. As we know, the TRC was established in 2008 by an Act of Parliament, which aims to find the main causes and the effects of the ethnic tension. The primary object of the Commission is to strengthen unity and reconciliation for all our people of this nation.

From 2009 to 2011, the TRC Commission was formed, and there were around a thousand people who were interviewed and gave statements and their records were taken by the Commission. As we know, that period of time, our country was down on its knees. We have experienced our nation have been affected by the ethnic tension. There were brutal killings, people lost their lives, properties were burnt, harassment and intimidations and so forth.

Before I proceed with my short presentation, I wish to remember those who have died during the ethnic tension. I did not have personal experience because at that time I was overseas doing my studies. But we could see from the televisions that there was a tension engulfing our country, Solomon Islands. I was in Fiji at that time doing my studies but there was an experience when I returned to our country. I was actually invited to a youth program at the Central Church. After that we took a bus to White River. I was sitting beside the driver at that time and we were on our way up the road at White River. All of a sudden there was somebody just came up from the bush with a gun. He was pointing at us in the bus. I was in a very terrible time. That was an experience I will never forget.

Prior to that, another experience was that my parents bought a piece of land close to Mbarande side. We settle there for six years and we were like the people here. They treat us as brothers and sisters and we live a very peaceful life there. As we lead towards the tension, some of our friends came and said, 'my good people you have to leave as there is something wrong going to happen'. I remember vividly that it was 2am at night, my parents led the whole group of people, women and youth including children. We have to come to Mbarande bridge, pick up a truck and headed down to the town. Why I raise this is because they are real experiences, and

experiences that never go out of our minds. It will always linger in our minds. And that, I wish to share that as my personal testimony in relation to what we have experienced.

The report was also brought to Parliament in 2014. Unfortunately it was on the last sitting of Parliament, and so it was not fully discussed at that time.

I wish to once again thank the DCGA Government through the relevant Minister for bringing this matter to Parliament, a very important Motion to our Parliament to debate on the report. That report produced evidences and testaments of people who were victims and perpetrators of the ethnic unrest. It highlights the causes of the unrest and the recommendations put forward by the Commission. The causes are in the report and also the recommendations. However, please allow me to touch a little bit on one or two causes of the tension, which is in the report. One of which is colonial legacy. The Prime Minister has outlined a lot of our colonial legacies, which in my respectful view, also contributes to the tension we have experienced in our country. Those historical injustices often resurface feelings of resentment and mistrust.

The other issue that caused the tension was economic disparity. As also shown in the report, there is an unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and benefits to our resource owners. Economic hardship, as experienced by our people, is the root cause of the recent ethnic tension.

Another cause, as highlighted in the report, is a lack of good governance and political instability. That is outlined in the report as also one of the causes of the ethnic unrest. Weak institutions and corruption can lead to a sense of injustice and inequality in how decisions are made and resources are allocations. That is also an example of the causes of the ethnic as identified by the Commission.

The Minister responsible, in his presentation, also highlighted the example of Rwanda as one of the countries in the world that experienced the same kind of ethnic tension that we have experienced here in the Solomon Islands. I have done a little bit of reading on the tension in Rwanda. There were actually three main causes, which are similar to our situation in the Solomon Islands. The first one is Colonial Legacy. Rwanda was colonized by Belgium, and because of the hierarchy system there, they have created the Tutsi and Hutu. There is a different hierarchy among these two different people. And so that causes division and hatred between these people.

Economic disparity are also one of the issues that gave rise to the tension in Rwanda, which caused resentfulness and tensions. The even introduce national identity cards to identify who is a Tutsi and who is a Hutu.

The last one is political manipulation. People use power to manipulate others. Those are examples from Rwanda. As we all know, they have come through the same experience as to what we have experienced here in the Solomon Islands.

What is the solution and the way forward? I wish to highlight that to us because they are similar to what is contained in the TRC report also contained in the report.

The first thing that they did was that they established community level courts. These were very small courts established in the communities, to deal with minor offences committed during the tension in Rwanda. They did not give penalties, but they encouraged reconciliation and forgiveness at the community level. So that is what Rwanda did as its first and foremost priority.

What else did they do? Rwanda establishes a unity and reconciliation commission. This is similar to the TRC. That deals with the promotion of national unity, reconciliation, and national cohesion. No.3 - they formed small camps of people, which includes more group of young people from every communities, they pray together, they reconcile, they cry, and they go out to the communities preaching peace, harmony and prosperity of Rwanda people. That is what the young people did. That is an encouragement for our Nation as well. They involved in peace building initiatives. They have allocated a national day of worship. The full country, we worship. We ask God for peace. I think that is an excellent idea for us in this country as well. They introduce that, praying for national peace, harmony and prosperity. That is what Rwanda did as well.

They also education and media. Even in the syllabus, they introduced the history of Rwanda, what they have come across. That has to be learned, taught to the young children of Rwanda. And then of course radio awareness about the pros and cons, about the history; and that is beautiful. We will do that as well. It is in the recommendation in the TRC report as well.

No.6 - law reforms. There are reforms implemented on different laws promoting peace, economic activities etc.

Finally, they even come up with arts and culture locations where people go and visit to remember what had happen in Rwanda as a lesson to bring peace and prosperity way forward.

Why I highlight that, is because I think there is an important lesson and the TRC report has accommodated some of this in its report.

The establishment of TRC was a crucial step in the aftermath of the ethnic tension that grip our beloved nation from 1998 to 2003. It provide a safe space for victims and perpetrators alike to tell their stories, to confront the painful memories and experiences that haunted our nation for far too long. The TRC report holds within

its pages the voices of countless individuals who dare to speak their truth. It embodies resilience and strength of those who admit pain and sorrow, show justice and understanding.

Through this report we have heard deep rooted causes of the conflict, atrocities committed and the impact it had on our ordinary citizens. The report however was not a documentation of the past. It is a road map for our future. The TRC report provides and offer us a clear vision for healing and reconciliation. It points us towards a path of unity, forgiveness and social cohesion. It reminds us that reconciliation is not an usual thing, but is necessary. We cannot move forward without acknowledging our past. It is a reminder that reconciliation is not about forgetting the past or sweeping it under a rag. It is about coming to terms with our collective history, learning from it and ensuring that the dark chapter of our lives does not repeat itself.

The report is a testament to power of dialogue and understanding. It shows that healing begins when we are able to forgive each other, and to find a common ground in the midst of our diversity.

The stories within each pages are reflection of our shared humanity and the capacity for growth. As we move forward, let us not see the TRC report as a mere document but as a call to action. It is a call to build a society that embraces diversity, that fosters inclusivity, and that values the sanctity of human life and dignity. Let us ensure that the lessons learned from the past are etched into our hands and minds, guiding our actions and decisions as a nation.

In conclusion, as I have said, the report is not just an account of the past. It is a symbol of hope for our future. It is a reminder that reconciliation is possible and that healing is within our grasp. Let us embrace the wisdom within its pages and commit ourselves to building a united, peaceful, and prosperous Solomon Islands.

In 2 Chronicles, if my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear their prayers, answer their prayers, and heal their land. This nation calls for people who can forgive each other and turn from our wicked ways; only then will peace and prosperity come upon our land.

I support the motion, and I resume my seat.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr) (*East Are Are*) (04:24): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving the floor to the member for East Are to make some contributions in this important debate. I would just like to recognize that my fellow colleagues, MPs, ministers, and the Prime Minister have already commented on this important topic and motion that has been brought to our attention. I would like to thank the minister

in particular for bringing this motion forward and allowing us to debate and share our thoughts on it. The Motion No. 35 is indeed to consider the paper on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the final report with recommendation, the shorter version of which I just saw a copy here.

I have been looking at the issue through the much broader report in terms of the actual report that came out with the volumes. So it is also interesting to note that there is some sort of summarized version now in the shortened version of this again, but just on the outset, I would like to perhaps mention here that we do not want to run the risk of missing out on some important issues as well that might not be contained in the shortened version.

So I will be speaking perhaps on both reports as well, although I do recognize the debate is to be focused on the short version of our discussion. But I think in terms of the discussions that we have already had and the debate, I think it is very important that I would like to encourage as many as possible to share our views and thoughts on this as well.

I join the Prime Minister in calling for this and the minister himself in providing an opportunity for us to share our thoughts on this. I think this is one of the strengths of our system in democracy that you can share your thoughts and ideas and they can be different from even within our own groups. That is fine, and that is good that we can speak our minds, and that is one of the shining lights of the democracy system that we have adopted.

I would like to also join others and thank the writers and the authors of the TRC Report, some of whom have already passed on. We thank you for their service. You know, when this was written, and just like the Minister for Public Service I was not in country with all of this taking place. So it is always an eye opener for me, in terms of reading what happened. Those five volumes of describing what had happened were quite horrific in terms of what human beings can do to each other. Particularly, what Solomon Islanders are capable of doing to each other. I think that is something all of us here recall when we think back of what had happened and what we went through as a nation and a country. It is truly horrific in terms of some of the episodes and testimonies that came out of the five volumes. We read about Solomon Islanders murdering each other, maiming each other, torturing each other, raping each other. That is a hard read, in terms of getting through that part of our history and I think it is quite correct that many of us here describe as the dark part of our history in terms of our nation. I think people are still working through it as we speak, even now. But the truth needs to come out and I think that framework provides for truth to come out. And if it is anything, it is good to know that those five volumes contain the truth according to the people who spoke their truth during that time.

Indeed, others have commented about the timeframe it has taken for us to discuss this very important issue. I think it is fair to say that we are bit late, now, in terms of the relevance of some of these issues that have gone before. Many of us and others perhaps might feel very strongly that this has already passed, it is water under the bridge and maybe, we should move on. And there is some merit in saying that. There is some justification because it has been quite some time for this to get to parliament to allow us to discuss this issue. So I think those that feel that perhaps it is now so long and it has become irrelevant, perhaps have a point. That we have delayed discussions on this in parliament for sometime now. But as the saying goes, perhaps some others may say, its better late than never. So it is good to have this tabled as it should be, in parliament, to allow us to discuss, debate it, and share our views on it.

This context of what we are doing here now, needs to be considered. We are talking about something that happened more than 20 years ago and at the same time we might be looking at things ahead. So we are in an interesting position whereby we will need to look back. But some of the things that we need to do is for the future generations as well in terms of the nation going forward. And that is something that I want to highlight here. Because if it is true that 70percent of our population is less than 30 years, then many of them will have no idea of what happened already 20 plus years ago. They were probably just babies or toddlers growing up. Probably, many of them were not even born yet. So we have to be careful, in terms of how we are going to address this moving forward, for that generation. perhaps we call them innocent generation that have come now after all these dark period that we have been through.

Proceedings interrupted at 4:30pm

(Leave granted to move suspension of Standing Order 10)

Hon. MANASSEH MAELANGA: I move, that Standing Order 10 be suspended in accordance with Standing Order 81 to permit the continuation of business until adjourned by the Speaker in accordance with Standing Order 10(5).

Question put and agreed to

(Motions is passed)

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): Thank you Mr. Speaker, and Deputy Prime Minister for moving that Motion, allowing us to continue.

Yes, as I was saying, I think it is a reflection that perhaps those of us here in Chamber are aware of in terms of the different audiences that are now listening to us talking about issues that are perhaps two decades plus old now and may of them is the first time for them to hear about these issues as well from us as leaders talking this at the

national level. I think anything we do or say in terms of what moves on from here will need to take into account that context that we are in. I think it is fair to say that with these kinds of reports they are usually considered quite soon after the event in terms of what had happened.

As we just heard from Rwanda, their one was considered quite early in terms of what happened in that particular African nation. But for us, for reasons we have heard already throughout the debates, the delays that have come in from successive governments, the different reasons that were given in terms of the delay that we are now just considering this, is something that we should bear in mind, I think, moving forward so that whatever comes out is something that we will need to look forward in terms of whatever recommendations as well.

It is true that there are recommendations here that were included in the report but I think it is also fair to say that perhaps some of them may need to be updated or have been overtaken by events. That is something that colleagues and ministers on the other side can update us in terms of what they have done as well in their ministries that might touch or impinge on some of the recommendations here already that we had already done some of these things. Perhaps unconsciously even in our policy but it will be good to hear these linkages from the work that has been done over the last 20 years in the normal course of governing that might have connection to some of these recommendations. Of course they are not always linked encroached in that but they are related or connected. I think that is something that we will definitely benefit from hearing on terms of our Ministers and those that are charge with responsibility of particular recommendations that are contain here.

Moving on in terms of what we have been discussing throughout this last few days, the historical context is important in terms of looking at where we have been and where we are going. There has been a lot of discussions already around the colonial period and how we came from that protectorate period through to independence right up to now. But it is also important for us to not forget to ensure that the proper understanding of what happened in the protectorate era is also given some air here.

We give hearing and I hear in school when I was in the primary school that the protectorate was declared upon us so that they could protect us from ourselves. We were depicted as head hunters, moving around islands, destroying and killing each other. Perhaps Cannibalism was rife. Perhaps that is true. That is probably part of it. But we know that the protection in terms of a protectorate comes from the United Kingdom as part of the geopolitics at the time as well, where European powers were going out and annexing different parts of the world. So you would know that the UK wanted to do the protectorate here before somebody else came in. The Germans, as you are aware, were already in the region. We know that the French were also in the region at that time.

So that was the geopolitics at that time. The superpowers then were the ones doing superpower things, like going around and claiming places for themselves. Solomon Islands, at that time, fell under that as well when we became a protectorate.

The black birding issue also played a big part in us becoming a protectorate. The British Naval Army was the biggest navy at that time, and they were the ones going around the world stopping the slave trade. In the early 1800s and 1860s, they spent millions of dollars stopping the West African slave trade with their own boats, the British Navy.

In fact, historians called that the biggest and most expensive moral exercise that a nation has ever carried out in the history of mankind, stopping slave trading. We knew at that time as well history would show us, there are documents for us to read that shows that the early missionaries complained about this, asking for Landon or the British Empire to come and stop the slave trading that was happening between the Solomon Islands, Australia, Fiji, and Samoa. That is why we are called a protectorate.

When we speak here in this House, we have to tell people what happened, if you want to go back into history. Tell the people about the history and why we are who we are. Because if you only want to tell a part of it, then we started going down a path of uninformed citizens that do not fully grasp and understand our history and start making up stories that frankly might not be true, and they keep that as the truth.

We have understood, in terms of the protectorate and what it means to be a protectorate and not a colony. We were never a colonized. We were a protectorate. Perhaps colonization doing it under light, not resource-heavy. There were no people coming here to settle in the Solomon Islands. We were being run by high commissioners from Suva at that time, looking at the Western Pacific. Both New Hebrides, now modern-day Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and the Gilbert Ellis Islands, part of the Western Pacific, run from Suva.

I know you know all of these, but I think it is important because we have hearing some stories here as well that, I think, needs to be put into proper context.

When another race or group of people come to subjugate, there is naturally resentment. We are human beings, and we are born free. We do not want any other group to hold us down. Such resentment has crept into our history, and the whole broad stroke about colonization. Our colonization experience compared to other colonized countries around the world, was very light. We cannot claim to be victims, as the real victims of colonization that happened were resources and labour. Following the black birding and the slave trading that did happen, Solomon Islanders actually decided to go to Australia themselves for various reasons.

Perhaps not too different now with the apple picking or the seasonal workers, wanting to go there themselves. Some actually went back twice.

So this demonization of this period needs to be seen in context as well. This is all pre-independence. You go to the 1950s, when the authority moved down from Suva. And then to the 1960s when High Commissioners were set up, looked after both New Hebrides and then they started to separate those particular regions. That is why by the time independence arrived, we had Ellis Islanders, Phoenix Islanders, our Gilbertese communities here in the Solomon's at that time because we were looked after together as the Western Pacific. And there was a need for them to move out of their islands as well because of resource extraction that was happening there. Phosphate. They ran out of land too.

So the British moved them to the Solomon Islands. That is one of the big issues during the negotiations for independence. What to do with our neighboring islanders who had settled in the Solomon Islands now. What sort of status to give them? Their citizenship. What about the land that they are living on? How are we going to deal with that, knowing our strong connection to customary land. Those were big issues back then. Of course brought to us because of the context that we were in. The idea that a collective Western Pacific was now being divided, for one for better word, into different countries. New Hebrides became Vanuatu. And so the story goes.

That independence was thrust upon us. After the Second World War, the Trust Issue Council in the United Nations led by the Colonial powers and administrators pushed for independence of their territories and Colonies. They set the time table as to which countries will get independence at what time. These were the Super Powers of the world, if you like playing their games, and we are caught up in it with little or no say.

We should have been independent in 1977. A Special request was made to delay it to 1978 because negotiations were not completed. Such was the rush for us to become independent. That is a history particular to Solomon Islands because others had to fight for the Independence, particularly in Africa. But for us, it was given; and yes as we have heard, perhaps given too soon. We were not ready for it, and it was acknowledged at that time that the British Empire had done very little in Solomon Islands in terms of infrastructure and economic development. It is pretty much very thin on the ground by the time independence arrived.

Super powers were in power. They dictate. And so it continues today, in terms of where we are now, and what these Super powers are doing for their own interests, but that is another debate. We know that there were constitutions that were written before independence for the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. starting in the

1960s and then again amended in 1964, and then a new one came in '74 that started to set up a self-governing territory that became a reality in 1975, leading to 1977, just prior to independence in 78, where the constitution that we now have fell into our hands. And I think our constitution is a framework constitution that sets out the main institutions, the obligations, the responsibilities, and the rights that are given, but then much of the work and the heavy lifting would need to be done by our laws, the laws that we need to enact to support those frameworks.

And I agree with the statement and sentiments my colleagues have expressed earlier that we can have as many systems as we want, but these systems are run by human beings, and it is up to us, the human beings, how we operate those systems. I must say here that for me personally, with my experience including in the international area, as soon as somebody mentions that this is our homegrown idea, homegrown law, or homegrown constitution, particularly consultants, my ears will start perking up and I will start to shake my head because we know that all of our frameworks are cut from the same cloth; we might add the print on the t-shirt, but it is still a t-shirt, and our constitution has the same elements as constitutions around the world. The main institution is the t-shirt; whatever we do to it, whatever writing we do to it, it is ours, but the t-shirt is still the t-shirt.

The constitution has certain elements that have to be there in terms of what the government is supposed to do and run. A liberal democracy is very, very similar; there are only three countries in the world that you know of that do not have a written constitution. We are in the majority; we have a written one; it is manmade, it can be changed, it can be amended, and I think we have done that already here in the Solomon Islands fifteen or sixteen times already; maybe it is fifteen in terms of amendments, and that will happen and continue to happen. Some of the recommendations that are coming out of this TRC report are ones that we can easily do, I would like to say, but then there are others that are perhaps a bit harder, but we should not put them in the too hard basket and leave them there.

I think we should come and revisit it and have a look at it again. Because, as rightly pointed out, the issue of decentralization is at the heart of the unity of our nation; decentralization is in our constitution's preamble. Those who negotiated the constitution are forbearers; they knew that this was an issue that needed to be cracked. Place holders were put in terms of allowing laws to be made for the devolution of powers, and attempts have been made, as you know full well, over the years by successive different governments in terms of trying to crack that nut and ensure that decentralization works for us. But I would like to put here that decentralization is not federalism. We should not be labelling what decentralization could mean. Who knows, it could mean different things for different provinces. But the idea of decentralization, of putting government down towards the people, allowing them to have their affairs in government, at that level, is an important one

that has been recognized even in our constitution even up till today. That is something that we will have to address moving forward. I am not supporting any thing in terms of how to label it but I am a staunch supporter of decentralized government. Whether you call it federalism or something else, but I think it is premature to label something and then try to shoot for it. perhaps, let us aim to decentralize, and label whatever comes later, with such an exercise. Rather than caging us in the federal, that already puts in our mind what the federal system is and try to put Solomon islands with whatever fits in there.

We know that the Federal system as the classical sense of it has many different facets, but it is a system that is adopted by only 27 countries out of a 193 UN members. Most of the countries in the UN have a unitary system just like ours. Only 27 have federal systems. Sir, there must be a reason why most of the nations of the world opt for a unitary system like our current system. And just because it is Unitary does not mean that there are devolved functions within those countries. I always like to point to the United Kingdom that have Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England but are represented in the UN as United Kingdom. They are quite devolved, quite advanced in terms of their devolution. They have their own Prime Ministers as you know Mr. speaker. They have very vibrant parliaments. The Scottish are very staunchly Scottish, so are the Wales people. But they are in a Unitary system. So they are not a Federal system. They are Unitary. But over time it has evolved.

If it is autonomy that we want then there are ways that we can do. It does not have to be a label. And I would argue that our provincial government system is already de facto in terms of a system that brings autonomy to the different regions of the nation. it might not be by law, but it is de facto already; devolving, starting the decentralization. I think what is up to us is to encourage it, be very strategic in terms of the powers we devolve. And I think, once our people get the services they need, I think they will be very happy. Whatever system we have! I think the bottom line is, our people are looking for services, delivery of services that touches their lives. If the government is too far and they do not see it too much, then they start complaining, start looking for another system. Yet we know that these are pre-cut, pre-designed. What we have here, in terms of our recommendations, are very noble efforts that are done by the work of the TRC authors and I commend them for what they have done. Looking through the recommendations, it is fair to say that some of them are outdated and might need to be freshened. The process going forward from here, perhaps the Minister has some ideas in terms of what could be the next steps after our discussions here. The current government might have ideas as well in terms of what we can do to take these recommendations forward and make it a reality.

The number one here is talking about reparations. Reparations is a very expensive exercise but often times it is a necessary one that would allow people to move

forward, to feel the sense of justice has been accomplished for them. For me, I see reparations as one looking back. We have to address something in the past to allow us to move forward. But for many of the population that are less than 30 years, 70 percent, much of this reparation, perhaps, does not impact them.

This is an important recommendation that the government of the day will have to deal with. How the government deals with it is up to the policy that the government adopts and the process it adopts in making it a reality.

Indeed I listened to the debates on yesterday or the day before from the Member for East Honiara, who was very passionate about this. In fact, without reparations, he thinks that this is not a proper burial of this issue. He might be right that the idea is that we know there is a young population who are looking to move a head and move forward with confidence as well. They will need to understand that this needs to be done to rectify the past so that we move forward with confidence. So this definitely rests on the government of the day.

The registry of victims in terms of specific recommendation coming out, perhaps the Minister had already touched on this, but I would like to also, if I may, add that it is important to register the reconciliations that have happened, if they have not yet been done or perhaps if they were done haphazardly. It is time for us to take it seriously and start recording the reconciliations that were done over the last 20 years so that we can keep them, pay the respect that they deserved. Reconciliation, as been told by many of the colleagues around here, is a ministry that our Almighty God himself, that is His heart. Reconciliation. reconciled us His own creation to himself through his son, Jesus Christ. The ultimate sacrifice that was paid and then he rose again.

This is an important aspect, I think, of this exercise, a registry of reconciliations, recording of these important events that often times happened between families, individuals, that happened outside of the lime light and not in the media, deep reconciliation that happened. I think if this has not yet been done, we should look into having this their own registry for reconciliation and keep that registry open. This is because reconciliation in an ethnically diverse country like the Solomon Islands will continue. It will not end. We will continue to manage our relations, moving forward. That is the reality of one of the most diverse countries, ethnically speaking on earth, finding mechanisms to manage our relations, acknowledging our different customs, our languages definitely are different. The way we conduct marriage is different. Land tenures are different. So we have to understand that this will continue.

This nation-building is a work that will never end. It will cost a lot of money and resources, and we will continue to do it and pass it on to the next generation. Hopefully, leaving us in a better place and the generation thereafter.

Such a registry would, I think, not only address the wrongs of the past by recognizing those who are willing to go through it, who took part in it, was it a chief, priest or pastor, what was said, what was exchanged. Recorded those. Very important! That is the culture of the Solomon Islands. That is different from the Western System that we have adopted here. That is what colleague Member for West Are'Are was saying. This is our culture. That would be different, and I think it would make a big difference as well.

The recommendations for vulnerable persons are quite clear. One of the ones that we keep talking about and hear in this House that is very relevant to us is the 30 percent of women here in Parliament. We forget that this was a recommendation of the TRC report as well. If we are going to go by Rwanda's example, we know this was a big part of their own truth and reconciliation process. Now, I think they have the highest number of women in any Parliament.

From that ashes of about 800,000 people murdering each other; husbands murdering their wives in Rwanda. You cannot imagine the horrors that people went through there, but now Rwanda is one of the leading countries in Africa. What a turn around. They did something similar as to the recommendations that we see here as well.

Once again, this is up to the government of the day and how you are going to do it. Whether there is political will to do it, whether you think it is important enough to do it. But it is in the recommendations. Maybe it could be part of the temporary measures that we keep talking about here, but that is for another debate.

Rehabilitation for Militants. This one particular one that I think is being overtaken by events, if I am to be honest. It has now been over 20 years that we have former militants still being in the headlines making news as ex-combatants or former militants. Former militants of what? This newer generation will be confused because they were born with no idea of what had happened.

Perhaps, it means that their interests have not yet been looked at seriously. The recommendation is quite clear; education, business, funds and projects, counseling, and reconciliation. These are the specific heads under which rehabilitation of former militants were listed for focus in the report itself. Perhaps some of it has been done. Perhaps some others have not been done. But I think this is one that, as an ordinary Solomon Islander, listening to the radio, reading your news paper, seeing headlines keep popping up; former militants. It will get to a point where population will get tired of hearing the same headlines, when all they want to do is to get the next meal,

when all they want to do is to try and get the money from the markets to get their child to school, educate their children; and then hearing headlines like millions will be given. Is that really the policy of this government?

That is a policy choice that this government will have to make, or it seems to be making, and that is a choice that they will have to live with. Whether it goes well or not, the consequences of this, and I am not speaking just about the former militants, I am speaking about just ordinary Solomon Islanders who have nothing to do. These are the 30 years old. The 70% of the population. It comes back to my point that what we do to address the past, we have to look at how it impacts the future.

I must admit that some of this former militants are my relatives. They have been to see me a couple of times. Sometimes, I think, it is reported in Caucus and Cabinet that I am now the leader of this militants. I have heard that, just because they are my relatives, and wanted to come and see me to discuss their grievances. I have been told by my colleagues that I was the boss of the former militants. I said, no, I am not. I told them straight that there is no money. There is nothing. It is a harsh thing to say and to tell them. It has been a long time coming. They said, "what about UN? Is there money there? You have been at the UN". I said to them, 'there is not even a cent'.

When you said that to them, their mouths dropped. For me, it feels like the first time they are hearing the truth. So much times had been led on. Come back tomorrow, come back next months. No! Just be straight. They appreciate that much more. The hard realities. At the end, they are human beings. They are relatives, they have gone through hard times, they feel that they have made a contribution to this nation. That is what many of them feel. When you read the Truth and Reconciliation Report you will see why. Providing security for Honiara, helped out by business houses. I read it here. They were feeling legitimized.

But I think the truth needs to be said. That, look, it is tough. It is difficult. Sometimes you should respect them enough to tell them the truth that we cannot deliver on whatever we have been promising. It is the rehabilitation of our former militants. There are programs that the UN runs for this, but they are run like two years after the conflicts, not 20 plus years. There are workshops to reintegrate former militants and ex-combatants back into ordinary life by providing counseling, giving them workshop courses on how to run a business, and finding out what sort of skill sets they have: welding or mechanic. They come out with a paper, and they go and find a job and contribute back to society. There are programs, but 20 years is too late. It is too late, and it is only fair on us as leaders to tell them that it is hard. You look at our children and grandchildren. It is tough to swallow, but I think they deserve the respect of being told the truth.

Institutional reforms touch on that already in terms of some of the issues that we are looking at here in terms of our government structures, but I would just like to repeat yet again that whatever system we put in place is run by human beings. It's run by human beings, by us. We cannot blame the system forever; we have to accept it. I really feel strongly about this.

Let us look at our laws. We do not have to look far; Vanuatu next door is perhaps more diverse per capita than the Solomon Islands. I think you would know you were right there. How they kept the peace—it is not easy, I am sure—what mechanisms do they have in place to keep them connected as a nation, knowing that with their small population size, much smaller than Solomon Islands, and even more linguistic differences, they have not fallen into what we have fallen into? Check Papua New Guinea just next door; check our two neighbors. How did they do it? For us, we are still stuck on this philosophical point: we are a country conceived but never born. Vanuatu can say the same thing, and Papua New Guinea can say the same thing.

We are a nation's own nation, really; we are talking about our modern Solomon Islands, and we are talking about how to deal with the cards that we have been dealt. Who the dealer of the card is, we do not know. The superpowers? Masters of the universe? God? We do not know; these cards are being dealt to us, and we deal with them the best way we can. That is our job.

But to keep coming back to this house and hearing about a philosophical point, I see it as philosophical. If we are a country conceived but not yet born, then what are we doing here? What are you doing there? What are you doing there, Mr Speaker? You are the speaker of the Parliament of the Solomon Islands, born in 1978. All the Ministers of the Crown sitting here, if you doubt that we are born, then why did you run for the elections in the first place? We are the national leaders of the sovereign nation of the Solomon Islands.

The more we repeat this philosophical argument; that should be left to academics at SINU to argue over. Put a panel up there. Get our academics there, let them argue this point: "Are we born already?" Let the Facebook people discuss it on Facebook. But as leaders of a nation to start questioning our own country, then what are we doing? What are we doing here, what am I doing here? That cannot be allowed to continue now. It cannot be allowed to continue because for me that is a curse. Every time we mention that, that is a curse, that we are not born yet? What is it? Are we sick? Is our mother sick? Is it a medical condition? No!

It is time we see that quote for what it is. It is a philosophical position. It is not fact. The more we repeat it here, the more our population go around, even the taxi drivers will say, it is true, we are not yet born. No! What sort of flag are you flying

on your taxi? This is Solomon Islands. We have our flaws, we are not perfect, far from it. What is incumbent upon us is that we have to rise, overcome. The saddest comments that I keep hearing from people is:

"It is true, we are not born yet that is why we behave this way"

That is a curse.

I work in the United Nation for 18 years. Everyday I go to work I see the flag fly with 193 other nations. We stand shoulder to shoulder. And I come here, to the most highest house to hear doubts about us not being born. We must sort this out. What are we saying to ourselves?

We have to accept, that we were, as if it were being forced to be born. Induced birth. Colonial administrators washed their hands. They have been here, seen the land resources, "just let them go, no need to hold on".

You know the story about Botswana, another protectorate of the British that actually had their administrative capital inside South Africa? So every time they wanted to meet they have to go to another country to just hold an assembly like this, prior to independence. Similar pathway that we went through. They are a protectorate.

I think now, the British are really kicking themselves because just after independence they found diamond, diamond in Botswana. The rest they say is history. The idea that we still cling on to this philosophical ideas is not helpful for our nation. There are things that we need to do. That is granted. There are laws that we need to enact, that is a given. But please, we are already born, and the least that I expect at least as an MP for East Are'Are in my first term sitting here, is to at least hear that others agree that we are sitting saying, yeah, I am representing a nation. Sure we have problems. We obviously struggle, but we are a nation, a modern Solomon Islands. You break it down like that and this is only on Malaita. Baegu is also there. It also a nation. When you break it down like that, you can realize that what we are doing here since 1978 and before that, is we are struggling to create a modern nation that involves all of us that have found ourselves with lines drawn by the colonizers. Done by who? The masters of the universe, the super powers, the empires. We just have to deal with the cards that we dealt and making sure that the pursuit of happiness of our citizens is our number one priority.

We want to fight the super power, it is very difficult. The Untied Nation Charter is made in a way that any amendment must go through the permanent five. Talking about amending of the security, but we all know that it has to go through the permanent five to amend the charter. Any admission of a new country has to go through the permanent five. The permanent five are the countries of power after world war two. Their power now are starting to wane in terms of economics and

others are emerging. We are going through global changes but our focus must always be on Solomon Islands. Solomon Islands first in whatever we do. That is where we stand. And as leaders, that is the minimum that we must abide and put our trust and faith that we can do all the best we can for Solomon Islanders. Solomon Islands first. What is this for us?

Coming back to our unitary system of government. As I have mentioned, the unitary system of government is the most popular system of government in the world. There are only 27 that have federal systems. In those 27, there are only two islands that have federal system. One is in the Pacific, and you know very well, and the other one is on the coast of Africa. You have Micronesia and Comoros. Those are the only two and I think the lesson for Comoros has something for us in the Solomon's because they are also trying out to figure their regional divisions. They continue to be in a state of insecurity with that system.

Before their independence one wanted to break away. As a compromise, they go for federal and still they are a small country and you do not hear about it, but they have issues, ethnic issues that are aligned more towards religious beliefs in that country. You know, when people arrived and want to convert you, they go to specific tribes. The Christianity goes one way and Islam the other way. They talk with the different tribes before the independence. After the independence, the different ethnic language groups added more on top of it, the religion, and this divides. That is why, I think, for us in the Solomon Islands, we have a fighting chance. We are a Christian country. At least that is what we claim to be. Sometimes I doubt with our actions but we are a Christian nation. We have values that are Judeo Christian in nature. Those are the values that I talk of. I start to hear arguments in this chamber about values. It seems that values are becoming an issue. But for me, it is not an issue. LGBTQ+, those sorts of things are non issues. The values that we are talking about are not those. The values that we talk about are freedom, much higher ideals. The freedom that you are willing to put your life at risk to protect. Transparency and accountability. These are values.

When I speak in this chamber and I mention values, this should be recorded as what I mean when I speak on values. I am not advocating for homosexual marriages, as I have been accused already in this chamber, putting words in my mouth that I did not even say.

These Judeo-Christian values are shared by many of our traditional partners and friends. That is where their nations are also funded. That is why you see Parliaments open with a prayer, as we do here. Those are the values that I am talking about. I go to the US, I meet some leaders, we open with a word of prayer. When you go to other countries, have you opened with a word of prayer? That is the value that I am talking about. It feels comfortable.

I have a feeling that this issue of values will continue to be one that is trying to dominate our discussions, even as we move forward, and that is propaganda. Propaganda being pushed because of the geopolitics that is currently at play. We have to be careful. Take your stand on what you believe in deep down. If you are in doubt, pray about it. It will become clear, but do not drag our nation down the path that we should not be going.

The same goes with whatever we do in terms of institutional reforms, that we have to address everything, as I know all of us here, have the same heart in the interest of Solomon Islands and our people as number one. Whatever we decide to do is in the interest of the nation as a whole. And it is hard sometimes because we are constituency people. So we think about our constituencies. Yes, they are important too, but the national collective is where I think our focus should be.

Democracy is not a perfect system. It has its flaws, and many countries have their own versions of it. But I think the central tenant or themes remains, that they allow people to choose who they want to represent them. Government for the people, of the people, by the people. That is really what our aim is. It cuts across many of our cultural norms because we do not operate like that in our own cultures and language groups. But for a modern Solomon Islands, it is not for me to impose Are'Are on you. Let us get one that is totally foreign, one that has been adopted by hundreds of countries. Let us use those main elements, and if we can, let us put our own spin, our own take on it.

As I mentioned, whatever systems we have, they are just systems and it is up to us those who manned those system to do the best we can for the sake of our nation and our country.

With those few remarks, I thank you once again and I thank the Minister once again for this Motion. I support the Motion and I resume my seat.

(Debate adjourned)

The SPEAKER: According to earlier resolution of the House, parliament is now adjourned.

(Parliament adjourned at 5.37pm)

[Edited]



Eleventh Parliament

Sixth Meeting

**NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF
SOLOMON ISLANDS**

Thursday, 3 August 2023

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

(Subject to Revision)

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NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**Thursday, 3 August 2023**

The Speaker, Mr Patteson John Oti, took the Chair at 09:58.

Prayers.

Business of the House

ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Minister for Forestry and Research, Minister for Health and Medical Services, North West Guadalcanal, Central Honiara, North New Georgia, East Makira, North Guadalcanal, West Makira, Ulawa/Ugi, South New Georgia/Rendova/Tetepare, and West Honiara.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

- National Policy on Conflict Prevention and Victims Rights. (National Parliament Paper No.24 of 2023).
- National Policy on Reintegration of Those Involved in the Conflict. (National Parliament Paper No.25 of 2023).

Motions

MOTION NO.35 - THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION REPORT

(Debate continues)

Hon ANTHONY VEKE (*West Guadalcanal—Minister for Police, National Security and Correctional Services*) (10:00): Thank you Mr Speaker for giving me the chance to contribute to the Motion, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report with Recommendations (Shorter Version) moved by the honorable Minister. The establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission through the enactment of the Truth and Reconciliation Act 2008 is a remarkable initiative. It is a concept that attempts to address the injustices of the past, heal wounds and bridge division in societies deeply scarred by conflict. It is a powerful acknowledgement of the need for truth justice and understanding in the pursuit for lasting peace.

At the core of such initiatives is the belief that in the Truth and Reconciliation Final Report will be able to bring progress by confronting the past and not to bury the findings in silence. It recognizes the fact that truth is essential in fostering healing and restoration of harmony despite how difficult and unconformable it is.

Recognition of victims suffering is an important pillar of the report that is before us. It gives the victims the platform to share their stories and recount their experiences and by doing so, find comfort by knowing that their pain is heard, acknowledged and validated.

The process of listening and acknowledging the victims suffering discourages the repetition of atrocities and help create a sense of empathy and understanding among individuals and communities. The truth and reconciliation commission final report must not end with unearthing of the past dark secret, the truth and reconciliation as documented facilitates the healing processes and encourages the restoration of human dignity through reconciliation between victims and perpetrators after both victims and perpetrators confront their shared history. This calls for remorse, genuineness, accountability, commitment to re-dress the roles.

The process of open confession and repentance undertaken by the Commission, as highlighted by the report, provides an environment for forgiveness and understanding to be realised. It creates an opportunity for dialogue, empathy and solidarity. This allows former adversaries to form relationships based on trust and shared vision for a peaceful future.

The report represents an opportunity for systematic change. And as leaders, we have to recognise this fact. It will be irresponsible of us not to recognise it. By systematically addressing the root causes of the social address, described as the ethnic tension, offers a chance to rectify the historical imbalances and reshape societal norms, values and institutions. This includes reforming the legal systems and ensuring access to justice for all and promoting inclusivity and social cohesion.

It is also a call to us, as national leaders, to use the lessons of the past for the developments of the present and for the future. Thus, the call to relook at our government system has never been wrong.

The Prime Minister during his contribution to this Motion highlighted calls from our people from different parts of the country questioning whether the current system of government is a right form of government to look after the affairs. This must ring louder to us as leaders.

As a Guadalcanal leader, it will be remiss of me if not to join my other colleague MPs from Guadalcanal and the leaders of Guadalcanal to continue our collective call for a government system that is able to deal with what we are facing now. This is the crux of the so-called Guadalcanal Bona Fide Demands. We can list them in numbers but the search for a government system that recognises the sufferings and the challenges of the people of Guadalcanal is at the heart of that so-called Bona Fide Demand. We believe that by having a system that recognises those challenges help us to address issues of pertinent to the people of Guadalcanal.

I do not want to bore us all with what we keep saying over and over but I am sure this honourable House is fully aware of the issues that we always call or raise as Guadalcanal leaders and people.

The system that we want to adopt or the government system that we want to adopt not only addresses those issues that we raise to the government, but also helps us to look after our people of Guadalcanal. The call for change of government system cannot and must not be seen as a call from the Guadalcanal alone. It must be seen as the desire of the people of this country. This country is calling for a government system that recognizes our diversity. Recognizing our diversity will result in respect for each other's differences. When we have respect for our differences we build a more cohesive society. When we have a cohesive society, we achieve unity.

I find it difficult to comprehend the sentiments that seem to say that we cannot find unity because we are so diverse. I do not want to continue to dwell on those matters because I know a lot of us have already spoken on those areas. But allow me to join other colleagues in thanking my colleague Minister for moving this Motion, for bringing this important document before this honorable House. This is a very important document. As a Member of Parliament for West Guadalcanal and as well as the Minister for Police and National Security, I am eager to deliberate on this Motion.

This report is important in many ways as it looks into the core fabric of the cries of our people. It speaks to us about the turmoil and hardships faced by our people both from all sides of the ethnic crisis. More importantly, it speaks to us as leaders on what is expected of us to deliver to them. This document is long time coming and one that the whole country is eager to discuss. I thank the government for seeing it fit to have it before us. As a Minister and representative of the people of West Guadalcanal, this is a document that is very dear to us as it will address many issues that we as leaders of this island aspire to address.

Allow me to express some clarity into some work which my Ministry have undertaken to address a core mandated recommendation under this TRC. I hope that by doing so we can emphasize on the important steps that lie ahead of us for this report in other areas of recommendations that require the whole of government approach in addressing them.

First and foremost, I must highlight here that many recommendations under the report are work in progress or have been delivered. The recommendation 1 under the security reform expresses the need to revitalize community policing and allowing community leaders to police their own communities. With this recommendation, I wish to inform the House that the RSIPF has developed and implemented the Crime Prevention Strategy 2016-2018, and have recently reviewed

and launch the Crime Prevention 2023 to 2027. Under this program, it sets the basis for community policing within both the urban areas and rural areas. I must admit that it is not an easy task as there are many challenges. A lot of learning process is ongoing with this program. So far, there are five hundred crime prevention committees established throughout the countries. There are 10 provincial crime prevention boards and about 30 provincial crime prevention councils. This community policing approach by the RSIPF is only a fraction of what is needed to address this recommendation. There needs to be a whole of government approach to ensure that there is an enabling environment for community policing and community leader participation. For now, the RSIPF is focused on ensuring that these programs are effective and operational, but that is only a part of the issue.

We also need legislative and social sector reforms, inclusive of community empowerment programs to ensure that community partnership is part of this community policing program. By doing this, it will provide an enabling environment for a sustainable and effective community policing program.

Concepts like the retracted Traditional Governance Bill is an example of an important area that we could revisit or review for community partnership. Or we can revisit our Special Constable for community policing support. These are ideas that will require more scrutiny and discussion on their suitability and durability.

Meanwhile, I am happy to note that individual MPs have taken their own initiatives to work with respective communities and RSIPF to deliver on community policing programs. I must encourage all of us to continue to work together to ensure that this is addressed. The RSIPF will continue to ensure that his program is delivered, ensuring that it is effective and sustainable.

Recommendation 2 under the security reform calls for the need to elaborate and the need to adequately resource the RSIPF to investigate cases in Honiara and throughout the Solomon Islands to be brought to the office of the DPP.

In terms of deliberating on the ethnic tension-related cases, I know that the law has dealt with a good majority of those cases. Of the 52 tension related cases, 35 were referred to the office of the DPP for prosecution, and 34 were convicted. The other cases were pending information or recommended for closure due to insufficient evidence.

In terms of the recommendations in its entirety for the country's justice system, I must acknowledge that efforts have been made to address this agenda and ensuring effective delivery. But again, it has yet to meet expectations in terms of case deliberations and effective delivery.

We have created a number of policies and programs to provide access to justice or effective prosecutions, but it is still a hurdle. The number of cases referred to the office of the DPP by RSIPF continues to increase each year, which in turn contributes to an increase in our remand rates.

I must admit that budgetary constraints as well as resource conflicts will continue to haunt responsible Ministries. But we will continue to address these issues. The true cost of policing is in no way near what we are currently operating under, and to deliver an effective policing program throughout the nation will be a challenge.

In fact, the supports that we have received from our partners in the past months are not additional resources but a replacement of what is old and needs changing.

Therefore, a strategic focus on delivery mechanisms will continue to be part of policy operations. Training priorities for effective investigation will continue as the RSIPF focuses on delivering its core mandates for policing.

In fact, the security partnership that we have created has played an important role in improving our investigation capability. Through trainings and development programs provided by all security partners, whether it be RAP, which is the Australian Program, or SIPSP, the New Zealand Policing Program, the CPLT, or the PRC policing program or the Fiji police and PNG constabulary. All our security partners has helped us improve our status. Therefore it is safe to say that though we still have challenges, we have made strives to address the need for improvement in our RSIPF investigation capacity and capability.

Recommendation 3 under the security reform expresses the need to organize evading processes in RSIPF to clean up the police and develop a sense of confidence in the RSIPF as well as build up security monitoring along our PNG-Solomon Islands border to avoid illegal trade of any kind.

I wish to inform the house that the RSIPF early retirement exercise funded by RAMSI for officers involve in the ethnic tension was completed in 2014. Since then the RSIPF has develop a recruitment policy with an aim to involve equal representation of all provinces in the RSIPF recruitment.

A robust governors policy on the RSIPF armory was developed and implemented in the RSIPF National Response Division. This is to safeguard ammunitions and police weapons. Leadership and ethical training continue to be provided to officers to ensure that there are ethical standards embraced in this department.

In fact it is the aim of the Ministry and the RSIPF to bring back confidence in the Police Force. It will not be an easy task, and though we have continued to face criticism, we will continue to ensure that we build the force to be disciplined and

professional. It is prudent that discipline in the force be imparted across it so that normal citizens can have confidence in the force.

As we moved towards elevating the standards of our Police Force, it is equally important that discipline be taught and loyalty of the force must be the safety and well being of the people of our beloved nation.

We have challenges in delivering our duty due to resources, but it is in the interest of this country that the Police Force must once again become independent, self-sustaining and trust-worthy.

As I mentioned earlier on, my Ministry strive to ensure that all investments into the RSIPF must be tailored and driven for a critical capability and capacity needs. We must be in the drivers seat, and my Ministry is progressing towards that. The number of SOPs that the RSIPF has design and in operation including proposal by the RSIPF to amend its legislation next year 2024 is a positive testament to the public of the desire to improve a current standards.

This year alone, the Ministry and the RSIPF have undertaken a comprehensive internal gap analysis consultation among senior executives and mid-level management of both the RSIPF and CSSI. This gap analysis consultation has resulted in an extensive recommendation for both agencies. This report has been shared with Cabinet and the Ministry is now in the process of engaging a dedicated program consultant specifically to target these gaps in a form of project improvement task. This will cover a period of three years and we hope that in doing this program, we will be able to build the RSIPF to a standard worthy of the trust and confidence of our people.

In terms of our border managements, I am pleased to inform the House that under our National Security Strategy, we continue to ensure that our border management approach is strengthened in collaboration with all law enforcement agencies. Therefore, the Western Border Patrol Boat Outpost and Joint Enforcement Office Project in Lofang in the Shortland islands is already underway and construction is likely to happen soon. This operation will help address the movements of illegal activities along our Western borders.

Recommendation 4 under Security Reform emphasizes the need for a memorandum prohibiting the sale and manufacturing of firearms. In addition, the Firearms and Ammunition Act shall continue until the outstanding fire arms from the tensions are recovered and destroyed. The Firearms And Ammunitions (Amendment) Act 2000 is currently in operation. The legislations prohibits the manufacturing and sell of fire arms, including imitation arms.

In 2017, there was a Second Gun Amnesty Program conducted by the government and this was done through an awareness and intelligence program. Since then, until now the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force has continued to rely on intelligence to retrieve surrendered firearms from communities. This program is still ongoing and although it is slow, it is an effective means of retrieving massive number of firearms in the communities. In fact, we have managed to retrieve a good number of lethal fire arms in 2022 and early 2023 through the support of donors and intelligence from communities. Therefore, this program will be ongoing and will continue with an emphasis on more community partnership programs.

Recommendation 5 under the security reform emphasizes on the need to acknowledge RAMSI and providing them with a clear exit strategy as well as the post RAMSI stages. The story of RAMSI is well documented process and does not require repetition. RAMSI departed in 2017 after an effective mission on our shores. Since then, the Solomon Islands Police develop program funded by Australia and implemented by the Australia Federal Police have supported the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force in developing the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force capability plan 2017 to 2022. Plus, the production of the course of policing report which focused on providing resources to enhance police capability development and capacity.

Despite the completion of the True Cost of Policing Report reviewed and updated in 2020, there is still a need to review this program again, essentially, to capture the challenges of policing, especially after increased or recurring of social disorders. In fact the recent gap analysis program done this year has already set a baseline for program costing for the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force.

Therefore, I wish to redirect that the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force has done a lot in terms of internal gaps review. However, in light of upcoming events, we may not expect many changes as operation focus for PG 2023 will require all operators and officers to be on deck. However, by 2024 we should be expecting some measures to eventuate in addressing the gaps for sustainable development and effective policing.

Whilst I am happy that a lot of recommendations for my Ministry have been addressed or in the implementation phase, it is my hope that we will continue to build on those challenges and improve on them.

Finally, after a long time, we can talk about the report. While I see and acknowledge the contents of the TRC reports and the truths in what it tries to report on, it is equally important that we must not lose focus on those whose stories make up the TRC report. It is those victims and individuals affected by the ethnic tensions that need to have their voices heard through this report, so as the expectations of the

people in communities shared through this report, one becomes clear on the sustainable development for an onward progress of our beloved country. As a leader, it will be unfair to me to say that we have achieved a lot of what this report highlights. Yes, we may have achieved a number of institutional reform programs as highlighted in my statement, but true essence of the report will still need our united visionary approach to it.

As leaders, it is our solemn responsibility that we take this report and try to unpack it, whilst simultaneously addressing what is highlighted within it. We cannot simply use this report as a fuel to attack the government. We must remind ourselves that this report will remain, while this 11th Parliament will eventually dissolve. Hence, it is the interest of this honourable House to ensure that we support each other in the implementation of ongoing activities to address the recommendations and also finding ways to continue addressing recommendations that are still outstanding. We need to have a strategic vision for the development of our beloved nation.

In fact, the recommendations set our very foundation for development. It sets the vision for us to be self-reliant, building into our still of being an independent nation capable of addressing our internal needs and responding effectively to external pressures. Future Parliaments must continue to build on from where we left for onward and forward developments.

As I draw towards the end of my contribution, I wish to applaud the Minister responsible for bringing this report before this honourable House. I understand the difficulties it has taken for this report to be presented. However, let us be reminded that this report solely calls for us to find peace and unity amongst a multicultural Solomon Islands. Social cohesion is what we aspire to reach and we can do so. Yes, we can for peace and security.

I join my other colleagues who have spoken earlier yesterday and the past days to thank the Commissioners, the victims, the perpetrators and those that I might not be able to mention here. You all deserve our acknowledgement and appreciation for what you did through this report that is before this honourable House.

With these few remarks, I support the Motion and resume my seat.

Hon ISHMAEL AVUI (*East Central Guadalcanal—Minister for Lands, Housing and Survey*) (10:31): Thank you Mr Speaker for recognising me to also contribute to this very, very important Motion moved by the Minister for Traditional Governance and Ecclesiastical Affairs and MP for Gao Bugotu.

The Motion reads that Parliament resolves itself into the Committee of the Whole House to consider National Parliament Paper No.5 of 2023 - Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report with Recommendations (Shorter version).

At the outset, I would like to join others to also pay tribute to the members of TRC for their dedication and commitment to the work in compiling the TRC Report and to have it presented to the then Prime Minister, who at time presented to Parliament. The TRC Report was made and table in Parliament in the 9th Parliament. It went into hibernation for good reasons in the 10th Parliament and now find its way back to Parliament in the 6th meeting of the 11th Parliament.

I want to also pay special tribute and salute to those who have in one way or another contributed to the restoration of peace and consolidating peace in the country. All of you from the former Prime Ministers to our current Prime Minister, church leaders and groups, business houses, women groups, youths, officers of governments in both Honiara and overseas including bilateral and multilateral bodies and RAMSI. Indeed, blessed are the peace makers for they will be called the children of God.

The TRC Report recorded the following human right violence and abuses, totaling to 5,721 human right violence. Of the total number of victims 2,501 are from Guadalcanal. 1,545 are from Malaita; 296, which is 5 percent are from Temotu; 155 from Choiseul, 45, which is 1 percent, are from Central Islands Province; 29 are from Isabel, 4 are expatriates, 3 are from Rennell and Bellona. The 964 is not accounted for. It may be comprised of all the provinces.

With killing and disappearance there are 200 of them out of which, 71 percent of them are from Guadalcanal, 24 percent are from Malaita and 4 percent from other provinces, mostly are civilians and followed by IMF and GLF. Indeed, this dark event of our history covers the length and breath of this country.

On behalf my people of East Central Guadalcanal, I would like to say sorry to the families and relatives of those 200 who have lost their lives and 5,721 who have experienced human rights violence during the ethnic tension.

I am saying this to those who are deeply affected in Malaita and Guadalcanal, Western, Temotu, Isabel, Rennell and Bellona, Makira, Central Islands and Choiseul Provinces. I am truly sorry.

We are all affected and let us not allow another ethnic tension to happen again. The challenge is how do we prevent another ethnic tension from happening again. That is the question. That question is the core business of the TRC Act and the Report.

The TRC was created by the 2008 Act of Parliament and was mandated, created and devised recommendations for the government to consider in an effort to prevent another ethnic uprising, violence, tension to happen again in this beautiful country.

These recommendations are now be before us; 18 of them in total. Section 71 of the TRC Act specifies the release of the TRC Report. That has already been done. The release of the report has made it tangible, and we now have it in front of us.

Section 17(2) states "that the government shall, as far as practicable, implement the recommendations of the report". In Section 17(3), the Act went on to specify the how-to. It already stated the how-to in Section 17(3), and that is for the Prime Minister to appoint a person or body to monitor the implementation of the recommendation of the Commission. That is the next step.

In the Same Act too, in Section 17(4) mentions "that the person or body shall submit quarterly reports to the Cabinet summarizing the steps that had been taken in the implementation of the recommendation".

The sticking point is, when is the practical time to act? Section 17(1) stated "that the government shall, as far as practicable, implement the recommendations of the report". Some of us here will be pointing fingers at the government for not doing its role as per the Act. But let me inform this House as to why it is not practicable to implement it in the 9th, 10th and 11th Parliaments.

As you know, this report was submitted to the Prime Minister then at the 11th hour of the 9th Parliament. So it is impracticable to implement it in the 9th Parliament. The 10th Parliament was an eventful Parliament. The Mbike island shooting was a sad experience. There was also the flash flood. So it was hard for us to implement these recommendations at that time. During the flash flood, about 10,000 people were affected.

In the 10th Parliament, there was political instability. So it was impracticable. In the 11th Parliament, there were two riots and there was also the COVID. So the practicality of having it prioritize by the government is hard. There is never a chance for the government to implement the recommendations of the TRC report. As I said, there has never been a practical time for the government to implement the recommendations of the report.

Having said that, allow me now to turn to those recommendations. The TRC report come up with 18 recommendations. It says "These recommendations shall avoid a repeat of the afore statements of the human right violations". Those are violations in the report. It says that if we implement those recommendations, it will not repeat those human right violations, and we will not repeat those abuses.

To avoid repeating those issues, what are the triggers of the ethnic tensions? We have mentioned some of those triggers, like internal migration for the economic reasons, uneven development in the country, government miss-management of affairs and resources of the country, weakening of traditional governance structures, and the very important one that everyone is interested in is the land issues and disrespect of cultures and lack of unity.

As you can see, land issue is identified as one of the triggers of the tension, and everyone have already elaborated on that. I shall now join on this aspect and how it became a trigger, and also try to inform this Parliament on what the government, through my Ministry, did to address this issue.

Before I proceed any further, let me see if land issue is qualified to be considered under the TRC Act and report. The TRC Act is clear and it says that it will only deal with human rights abuses of the report. So the question is; is land a human right subject matter? Obviously, the answer to that question is yes. I read a case in 2001 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the case of Avas Tigni community against Nicaraguan government. The court quote it like this, so that you know if it is human right abuse or not? The court of Nicaragua says

"Indigenous groups by the fact of their existence have the right to live freely in their own territory. The close ties of indigenous people with land must be recognized and understood as the fundamental basis of their cultures. Their spiritual life, their integrity and their economic survival. For the indigenous communities relations to land are not merely a matter of possession and production, but the material and spiritual element which they must fully enjoy, even to preserve their culture and legacy and transmit it to the future generation".

End of quote.

So if you remove land from a certain group of people or tribe, you are placing them into a disadvantage situation. In other words, once you alienate land from people you are abusing their human rights for the rest of their lives. So yes, land issues are a human rights matter.

Solomon Islands: unlike other countries, like Fiji and Papua New Guinea, our colonial history is a sad story. In fact, no imperial power was interested in colonizing and developing the Solomon Islands because of its smallness and remoteness, so you see in our history that only traders and whalers landed on our shores and removed resources to feed factories in Asia and Europe. They came and harpooned whales, cut down sandalwood, and dived for beche-de-mer and trochees shells.

This scramble for resources ends up with the stealing of human resources to work on plantations in Australia and Samoa. Some were kidnapped and forced, and others went willingly. Just like now, a lot of people are going to Australia willingly.

Indeed, we are fortunate, as mentioned by East Are'Are in his contribution yesterday, that the British, because of her changing policy to fight slavery, decided then to step in and declare these islands a British protectorate. It was administered from Fiji until the appointment of Charles Morris Woodford by the Foreign Office in 1897 as a residence commissioner and based in [inaudible].

Faced with the challenge of administering the protectorate, Charles Woodford resorted to the easiest option to generate revenue, which was grabbing land and leasing it to traders like Leavers Brothers, etcetera. That was his only option because he was challenged with controlling the headhunting and paying of his Fijian officers and soldiers. So the only option was to take the land and sell it to the traders to make use of it.

In the Solomon Islands, human rights violations in terms of land started during the days of Charles Woodford and not just during the tensions. Human rights violations started in Woodford's time. The declaration of the Solomon Islands, as I have mentioned, as a British Protectorate marked the beginning of large-scale land alienation for commercial plantations through the king's regulation and the waste land regulations of 1900, 1901, and 1904. Waste Land Regulation: A land that has no one on it and no hunting on it is what the king took. The abuse started during that time, so by 1913, the indigenous people of the Solomon Islands had lost 163,000 hectares of land to foreigners.

When the big land and fertile land were gone, our people complained. So the colonial administration set up the Philip's Commission to look at the complaints, and so in 1924, some planted and all unplanted lands were returned to the indigenous land owners. Some were planted, and all the unplanted land was given back to Solomon Islanders. And so, during the 1930s and 1940s, littoral land was alienated and new plantings were kept to a minimum. They controlled it. The story of land alienation was supposed to be kept under control for the years that follow since 1940 through to the 1960s. We should have controlled it because the British Commission knew about it, and so they controlled it. You know what, the passage of the Lands and Titles Act of 1963 allowed the Commissioner of Lands to acquire customary lands from indigenous Solomon Islanders with a meagre amount of compensation. The abuse started and the abuse intensified when the colonial government controlled it. Our government with the Lands Entitles Act increased that and that is the effect.

So the term used by the government then was for public purpose, thus acquired it, took it, alienated it, registered it for public purpose, remove them from the Solomon Islanders for the sake of the state for public purpose. It is for education, infrastructure, mining and so forth. Acquire it for aviation so we bought the airports. By the time of Charles Morris Woodford through to this day, about 20 percent of the land in Solomon Islands were alienated and 80 percent remained as customary land. That is the current situation and status. The whole 20 percent of land in Solomon Islands is alienated and 80 percent remained customary.

The call by Solomon Islanders to return their land commenced, as I have said, in 1919 at the village commission. The call started that time, give us our land back, give us back our land, they have been saying in 1919 to the Village Commission. Later on, on the date of Independence on 7th July 1978, all alienated land shall be returned and the people also expected it because we are now independent and our lands will come back to the original land owners. But for some reason, this accession has been willfully conceive by conservative Solomon Island Governments since 1978.

Also, for us, we the government know about concerns and the calls for the return . Also, we do note the bona fide demands of the Guadalcanal people in 1988, which was re-emphasized in the Townsville Peace Agreement for the return of their land. We the government know those sentiments.

So, that constant message since 1919 to 2003 to return alienated lands and stop issuing of temporary occupants licenses highlighted in the TRC Reports, we take note of it. And the TRC highlighted that that the land is a core ingredient of peace and unity in Solomon Islands. You deal with land, you settle peace and unity in our country. That is one trigger. So TRC Report stated that we deal with land, we should at least a step closer for not to repeat the tension.

Based on this report and submissions, this government through my Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey on two mammoth reforms. That is the alienated land reform and customary land recording program.

I am really thankful to the DCGA Government because it is the only government that has the policy on alienated land. Policy 5217(b), says "develop a restitution policy and establish a commission to deal and address alienated land issues. The other policy of the government is to encourage land owners and land resource owners to participate in economic development activities and become partners in development opportunities. Under the alienated land reform, we are working on two programs. The first is the return of alienated lands and second is the land restitution program. My officials are now doing consultations to have these two policies into a bill. Currently they are visiting provinces to do consultations and

hopefully there should be a bill that will come to parliament for us to debate. I call on you all to look at it and pass it.

In the case of return of alienated land that it is important to cautiously note that there were two categories of statuses of land leases that existed at a time or the country became independent. These two categories of land leases are as follows;

1. Land leases that had expired before independence in 1978. These leases had not been renewed and in fact this continues. In some cases some of these lands have been returned to land owners and there was some that had been returned and administered by provincial governments like in Isabel, Western and more recently Makira Province.

2. The second is a category of land leases are those that have not expired at the time of our country becoming independent.

According to some experts and recent high court rulings, these leases had been extended for 75 years at independence day. This will be expired in 2053. A good example are the Levers Solomons Limited Land in Lungga and Tenaru. Nevertheless, there are still shimmering intentions by land owners that those land must be returned quickly, but land owners listen properly on how you will do it. It is worth noting that all alienated land are administered and regulated by the land board as per the powers vested in it by the Land Entitle Act, and therefore, can only be transacted by the provisions of that Act.

We must follow the law and Act. As I said, the Act is 1963, Lands and Entitle Act. That is the law at the moment and we must follow it when we want to take the land or give out the land. Therefore, the land board had decided and now is implementing the policy that those undeveloped alienated land which government does not have interest in be considered and return to the original land owners. The unused land will be given back to land owners. Such land can be return by compliance to the approved policy on granting on FTEs over unused lands. The tribal land holding group must provide detail during plans to push such land into productivity and development and be included as participants in the economic development activities.

As I have mentioned, the Phillip Commission is very nice. The unused land must be given back but the land board said that, no, do not give it back. It is abuse. However, I am really thankful to the land board that we can review it. This is a form of abuse. But the land board simply says no, and allows the FTE back to the people.

Now, I want to go to the restitution policy on the alienated land. As I said, we will bring a Bill that covers this as well. It is worth mentioning here that land, whether alienated or customary, is a commodity that cannot be bought or sold like any other

commodity. To the contrary, it is the value of the land and its potential use that can be transacted or paid for in an incursive manner. This is the dynamics of land, and it is the intention of this restitution policy reform that we are currently engaging in a legislative consultation on this category of land reform based on the three principles:

1. Recognition. Recognition comes with all alienated land in the Solomon Islands, were once owned by tribes but have been transacted or alienated in unscrupulous ways by the then colonial government.
2. Acknowledgement. Acknowledging that in recognition of such unfairness done in the past, legally unrepresented tribes, that land had been taken away from them, and they (that is, the tribes) should be re-compensated in real economic terms or have some of their lands return to them.
3. Inclusiveness. When previous injustices have been addressed and dealt with, land occupation and the use will become more inclusive. Acknowledgement and recognition are the basis for inclusivity, on which this reform is based.

The word restitution simply means to restore, put something back, or return what has been wrongfully taken away. It is the opposite of alienation, which means to remove from the original landowners.

This policy intent is to make Solomon Islanders show up at the moment of truth. This is the moment of truth, and we must be completely honest with ourselves. Whether we think and believe that there was indeed an injustice done to our people in the way they had been treated by planters and beachcombers in transacting the native land away.

As a government, we are being challenged to put things right again with our own people, not with the British colonial government of 1856. This question is now directed to the government of the Solomon Islands. This is 45 years after independence, and we still do not realize that our biggest enemy today is not other countries or the United Nations but ourselves. This is the right time to make restitution to our very own people and restore justice to them, as requested in TRC recommendation No. 4.

It is now time for us to exercise a stronger and political will to recognize and acknowledge the ownership of our land and resources and truly appreciate the meaning of our independence, and, in so doing, to take 100 percent ownership of our country once more.

This is where we must start the governance of our country, exercising a political will and supported by some sense of nationalism.

What really are the objectives of the land Restitution policy? A number of positive outcomes will be attained as a result of implementing this policy. There are a lot of them, and I must list them. 1. Land Owners will feel that they are no longer excluded from their land that has been unjustly alienated from them for many decades.

2. Land Owners will now have for the first time being treated with fairness on the principles of being recognized and acknowledged.

3. Alienated land has become more inclusive for development, as land owners have been recompense and rewarded, and therefore will lessen their demand to settle and occupy alienated lands.

4. Land Owners will hold savings accounts at the Central Bank; and such funds shall continuously gain interests as their money has been re-invested in various public port folios and public burins. We will amend some in our legislation to include that. Maybe we will amend the constitution as well.

5. The country will have as a result of the policy a huge cash liquidity and reserved in a form of hedge funds and savings standing in the names of Solomon Islanders.

6. Tribal land trusts will for the first time have investment funds increasing annually into millions to sustain and guarantee thee their livelihood into the future.

7 Solomon Islanders will begin to appreciate the important of savings and investments. Those tribes will become rich.

8. Solomon Islanders will for the first time have the feeling that they have now truly own their country in real terms rather than in nominal terms.

9. A foremost stigmas related to illegal occupation of land in all Provinces will slowly but surely desperate; because there is now in existence a beneficial relationship between land owners, land users, and most importantly the State as facilitator of developments.

10. Solomon Islanders will become the first country in Melanesia to harness acute facts of diversity, land and culture into a national peace, unity and harmony.

Those are the visions of the restitution policy. How do we implement national land restitution program? This policy suggestion is not about returning all alienated land to original land owners, and claimers. It is different to the other one. This is restitution, not to be return, just to pay rent.

So Auki, Buala, Lata and Honiara will rent. Rather it is about reward identified land owners and claimants of alienated lands in real terms with long term and sustainable financial benefits. The identify of land holding tribes will be a challenge, but can be done to the customary land recording program of my Ministry.

Otherwise tribes may submit application to the land board who will establish a Commission or a Panel to identify the real tribal land owners, for those lands. Either you apply now than the board of the Ministry will make inquiry to identify who is the real land owner. Process is there.

If you are interested, you come to the land board, they will give you the process to go about it. You fill up application, and the requirements are there as well. You must also have evidences that you have owned the land, some of your stories to submit; so process is there.

For alienated land or registered land owned by government with FTE, a public enquiry to determine genuine and descendants of original landowners. If during the inquiry there is no dispute, then restitution in the form of payment of a percentage of land rental in turn to a trust board and representing the tribe, so the trust board, you must establish those tribes and part of the rent will go to you. So when land owners decide to allow their addition of customary lands or native lands for development for lease payments, such can be enabled through another land policy called the Solomon Islands Customary Land Institutionalization Provision. Land rentals on institutionalized lands will be paid 100 percent to the trust; they will be identified as taxable income to the trust.

I wish to encourage landholding groups to organize themselves into legally registered trusts. For example, we from Guadalcanal have the Ghaobata Tribe Land Trust, the Kedipale Land Trust, and the Dimbo Tribe Land Trust, and so forth. Tribes and not the bodies or houses of chiefs, no! The House of Chiefs does not own lands; tribes own the land, so tribes must organize themselves into trust boards.

For the lands that are owned by the Solomon Islands' Government with no FTE-claiming tribes, tribes can submit their applications to the land board. If Solomon Islands' Government has no intention for the land, a public inquiry will be held to determine the descendants of the original land owners. If during the inquiry there is no dispute, then the land board can either grant an FTE to the trust board set up for the land owners or seek tenders from investors to partner with the land owners on a trust board to develop the land. So either you come, we discuss, and you show proof that you own it, and we give you the FTE and you develop it, or you allow the government to tender it, and the investors who are interested can partner with you, the tribes. So come and discuss with my officers, and they will tell you the process.

The land restitution program will become the single most unpopular public policy made possible by the exercise of strong political determination in taking full ownership of the country by invoking the exercise of the people's collective victory. This will put us right; we put our trust in our people, and they must own their lands.

I deal with alienated land and the two programs: return of alienated land and restitution policy. Now we are on customary land. The second land reform is a customary land recording program. Sir, you know well that about 80 percent of the land in the Solomon Islands is customary. Under my ministry's work plan, we will continue to record customary land where there is no land dispute following a public hearing. We will continue with our program. We are implementing the recommendation for you to stop squatting all over the place so that wherever you go, landowners are there. You see them, and you deal with them.

My ministry wants to move forward further. My ministry is planning not only recording but also amending the constitution to establish additional control over how recorded customary land can be registered. We want to go that way so that we can record customary land and also register it. At this time, we are only recording, but we would like to amend the constitution so that we can also register. So while customary land is registered, its intention is to protect it as a special type of perpetual estate to be called customary perpetual estate (CPE). The other one was PE. CPE which is Customary Perpetual Estate in the Land and Titles Act. 80 percent of the land in Solomon Islands will be CPE and only 20 percent PE. How big would be a Ministry for the 80 percent CPE? It will be much bigger than the Ministry of Lands and Finance be ready as I will call for money to take to the Ministry.

The idea is that the tribal owners of CPEs will be permitted to subdivide their land, lease out parts of their land, obtain bank charges, register transfer profits, create easement and right a way but will not be permitted to sell the CPE. You can do all those things but the law says you are not to sell a CPE. You are not permitted to sell a CPE. It will remain with the tribal trust board forever and ever, amen. It will remain with the tribe for ever. It is not for sell. It is the right of the Solomon Islanders. You do not play around with rights or human rights. This is how Solomon Islanders will own Solomon Islands.

It will be very soon and I have already talked with the Commissioner and had advised the PS and Commissioner that we will prioritize recording and protecting land in the periphery of Honiara, Auki, Gizo, Buala, Lata, Kirakira and Choiseul Bay. The tribes that own the land around there, we will prioritize them. That is the program so that we will not expect squatters and illegal land sales around our urban centers. No one from Auki can sell land there and as well as Afio. It is not for sell there, it is for Solomon Islanders. You can lease, sub lease or so forth or do loan at the bank but it is not for sell.

I will end here and I must have bored everyone. I see that you want to sleep but those are the programs of my ministry that I am doing to prevent land to be another trigger for another ethnic tension. That is our effort and what we are doing so that we do not repeat what had happened that you come back in another tension and

say that it is land. Maybe, it can be a third reason but not number one. Now, it is the number one reason and how you have presented, it is number one. But that is the program of my ministry.

I am not waiting, it is the resource that you have allocated for me every year, that is what I am doing for my programs. But my call as I have said, any minister who would come next time, you have to give again resources. The move to this new 80 percent is not an easy work. The \$13million allocated to the Ministry of Lands it is only for 20 percent of the lands in the Solomon Islands. This is the registered land and the 80 percent would be five times more of the Ministry of Lands that you will give us so that we cover the 80 percent of the Customary Land here in Solomon Islands. That is my way forward. I do not have another way forward. You just help me resources to cover 80 percent of the customary land so that I register them.

I am almost done but I would like to touch on some more broader issues. I want to go some boring issues that I heard here.

Another trigger which I think the Member for Small Malaita has mentioned where leadership is the problem. I think it is very true and I am not surprised because when you look back to our history, as I have stated at the beginning of my speech, there is no imperial power interested in Solomon Islands. So in our history, there has never been a program to train people to get this country into independence. They just came here to protect us. Not like Fiji, Papua New Guinea and South Africa. We were never prepared.

I thank the missionaries because their training schools are for the mission work. The SSEC, Catholic, SDA and Anglican. Their schools are for missionary work and to preach and interpret the bible. They are the ones that started our schools. It was in 1970 that the administrators at the time have knew that independence is coming and they start sending people to Australia and England to prepare us. But there is no strategic human resource during that time for our country.

In later 1970s, we all went to USP. The Speaker also went there, one of the first. Some went to UPNG. We just started but independence was in 1978. It was just eight years before independence. For the leadership training to strengthen us, there was none. Then there was the localization program. My goodness! We did not even have the capacity. So their sustainability is not there. We have not been trained and prepared enough for independence.

Independence was in fact given to us on a golden plate but a hot one and not cold. Therefore, my suggestion as way forward in terms of leadership is what my good friend the Minister of Education said. You establish a school of governance at SINU as one of the programs so that we groom Solomon Islanders, a new generation of Solomon Islanders, so that they can think about the governance of our country.

I also heard the leadership of state government. I am convinced that state government is the solution for our country. The architect of this archipelago. Who is the architect? Who is the architect of this archipelago, creating this archipelago with these beautiful islands, beautiful cultures, very colorful cultures and beautiful resources?

Let us try and unite. Although we are struggling, the architecture of this archipelago has already done it, by dividing our islands, surrounded by the seas. The British try to unite us, but it is hard. Every 10 years there is a problem.

Some will argue for Christianity and Christian principles, like love, peace, and joy, while others may say let us resort to culture. The trends are not going that way. No one is standing on Christian principles now, and no one has respect for our cultures.

So we are trying to unite this country with words, but in practice, it will never happen. We can do a lot of things, but nothing will happen. What we may need is a revolution before we can unite the Solomon Islands. But with democratic and cultural principles and values, you will never unite the Solomon Islands.

Does the state government intend to tear this country apart or not? That is the question. No! Do not interpret it as independent. We are still united. Only the volume of power that each state has will be different. So fear not. We are not going to fall apart, but we will be recognizing the trends and practices in government and our offices as well as outside. Let us recognize this trend and not dream about our culture and Christian principles. Nowadays, attitudes and trends are different.

So for the people of Guadalcanal, the only answer is state government. You can see it yourself. 45 years after independence, she still does not have a headquarters or hospital. And PS, I think there is only one that still remains. There might be none next year.

The trend in the Ministry is that any allocation for Guadalcanal will be diverted by the officers there. Is that unity? The Aola-Marau Road is also in the TPA, but there is no seriousness to it. Then you ask us to be united. How are we going to be united? Will respect for cultural and Christian values happened?

It is hard. But let us do it. Those who are not ready, we can deal with them later, but let us not fall apart. Our country will not fall apart, but let us do it. We felt it. That is for the State government. I express it like that. That is how we, Guadalcanal people, feel and especially my peace loving people of East Central Guadalcanal. What I presented is how we feel. We really felt it. When the doctors did ward tours in the hospital and saw someone from Guadalcanal, they will just go from him or her. He or she is sick and just being overlooked. Are you telling me that it will be like this all the time? That is about State Government.

I want to talk on another issue, and I think this will be the final one. If we want to avoid another tension, we must be the ones sitting at the dinner table and eat our meal there. You hear that? We are the ones to sit at the dinner table to eat our meal there. Professor Lumumba of Kenya always used that analogy. I really like it. Let us sit at the dinner table. Do not let others to sit at that dinner table and eat their meal, and we are underneath the table. Solomon Islanders must sit at the dinner table and share the meal, and not others. That is the way forward. It means that Solomon Islanders must harvest their resources that they have on their land. Resources like forest and minerals. We cannot watch while others enjoy the benefit of our birth rights and us fighting over the royalties.

During the tension, we fight because of money. They are getting out money while we are fighting. The ability to share wealth. Who is at the dinner table? Were you there? Nobody is there. Somebody is at the dinner table and share it. And for us, because of our situation, we fight. So let us move from under the table to on the table. Let us move up there.

Late former Prime Minister Solomon Sunaone Mamaloni has a sense there. Apology Member for East Are`Are , I may not go with your views on how you see this philosophical statement of the late former Prime Minister Solomon Sunaone Mamaloni; but he has a sense of that. That is why he said Solomon Island is a nation conceived but never born. He already saw it. He was in the Opposition at that time, in 1988. That was one year after Solomon Islands gained its independence. That was when the Late Solomon Sunaone Mamaloni said that statement in 1988. That is one year after independence. He saw it and sensed it, and that is why he stated that philosophical statement, that the Solomon Islands is a nation conceived but never born. I think about what he meant by it, and I may be wrong; I stand corrected, but he means that unless we have full control of our country, we will never come out of our walls. That is what he meant; if we have full control of our country, then we will be okay. So this one is not a curse.

To me, that statement is not a curse; it is a reminder. So every time I hear this statement, it is not a curse; it is to me a reminder, reminding me and us Solomon Islanders that we must do something to be fully independent. That is what Solomon Mamaloni meant—true independence and not political independence, no! The political independence that we gained in 1978 is only the beginning, but true independence is where we Solomon Islanders control the economic base of this country, and that is what he meant. So in 1978, we were just conceived, but we cannot come out unless we control the economic base of this country.

We must be at the dinner table on top, not at the bottom. That is what Solomon meant, so political independence is just an independence for celebration; police officers parade, we wave the flag, and we finish; that is political independence.

What Solomon saw was our economic independence. so that we must control our economic base so that we are on top, we are all right, and we come out. That is when we will be born, but now we are not yet; we are not yet born; we are still inside the womb. So we must, if there is anything that we can do, have our parliament pass it and change our laws—forestry law, mining law—so that we are the ones with the licenses to those things and we get the full revenue and not other countries. We must have control over our country's economy.

I hope that one of my recommendations is that the forestry and mining bill be passed. We must make sure that the Solomon Islands benefit.

Finally, the recommendations of the TRC report must now be implemented. Section 17 of the TRC report must now be invoked so that a personal body is set up to monitor the implementation of the recommendations by ministries and agencies.

Mr. Prime Minister, you are known for leading and making hard decisions, and I trust you that you will set up this body, maybe at the Prime Minister's Office or any new ministry, and make sure they do their job. We just put their resources there, right, Finance? Resource them so that we work on it, and monitor us in the ministries; some of us are ongoing, so we only need that body for monitoring us: the police, land, education, and others in the recommendation. You monitor us, and we report to the Cabinet; that is all. That is my last comment. We follow the Act, for the Prime Minister to set up the board or an organization, and we work on it. That is all.

Thank you on behalf of my good people of East Central Guadalcanal, I do support the Motion and resume my seat.

Hon CLEZY RORE (*North Vella Lavella—Minister for Justice and Legal Affairs*) (11:43): Thank you Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity to contribute Motion moved by the Minister for Traditional Governance and Ecclesiastical Affairs.

Much has been said by previous speakers, so I will not dwell on the report itself but will touch on the recommendations made in this report where my Ministry, the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, is mandated to take on the challenges in addressing in specific recommendations highlighted in this report.

Recommendation 1.3 on vulnerability of our population on issues of violence against women is addressed by legal framework and law enforcement through the justice system to proceed and support women against violence.

It is common knowledge that violence against women is on the rise, where women are abused and harassed during the period where law and order is not prevailing. This brings about the Family Protection Act headed by the Ministry of Women, Youth and Family Affairs and its review in 2019. After three years of its

implementation, my ministry was tasked to head the joint review taskforce to conduct its review and make recommendation for improvement. Cabinet has endorsed this review in 2022 and the bill is now with AG Chambers and we hope to table this in the current Parliament in 2023.

Recommendation 1.4 on former combatants tension related trials to be disposed expediently. The Judiciary has completed all tension related cases and no more tension related cases are pending.

The issue on the retention of the lawyers was also highlighted in the report due to high turnover of qualified lawyers in the system. High turnover of lawyers is due to limited prospect, career path in the system as well as better prospect in the market.

The Ministry of Justice has taken seriously the retention of our lawyers and have already signed an MOU with the Government Lawyers Association on June 7 2022. The MOU allows SIG lawyers to be paid certain allowance in accordance to the system. This MOU will lapse in 2025 after three years of implementation whilst consultation on the lawyers scheme of service proper is underway.

Recommendation part 2 on 1.1 on institutional reform on judiciary system on new laws and procedures is ongoing. The National Judiciary Administrative Autonomy is a major reform currently in progress with the assistance of a consultant engaged under the Australia Solomon Island Justice Program. The report will form the basis for drafting instruction for the AG Chambers. If it finds it ways into the Chamber, it will provide the judiciary administrative autonomy to effectively and efficiently carry out its judiciary functions to better serve our populace and the country as a whole.

Within the structure, the Ministry of Justice has completed two court house, one in Atori and the second one in Seghe where during court circuits the judges can convene hearings to dispose back log of cases.

I must again thank the powerful MP for Gao Bugotu and the current Minister for Peace, Reconciliation and Ecclesiastical Affairs for his initiative in establishing the third court house in his constituency and officially handed this to my ministry. The Ministry now has three new court avenue where judges again can convene court hearings during their court circuits.

Other reforms being carried out by the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs is one the money laundering and proceeds of crime Act. This report is now with Cabinet for clearance and drafting instruction will proceed. The Prescription of Judges High Court (Amendment) Bill is to increase judges from 7 to 21 to allow recruitment of judges as and when required to offset the current workload experienced by the

Judiciary. The Cabinet has endorsed this and now pending drafting instruction with the AG Chambers. The Constitutional (Amendment) and Facilitation Bill 2023 and the subsequent legislation, which is the amendment Repeal and Validation Bill 2023 to provide electronic version of our laws in Solomon Islands.

Finally, the Public Order Offence policy paper is currently being prepared to look at public order offence with the view or putting in reforms. The recommendation 1.17 on corruption, the DPP has been working on prosecuting cases including government officials where corruption is evident. With recommendation 2, on access to information, we allow freedom of information accessible to ordinary citizens, however due to familiar constraint this recommendation has not progressed. These are some of the recommendations in this report that affects the Ministry of Justice and Legal and challenges and achievements going forward.

Finally, I must take this opportunity to thank successive governments who have contributed one way or another in getting this report finalized and most importantly the TRC taskforce in compiling this condense version report now before the House. Before I take my seat, I want to express my support to the comments made by the MP for East Honiara and to appeal to our good people of this country that after resolving whatever issues adhere to this report we must burry this coffin of tension and move on as a nation and restore the happy isles once we enjoy in the past.

With these few remarks, I support the motion and resume my seat.

Mr CLAUDIUS TEI'IFI (*West Kwaio*) (11:50): Thank you Mr. Speaker for allowing me to at least contribute on behalf of my people of West Kwaio. The debate on this Truth Reconciliation Report that is been table here in this Honorable Chamber.

Before I proceed further, I would like to thank the leadership of the current government, DCGA, for having boldness to bring to this honorable Chamber this long standing report where our people of this nation, especially the victims of the ethnic tension, have been waiting for so long.

For the truth about the cause of the ethnic tension. The real perpetrators and instigators to be revealed. The so called big fish behind the tension to be held accountable and brought before the justice, and the victims to be well compensated for their loss. The suffering and pain during the darkest moment in the history of beloved country Solomon Islands. Before, I proceed further I will like to take opportunity to pay respect to those ones who lost their lives, properties, wealth and suffering tremendously during the time of the tension.

I believe and certain that this report as we debate in this honourable House, will bring forth many bad memories of the lost, sufferings, senses of bitter regrets and

many who have lived through the darkest period of our history. I believe and certain that his report as debate in this honorable House will bring forth many bad memories of the last sufferings, bitter regrets, and abiding stories of many who have live through the darkest period of our history.

I regretted that a good number of victims who suffered tremendously as a result of the events were not able to live today to listen and see the actions the government would take action to address those issues that affected them during that time.

All of us in this Chamber know and are aware of the happenings during the darkest moments of the history of our country, the Solomon Islands. Therefore, I will not dwell too much on those sad stories and events of the tension, the so-called big fish that have never been arrested, the real perpetrators, the militants, and those who have brought this country down to its knees during those years. However, I will try to focus mainly on the way forward to ensure that such dreadful events and other adverse events of similar nature will not happen again in the future that will affect the future generation of this country.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the unwavering assistance and support rendered by the traditional partners and neighboring island countries that stood with us in solidarity when we were on our knees.

Without their kindhearted support, we would not be able to have this report or enjoy our lives in peace and harmony. In that sense, I must take this opportunity as a leader representing my good people of West Kwaio Constituency, with due respect, to acknowledge the Republic of China (ROC) for their support and the loan of USD \$25 million for compensation payments. I would also like to thank Australia and New Zealand for leading the Regional Assistance Mission, where our regional neighbors have contributed extensively to bringing normalcy to this country, especially in Honiara, Guadalcanal, Malaita, and Western Province.

I acknowledge them for their effort in assisting us to reduce the corruptive practices in the government machineries. Exhortation of public funds by opportunists during those times, and this sir, I stood on behalf of my people of West Kwaio and thanked our big brothers, Australia and New Zealand, and our neighbors for their support during that time when this country was brought down and guns were used to rule over everything.

Let me begin my points on this important debate by saying that the seriousness of this matter has been downplayed for the last 20 years.

The sensitivities, seriousness, and deepening agony of this matters were downplayed. Many victims have been denied justice. However, I commend the government of the day for bringing in this long awaited report to the Chamber, not

only to debate here, but to see that collective recommendations and report are implemented for the future of this country. The seriousness of this matter does not warrant us in this Chamber to continue throw stones at each other over our shortfalls; but rather take into serious consideration on how to address those matters and want actions to take as a way forward for this nation on those recommendations in this report.

While glazing through the short version of the Truth and Reconciliation Report, I acknowledge that the plight of Kwaio in relation to the September 1927 event was included as history; and included in Part 2 of the recommendations. Sorrowful event that took place in 1927 has inflicted a large number of deaths of Kwaio people. Imprisonment of some innocent Kwaio men, and the symptomatic destruction, discretion of important Kwaio ancestral shrines and ritual objects. The event was of extreme significance for the Kwaio people, and has greatly affected their way of life. The effect of the incident is still with the people, and I quote here, "what was echoed by the chief back then in 2019 that the government must formulate appropriate developments, which will reconcile the situation, so that people of Kwaio can go back to work and develop their places, and to live peaceful in their own land".

My good people of Kwaio are eager to see what the government would do in solving the matter for them. Political boundaries only have separated East and West Kwaio, otherwise there is only one Kwaio, in terms of customs and genealogy. Therefore I have the heart to voice the concern here in this Chamber and plead to see that these programs are translated into action in this respect.

I acknowledge those that have put in efforts to summarize the whole issue into TRC short version report. The report contains very important recommendations and some of them are long overdue for implementation.

Whilst part and partial of some recommendations have been implemented through the government line Ministry programs over the years, I know government Ministries were not sleeping over those matters. For example; the work done by the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs in the last 10 years, such as the implementation of the National Youth Policy and support to National Youth Congress, Gender Equality and Women Development Policy, GEWD Policy, the Family Protection Act 2014 and so forth. Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (MPGIS), such as Provincial Government Strengthening Program, Provincial Capacity Development Fund, which focuses on good governance and accountability capacity buildings in our nine provinces. As we are aware, to date, the program has involved and worked in partnership with other sub-programs to improve the livelihood of our rural people.

Ministry of Finance and Treasury for their reform program and public finance management reforms at the Customs of improving the collection of important duties and goods taxes. The continuous effort of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development in partnership with the donor, especially the government of Japan to improve the Honiara's main road to date. The Ministry of Police and Justice, Ministry of Health, the Medical Services, and the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force for establishing the safe house for the survivors of gender-based violence, and many more initiatives that were done through collaborations and partnerships with our bilateral partners and non-state actors, such as our churches and NGOs that I have not mentioned.

On this note, I must say that our traditional friends have done so much for this country in those respects, and I believe they will continue to support us into the future with our major development aspirations, especially with our key recommendations in the TRC report that are yet to be implemented.

Therefore, I want to remind us that we must maintain impartiality and a bilateral relationship of friends to all and enemies to none, as this TRC report that we are debating presents big challenges in the new road map ahead to address those long-standing issues that we oversee. We ourselves will not have the financial capacity to implement them if the government is serious about addressing them.

It has been more than 10 years since the final TRC report was done. I recommend that the government take stock of what they have achieved over the years in relation to the key recommendations and see what recommendations are still relevant for the government to pursue.

We can give confidence to our people if those outstanding recommendations are drawn into tangible government policies, giving them implementation timelines with full project costs to enable us to see how much it will cost the government to fulfill implementation and implement those outstanding recommendations. This is to give hope and confidence to our people and show any government of the day's commitment to address those issues. I am not sure whether all these recommendations have provisions linked or referenced to the national development strategy 2016–2035 and government ministries annual work plans; the good plans of Solomon Islands need to be aware of those undertakings if work on those recommendations has already commenced by the government.

I am aware that there is draft Reparation Bill that maybe at its drafting stage or wherever. If the government thinks that this Bill is important, then it must pursue it, as now the TRC Report is debated.

In addition to that, reconciliation is a catch appearing in the name of the Commission; the title of the report and everywhere in the report. So, we have to

witness ourselves in stance, where reconciliations between parties become meaningless and useless. It is my view that the government should consider as a matter of policy to come up with a reconciliation registered Act, where whatever forms of reconciliation that is carried out or perform between parties are recognised under such Act.

The reconciliation registered Act is important in the sense that whatever reconciliation that is performed is recognised and registered under the Act and it is important for future reference for future generation and socioeconomic development in the country. I see there are a lot of benefits in emanating from this Act to avoid repetitions or resurfacing of matters that has been long settled from reoccurrence.

This will also empower the work of local chiefs, leaders and churches who had taken leadership role in the most reconciliation initiative in the country. The government must be proactive and our role is to make laws to govern matters that are important for the socioeconomic development of this beloved country, Solomon Islands, for our people.

To complete my debate on this important report, I would like to join previous leaders and other leaders of Malaita Province to highlight the following issues on a serious note. Past successive governments to date were not keen on addressing the root cause of the ethnic tension that led to the Bona Fide Demands of the Guadalcanal people. The issue is about migration of people, especially from Malaita, and occupation of land in Guadalcanal, let alone the forms of acquisition of land that took place. In the last 20 years, we have not seen any tangible plan and development for people of Malaita to remain in their villages and earn money. Every development is centralised in Honiara.

Squatters occupied by Malaitans around Honiara is also full as well. Guadalcanal Province have increase tremendously than ever before the tension. New settlements by Malaita started at LDA. Mamara in the west side to Red Beach in the east have increased. We cannot point fingers and blame the people for this because it reflects the central government's inability to address matters that are important to peoples' livelihood, to return them back in their villages.

The pull and push factors that affect people to migrate is not addressed. The uneven distribution of development by the government. The people of Malaita flood everywhere in the Solomon Islands because of frustration to find money in terms of education. Maybe one person has five children attending schools and has to move to look for school fees. School fees nowadays is not cheap. You are talking about a person for one year is about \$18,000 at SINU. This is quite expensive. Our local people cannot afford it. That is why people moving in and around to find the way

forward to earn money to buy the school fees of their children. For example, West Kwaio has contributed largely in the logging but we have not seen any tangible development from the government as a reward for allowing our land to be logged to earn the revenue for the government. The people suffer. The logging companies charge expensive prices for goods sold or borrowed from logging camps by resource owners and deducted from royalties at the expensive prices as well.

Today, the Forestry Act does not give the resource owners any long lasting benefits from their resources. Like, for example, in terms of sharing profit of round log export to China or anywhere. 60 percent goes for the contractors, 25 percent goes to the government of Solomon Islands. 5 percent goes to the facilitator as licensee and 10 percent for resource owners. This Act must be reviewed in order for the people in the rural areas who owned the resource earn a lot of money and develop themselves.

Who is to be responsible here? The resource owner or the government? That is why government must look seriously on the Forestry Act to revisit that Act so that sharing of profit of round log export must be helpful to the resource owners.

We also engage on coconut replantation in West Kwaio Constituency in a small scale. I called on the Ministry responsible to at least help and support me, but never mind, we are in the financial crisis and maybe there is no money and no help. I think we have to start again in order for us to be strong in terms of the economy. We have to start with agriculture. It is the back bone of our country. If we oversee these things, maybe we will be good.

The government policy innovation is important on many issues affecting our rural people. For example, in West Kwaio, we have community high schools that have potential to run TVET programs or even university programs, but has never been explored. We could retain our student back their villages undertaking the same course offered at SINU, USP or other institution in Honiara over to DFL or Semi-Face to Face at these community high schools. The issues should be factored in the education reform programs as part of addressing the core issue of tension.

I want to highlight here, that for the past 20 years, after the dreadful event of the ethnic tension, we have not seen any major development taking place in Malaita for Malaita people. Our road infrastructure are still ruins. We still use broken wooding bridges and some major ports are still without proper wharves. If land dispute is the major causes of concern for some tribe site for development in Malaita, the government should at least look at developing our key infrastructures. I believe if successive governments were serious, Malaita province, having one of the largest road network in the country, should have its main road North to South and Central to East fully tar sealed, bridges and wharves constructed by now. Malaita Province

has one of the largest road networks in the country should have its main road from north to south and from central to East fully tar sealed, bridges and wharves constructed by now. This shall encourage and create an enabling environment for Malaitans themselves to engage in socio-economic activities that will contribute immensely to the improvement of our social and economic wellbeing.

I believe Malaita is ready. The government just needs to change its approach and strategy. Acquisition of land for large scale development is not easier and is also packed with disputes everywhere because of the mindset of the people. The government always has millions in its budget to engage in these undertakings. When individuals or families are engaged in their small scale development, disputes are always almost zero. The government should rethink its approach, reevaluate its reforms, and contextualize them.

Once again, thank you for this opportunity to contribute to this important debate on behalf of West Kwaio. I also extend my appreciation to the Prime Minister and his Cabinet for seeing it fit to bring this report to this Chamber for debate.

We can say whatever we want to say here, but the crux of matters is the ability to take action on those recommendations for the future generation of our beloved country and people.

With these few remarks, I support this Motion and resume my seat.

Parliament is suspended at 12.20pm

Parliament is resumed

Hon FREDRICK KOLOGETO (*South Vella Lavella—Minister for Commerce, Industries, Labour and Immigration*) (02:13): Thank you Mr. Speaker for giving the Member of Parliament for South East Vella La Vella and the Minister for Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration for also contribute to this Motion brought forward by the Minister of Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs, on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report with recommendations.

My contribution will be short as most of the issues raised here have been covered by my colleague Members. But I felt that it is important for this nation to also hear from me as the leader of this government. I will just briefly looking through the five volume, it is a bit hard to shallow some of those volumes and statements that the victims have put forward in this five volume.

During the height of this so called tension, I was not really in the country because I was on study leave and I am not in the country; but I was occasionally coming back home for the holiday, and few times have been stopped on the road by the factions, the groups, and also share the sentiments that as others have.

I could remember one time I am at the airport and they stopped us there, coming down town. Very sad situation; but those are the past. The volume speak for itself. Five volumes is very thick. A thousand pages and a lot of people contribute to this; but as other Members of Parliament have stated, the Commission for the TRC that was set up in the ninth Parliament, and I thank the Commissioners for the report. I also would like to take this opportunity to thank the various party that involved during this tension to also come an understanding that it is time to sit down on the table and talk about how we should go forward.

On that note I also would like to share my sorrows to the victims of this tension. There are a lot of innocent victims who stayed until now and we did not really address them; but I thank the DCGA government for seeing it fit that this must go to Parliament. The Prime Minister rightly stated, I think it is best that we should have gone through this 10 years after the tension. I also allude to the statements stated by the Minister of Lands, but it is not right. After they tabled it in the 9th Parliament, then we had a few issues raised, so the government did not have the opportunity to raise or go through this paper.

I will contribute a little bit on the trigger of the tension. They have listed a few important issues, and others have shared their views on those. Issues like land issues that the Minister talked about, governance, economic disparity, etc. I will talk a little bit about economic disparity because it is a part of my Ministry of Commerce, where we deal with how to make money to ensure our standard of living is good.

If you look at the summary, *Rising from the Ash*, on this TRC report, it mentions that from 1893 to 1978, the colonial rulers came and took all the fertile lands. By the 1950s, 90 percent of the fertile land along the coast was controlled by foreigners. They put plantations everywhere because the idea there was that we would pay for the tax. So at the same time, some of our workers went around the islands to work in the plantations, and now we have some plantations around the Solomon Islands.

If you look at 1978, in the new Constitution, it recognizes the fundamental rights of freedom of movement through the country. It allows people to go anywhere in the provinces. Solomon Islanders, from Temotu to Shortlands, travelled anywhere they wanted to go because of this Constitution that was created in 1978, the freedom of movement.

In the 1990s, despite the fact that we move around the islands and provinces, there has never been any strong sense of oneness or one nation, as other Members of Parliament have stated. No. But rather, we regard ourselves as from different locations and identities, bounded by togetherness by the system of government that we have today. Those from Temotu, West, Isabel, and Rennel are different.

More so, if you look at this place that we are living on, Guadalcanal, they will say if you are from East or South or West. Even at the provincial level. If you look at Malaita Province, they will still label you as from North or South. Even in Temotu. They will label you as from Tikopia or Gisi or Pileni. But it is different when you go out of the country. When you go to Australia or England, you any Solomon Islander as a brother or sister. Why does this idea not descend down to us when we are living in our nation? It is a big challenge.

I think it is time for the next government to come up with a policy to look ways that we can see ourselves as one. We can learn more from Rwanda.

Our Prime Minister had stated clearly in his speech on lessons learned and that is very important. How do we move our nation go forward. I as a leader and I am from Western, it will be tough if we separate this nation. I think we are stronger together than divided.

Not only that, we have relatives everywhere in our nation, from Shortland to Temotu. So, basically, we are one. I do not know why, at times, we still see others as from Makira or from Rennell and Bellona. Sometimes, I feel that we get rid of second appointed days. It divides us further. We put a day that unites us as one.

Further to that, I do not want to talk the importance of the cultural show. I am also part Isabel. The Gregreo Show, is it good or not? Does it divide us or unite us? I question such things because of the diversity of our country. I will leave that to our leaders to think about.

Let me talk a little bit on the issues which triggered the tension. The one that I will look at is the economic disparity. In terms of economic activities, some are complaining that only some provinces have big companies. What about other provinces? These are the things that have triggered the tension. How would we come together to serve everyone because we are one nation and one people?

As I have stated, because in 1970, people were allowed to move around, but since before the tension, that is part of it because we see others as belonging to different provinces. How can we become one is a challenge for all of us leaders and every citizen of this nation?

On economic disparity, it is very true and is the truth. I did a some research and during the tension, as stated in the TRC Report, in 2000, the economy is contracted by 14.3 percent. Another 9 percent went down in 2001. It went down 2.4 percent in 2022. For example, Oil Palm, before 1998, the export was 97.9 percent and just after one year in, 1999, it was 65 percent, it went down by \$30million. By the year 2000, Oil palm export was only \$6.5 million, until it closed down.

Also, on that note, before the ethnic tension, on fish export, it was \$195million in 1999. In 2000, it was \$45 million. Sometimes I would think that our old politicians and leaders are very clever than us.

In my research and finding, when we had a tuna factory in Solomon Islands, PNG did not have any tuna factory. At the moment we are still with one. We do not change our number. In Papua New Guinea, they have five factories now. What is wrong? We are leaders and we are sitting here, just talking. On that note, when we have SIPL, PNG also have one, but now PNG has four, and if I am right, I think they have five. We still do not want to change. We remain with one. I Remember, during the time of Julius Chan, during the height of the Bougainville crisis, he connected the island of New Ireland with road. They told him that there is not resources there and why was he building the road. Now an Oil Palm plantation is located there.

Sometimes, I disagree when people talk about what we can do before we build infrastructures. No! That is old economics. That theory does not exist now. It is not applicable. It does exist but it is not always true. We try and put a road in Isabel. You would think there is nothing there. If we build a road there, you will see the economic activities that will going to happen.

On that note, sometimes I disagree because during the tension, two of our province were really affected, Malaita and Guadalcanal. On the TPA, it stated that we must ensure that we improve these two provinces. No! All the provinces must be improved together. We grow together and share the values. We are one.

There was report that stated that the highest migrants to Honiara at the moment are from Western province. Not from Malaita or from Temotu, but from West. Second to it is Isabel. When we address these things, we must address all of us. We have to look at ourselves as one.

On the economic disparity, just a note on the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration that I looked after. I will give some information on what the Ministry had done so far. The government has been working since the tension. We cannot deny that. But I would appeal to all the Ministries and necessary stakeholders to continue chipping.

Just to give a little bit of back ground of why there is vulnerability of our economy and that it was low, is because our workforce only comprises of about 25 percent to 30 percent in formal employment and the 80 percent are in informal sector. Our base is very narrow. We can easily collapse by minor problems.

The Ministry have tried its very best on how to engage the 80 percent in the rural areas. On that note, the government has put emphasis on decentralizing activities in the provinces. But even if the government would like to put business activities in

the provinces, it comes back to land. The minister of land has been doing his best, and I trust him that he will put everything right so that when there is development, it is not hindered.

We have come a long way from the primitive era and we want to enjoy life as well. We are just custodians of these lands so let us properly register them and allow our lands to be developed for the benefit for all of us.

On that note, I want to inform the House that the ministry is putting a very serious effort into the SEZ (Special Economic Zone) to continue addressing these economic disparities, which are recorded in the TRC report.

As the current minister of commerce, I am happy that I will table the SEZ paper as well. The Prime Minister told me that this paper has never been tabled in Parliament since 2000. Mr. Speaker, I will bulldoze this so that we address these issues pertaining to our people. So the special economic zones are to prevent us from coming to Honiara, where we can stay in our provinces and benefit. We will only come to Honiara for Holidays.

I just want to make clear here that during the tension, our economy has fallen, so the ministry opens retail and wholesale for foreigners to operate so that we could have money. But in 2017, the ministry again prohibited foreigners from operating retail and wholesale businesses in the country.

On the SEZ, we also have growth centers, which are aligned with the Ministry of Rural Development to work together to implement these growth centers. So I encourage the members of Parliament to work together with MRD to create growth centers and put income generating activities in them to enable our people to earn money in their areas.

So I would like to encourage the people of Solomon Islands, and as stated, I think it is time that we put a stop to this now. Let us bury this coffin and move forward. Let us learn from the lessons that we learn and go forward as a united country, one people from shore to shore.

With this, I support the motion and resume my seat.

Hon CHRIS LAORE (*Shortlands—Minister for Home Affairs*) (2:37): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to also contribute on this very important motion on the truth and reconciliation report that has been brought to us in Parliament by the Minister of Traditional Governance, Peace, and Ecclesiastical Affairs. Also I thank the government for tabling this very important Motion in Parliament.

The Truth and Reconciliation report has avail avenue for us to being together the records of the past ethnic crisis and the recommendation needed to be considered by us leaders. I acknowledge the different recommendations that comes under each line items for each Ministry. These are important aspect of institutional building we need to thoroughly (unaudible:2:38:42) to contribute to the strengthening of our governance, economic and social well being of the country.

Conflict happen and impact as with its consequences. We experienced it we lived with it, we learn from it; but our responsibility is to avoid it. In the Pacific Region our neighbors have their experiences as well. Our country Solomon Islands have its share as well. The TRC report therefore spells out the recommendation that allows us to merge it to our current circumstances and mitigate the impacts. I wish to contribute in my humble capacity as the Minister of Home Affairs to actually share my Ministry's perspective as a way forward in addressing some of the existing gaps that can be needs for the possible conflict in our society.

My Ministry has launched the National Sports and Recreation Policy in May last year 2022. This is the first ever National Sport Policy the country has ever have since independence. My Ministry's vision is to take the holistic approach by utilizing and decentralizing sports as a means to engage participatory development in our rural areas. Foster unity and cooperation amongst our diversity. Ensure our people live a healthy life and empower our people to realize the potentials in sports; and the many economic and social benefits that associated with. I want to share this information with you that in 2021 Fiji remittances in sport alone accounts for around \$300 million Fijian. We can do the same if we invest time, effort and resources into this sector.

I speak with conviction that sport is one aspect that forges unity and peace coexistence in our country. Thus we have to invest more efforts and resources in this industry. The upcoming Pacific Games and the governments post games legacy plan will institutionalize this industry to a greater heights. Allowing our rural talents to move up their higher performance level. Elevating our capacity and enhance sports tourism and remittances for our country.

Therefore the Ministry embarks on decentralizing sport facilities in the Provinces to ensure people have access to them. In July last month, the government through my Ministry handed over the refurbish sports stadium at Aligegeo Secondary School through the Malaita Provincial Government to the Malaita Football Association. This will be the home of sports for the good people in Malaita Province. My Ministry also constructing other sporting facilities to other Provinces in the coming months. The sports facilities being built and it is near completion about 70 % completed are at the Noro Tuna Park Western Province. The community hall is being refurbished into a sport facilities in Taro Choiseul Province. The Multipurpose hall is to be built

at Korovou in Short land Islands. A sports stadium is to be build in Guadalcanal soon once the land is shorted out. Whilst we recognize the economic benefit associated with sports, we must also appreciate the sense of identity that comes with it. For instance, when our national football team plays abroad, the whole country is behind them with one identity as Solomon Islanders. This is our pride and our oneness; like the Minister mentioned, when we have Solomon Games, we divide ourselves into provinces; when we come to provincial games, we divide ourselves into constituencies; and when you go to constituencies, you divide yourself into villages or tribes.

While we acknowledge the recommendations made in the TRC report, let us also look at this present democracy and seriously imagine what will come ahead in the future. Mr. Speaker, if anyone asks my view of the cause of the potential conflict in the future, in the country, I reckon it will be caused by our growing population. Solomon Islands has a population of 700,000 plus people, and youths make up a substantial part of the masses; however, their involvement and engagement in much of our society's productive activities are limited. Data show that out of every 10 Solomon Islanders, one is under the age of 30. This is a time bomb awaiting a massive explosion. If this population bulk is not properly managed. Even as I speak, the statistics published by the population division of the United Nations Economic and Social Affairs Department show that Solomon Islands has a total dependency ratio of 71.5 percent. Only 28.5 percent engage in meaningful economic contributions. The figure shows that 71.5 percent of the country's population is not linked to any formal income-generating activities. Therefore, in some ways, the 28.5 percent of the population that is either employed or self-employed

Statistics also show that the country's economic growth is steaming at 2.1 percent against population growth of 2.1 percent. In April 2020, the Central Bank of Solomon Islands published that in order for Solomon Islands to cater for its population growth of 2.4 percent, its economic growth must be elevated to a 5 percent acceleration.

Currently, we have a deficit of 2.9 percent growth rate to cater for the fast-growing population of 2.4 percent. These figures are alarming, and we need to utilize all options that groom our young and beautiful population to become productive. Sports is one core sector to help realize this potential. My ministry's investment and focus in sports are of high priority, and they drive alongside its core vision of an active, productive, and healthy nation.

In addition to that, let me touch briefly on the population statistics and figures. In 2019, the country had 16,760 new births. In 2022, we will have 16,903 new births, and in 2023, it is projected to be 16,987 new born. In terms of deaths per year, in 2019 it was 3,404, in 2022 it was 3,612, and in 2023 it is projected at 3,682. In the

country, a senior secondary school is estimated to have up to 1,000 students. Therefore, our population growth can be aligned with the 17 new secondary schools built each year, and I think the minister for education can elaborate more on that or tell us the true figures. So we have three to four senior secondary schools lost each year through deaths. Currently, we have a total of 1,450 schools in the Solomon Islands. Starting from Early Childhood Education to Primary Secondary, vocational, and a total of 351 health centers nationwide. The fear of having less number of schools and health centers against the growing population poses a severe list for high illiteracy, high unemployment and high marginalization rate which will increase the dependency rate and possible conflict in the future. We must therefore take serious and practical measures to deal with our population growth and associated socio economic development that need to allow new things.

On institutional strengthening, we must support empowering our law enforcement agencies. We must reaffirm our trust and confidence in the RSIPF and support the capacity building of our men and women in uniform to establish an independent trustworthy, discipline and self reliant police force that represent our country's pride, safe guide our mother land and our sovereignty. On other national issues related to the socio economic family and gender matters, there is better way to address it holistically and that is through the development approach.

Rural infrastructure development is the oxygen to any economic growth and governance and stability. When basic infrastructure are in place and people are empowered to mobilize in economic activities, transformational changes will come into play. People will be self-reliant and independent and have the capacity to manage their own families and solve issues facing their communities. I want to reiterate this that development mindset solves all cross cutting issues if we genuinely progress it. We do not need to go here and there, trying to solve our challenges on sectoral or piece meal basis.

I wish to wrap up my debate by saying that we must learn from our past and have a good heart to move forward and make a difference for the lives of our people. The TRC Report has given us this chance to learn from our past and see the future that we want. We have to look to our children and our youths. This is the generation we must seriously talk about and groom them for the coming future. The onus must be on us now to do this noble job for the regrets and future failure will fall on our shoulders.

Let us look towards a better future. The entire country suffered from this past ethnic crises, let us stand on our feet again and work together and build our country. We acknowledge the five volume contained in the TRC Report. We have to appreciate the measures that our government through our line ministries, our private sectors, our civil societies and NGOs, our churches, our chiefs and community elders, our

academic institutions and our respective families have contributed in bringing national reconciliation to our people in the country.

We need national healing, genuine understanding with one another and finally this country needs to reconcile with one another and reconcile with God and ask God to put us back and right into his plan for this nation. In all matters of grief, frustration, loss, comfort and grievances, there is only one authority who heals, so let us ask God for guidance and wisdom to see us through into the future.

Before I close my debate, I would like to close with a word of Martin Luther King Jnr and I quote from one of his statement;

"Forgiveness does not mean ignoring what has been done or putting a false label on an evil act. It means rather that the evil act no longer remains as a barrier to the relationship. Forgiveness is a catalyst to creating the atmosphere necessary for a fresh start and a new beginning".

End of quote.

Our country needs a new beginning and we must make it happen for our children and those who would come after them.

With these few remarks, I support the Motion and resume my seat.

Hon LANELLE TANANGADA (*Gizo/Kolombangara—Minister for Education and Human Resources Development*) (02:53): Thank you Mr. Speaker for giving me this opportunity and I would like to add my people's voice to the debate on the Truth and Reconciliation Final Report.

It has been wonderful listening to the various perspective of the TRC Report that my colleague Members of Parliament who have spoken before hold. I have noted that there have been various sentiments raised during the debate ranging from the reasons why the ethnic conflict occurred in our country to our failure to avoid the conflict, including our inability to immediately address some of the serious issues we could have addressed as soon as TRC Report was released.

Sentiments around ongoing peace building initiatives and efforts were also highlighted and I am pleased to know as a country and people, we have endured peace after RAMSI had left somewhat six years ago.

The fact that the TRC Report has been tabled to Parliament by the honorable Minister for Peace, Reconciliation and Ecclesiastical Affairs and we are discussing it, is an indication of responsibility and duties that the Ministry of Peace, Reconciliation and Ecclesiastical Affairs has demonstrated to us. We also reiterate that the tabling of the TRC Report has always been the plan of the DCGA and it is

indeed satisfying that at long last this very important report has been tabled in Parliament.

May I also join other honorable colleague Members of this honorable House to pay tribute and my sincere thank you to leaders past and present, the members of the Commission who took their time to listen to voices of more than 1000 victims and those who have involved in ethnic tension from 1998 to 2023, our brave women, mothers, church leaders, chiefs and elders who have been very instrumental and ensuring peace, progress and prosperity is achieved.

I commend the hard work of the Minister for Peace, Reconciliation and Ecclesiastical Affairs and his staff for the preparatory work done to enable tabling of the report, especially for providing the background information in some of the actions taken, which I believe provoked a lot of interest and joint call made for all Members of Parliament to contribute to the debate on the report.

There are sentiments raised about the timing of the tabling of the TRC Report to Parliament. Some Members of Parliament stated that it was long over due, implying that it should have been implemented during the RAMSI period, while others stated that the timing for the tabling of the TRC Report to Parliament was right. My perspective on this is that the submission of the short TRC Report to Parliament cannot come at a better time than this time.

Further more, I would like to reiterate that it is better to submit the TRC Report to Parliament than never so that we can continue to support the implementation of the recommendations of the report and enjoy and endure peace in our country in the years to come.

From my perspective, it is fundamental that we not only acknowledge the TRC Report but most importantly understand why we mandated the TRC to be established and to action peace building initiatives to build our country based on the recommendations of the report.

The TRC Report provides and account of the possible causes of the ethnic conflict that we experienced between 1997 and 2003. The TRC Report provides rich information about what happened to our people, boys and girls, men and women that suffered the most horrifying experiences in their life time. The TRC Report provides cause or acts of violence, cruelty, intimidation of civilians, unspeakable outrage by ordinary peace loving Solomon Islanders who distaste violence and conflict, civil obedience by militants and sympathizers who cause acts of evil such as the rape of girls and women, murder ad massacre. To be honest, when I first saw the shorter version of the report, I only read the first page, and I closed the book. It took me a while to go back to the report that speaks for the past that we do not want

to experience in the future. Enough is enough. It is time to move on with this significant question: What can we do for our beloved Solomon Islands?

The report unearthed by the TRC is indeed sensitive and controversial, but accurate and demonstrated the truth about what happened to those that were severely affected during the height of the conflict.

The stories told by the victims of the tension, observers, and sympathizers have formed the basis for healing our people and our nation. The recommendations and actions of the report were meant to implement activities, projects, and programs to strengthen national unity and reconciliation by engaging all key stakeholders in the reconciliation process.

The question is: how can we tell if we are on track in terms of the implementation of the TRC recommendations? Are we there yet? What else can we do to sustain our peacebuilding efforts?

Putting the question in another way, Mr. Speaker, how far have we gone into addressing the inequitable distribution of development benefits? Which is believed to be one of the main causes of the conflict. Likewise, how can we teach our children, students, and young people to become peace-loving and responsible citizens who value living together in coexistence with one another and their environment? I salute the on-going efforts by our successive governments, including the DCGA government, to address some of the disparities in development so that the provinces that had not benefited in the past could be considered and supported this time around. This is the most challenging issue that will be with us in the years ahead. However, we must not lose hope and try to reach out to our people in terms of development so that they can also benefit from the social and economic developments.

I would like to make an important call that each stakeholder and government ministry identified as being responsible for implementing the TRC report recommendations continue the implementation of their respective recommendations. Also, to call on the government ministries and other key stakeholders to monitor, evaluate, and report on their implementation of the TRC recommendations on a regular basis to cabinet and the other responsible ministry of Peace, Reconciliation, and Ecclesiastical Affairs, So that we can track the progress that it makes.

The challenges to securing durable and lasting peace in our country still very much depend on the implementation of the recommendations of the TRC report, as well as exploring other ways to support peace capacity building to address existing and future conflicts and tensions. We cannot afford to experience the November 2021 riots repeating again in the near future. We have to establish not only the

intelligence to sense or detect potential conflict in advance but also the trust to build on each other despite our diverse ethnicities, multiple languages, and cultures that quite often make us suspicious of each other and could potentially destroy our relationship and cause us to create conflicts. This brings me to the key point that I would like to contribute to the debate, which is the status of my ministry's implementation of the TRC report recommendation.

I have listened to the remarks made by my colleague members of Parliament regarding the importance of education in building our society so that young people in particular can access a quality education system to help them learn and strengthen their peace-loving attitudes through the Solomon Islands value-based general education curriculum.

There are fresh recommendations that members of Parliament have made during the debate on the motion for the need to train students to have problem-solving skills through peace-loving learning activities, projects, or programs organized in schools.

Before I provide a brief update on the progress made in relation to the integration of peace education in the school curriculum. Let me inform you about the specific TRC report recommendations that my ministry is responsible for and has been implementing.

Education recommendation 1 states that values of democracy and human rights, that these need to be integrated into all school curricular. Selected information from the final report of the TRC should be used as a text for students to learn and appreciate the history of the conflict.

Education recommendation 2 states that the government creates a national university with a home grown curriculum gear towards the development needs of the country.

Education recommendation 3 states that inter-cultural relations in educational institutions need to be encouraged.

Currently, Provincial schools have utilize a quota system of students intake whereby schools are obliged to enroll more students from the host Province than from other Provinces. This system will have to be done away with if Solomon Islands is to move forward as a united nation.

Moreover, it should be noted that recommendation 3 acknowledges that inter-cultural relations in bringing together in friendly interaction all cultures, faiths, nationalities and island identities and calls for schools to become agents of inter-cultural relationships and understanding.

Since 2004 when my Ministry began to review and develop the primary and secondary curriculum, topics on peace, education and concepts have been included in both primary and secondary curriculum; and I am delighted to inform this house that those that may be listening now through the SIBC ; that my Ministry has made considerable efforts and the current content of the national school curriculum with focus on civic and citizen education and peace education. The eight philosophical principles under line the national school curriculum its purposes, structure and the subjects including the school curriculum are based on certain themes that were identified.

These eight principles are used to guide each stage of the curriculum designed development and implementation process; and these are as follows; literacy and numeracy, environmental and health education, practical skills, inclusive curriculum, learning and teaching with the practical focus, cultural and social values, tradition and beliefs, sensitive and controversial issues and safety.

The key learning outcomes as they are referred to in the curriculum documents are the outcomes of learning that students are expected to have learned as a result of the teaching and learning under the prescribe national school curriculum. All key learning outcomes are required to be addressed by all individual subjects and emphasize the following themes; culture promotion, lifelong learning, ethics and good citizenship, peace and reconciliation, technology, entrepreneurship, environment, conservation and climate change, development of the whole person.

One would need to see the student and teacher books to verify the peace building topics and concepts to appreciate a glimpse of curriculum integration my Ministry has progressed and which I have mentioned; to indicate that my Ministry has progressed the implementation of education recommendation 1 of the TRC report.

In addition to this, my Ministry through the Curriculum Development Division is fully aware of the notion that the strengthening of the students peace loving attitudes can be integrated in the national school curriculum as we have done in the review and development of the curriculum at its level of education.

The activities formulated by teachers can potentially increase students knowledge and understanding of others, accept the diversity and accordance with their identity; improved communication with others, increase solidarity with others; increase cooperation with others, and make students creative in providing solutions to the problems of peace loving, and make students have the peace loving attitudes, and makes students do the actions that uphold the attitude of peace loving.

Nonetheless, the accusation of peace building concepts values and attitudes by learners, or students depend very much on how well teachers prepare their lessons and present to their students, as well as how much students can learn and apply the

knowledge skills and attitude developed to the situation they find themselves in, and are able to solve the conflict or tension related problems they encounter in their daily lives.

Lest we forget, students can and will learn about peace and the importance of respecting others, and to live in coexistence with their fellow Solomon Islanders and the environment. However, if adult members of their family, including their parents and other relatives, influence them to resort to violence whenever they encounter conflicts, then there is a likelihood that the teaching that they receive in the classroom could be worth less and could lead to even bigger problems. There is general agreement amongst leaders that a culture of peace can be achieved when our people understand the problems they face, have the skills to resolve conflicts, and struggle for justice non-violently. Live by the international standard of human rights and equity, appreciate cultural diversity, respect our only earth, and most importantly, respect each other. Such learning can only be achieved with systematic education for peace.

My ministry has endeavored and will continue to provide learning opportunities for our children and students in order to help them build or create a better future, a future that is free of armed conflict. In relation to Education Recommendation 2, which requires the government to create a national university with a homegrown curriculum and geared towards the development needs of the country, we have established our national university, the Solomon Islands National University, or SINU for short, and SINU has developed courses that focus on conflict and conflict resolution. For example, as the faculty of Education and Humanitarianism, there are plans to establish the Solomon Islands Development Study.

In relation to Education Recommendation 3, which aims to facilitate student exchange from different provinces, there are certain numbers of students from other provinces that attend boarding schools, for example, provincial secondary schools and national secondary schools such as King George the Sixth, Waimapuru, Su'u, Goldie College, Selwyn College, Aligegeo PSS, Siota PSS, Biula, and the list goes on.

While the presence of students from different provinces is critical in the schools, the extracurricular activities and programs organized for the students are equally important to learn about each province's cultures and traditions, including how conflicts are resolved. With the national sports stadium and sports facilities now available, my ministry is planning to organize school games more effectively and to allow students to interact socially from 2024 on.

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development also supported initiatives by Malaita and Guadalcanal Education Offices on peace through education. The initiative by the two provinces was further enhanced by the ministry

of education through a national education authority conference held in Malaita in 2016. Similar inter-provincial gatherings have been planned, and we have been executing them from 2017 to 2020. There are plans to do this kind of activity in 2024 and beyond.

It should be accepted that the absence of ethnic tension like we experienced between 1997 and 2003 and the riots in 2006 and again the November 2021 riot that caused so much misery, anxiety, uncertainty, and economic downturn cannot guarantee that people do not suffer psychological violence, repression, injustice, and a lack of access to their rights.

Therefore, peace cannot be defined only by negative peace; the concept of peace also has an important cultural dimension. In our cultures, peace also has to do with inner peace, peace in our minds and our hearts. In our traditions, for example, peace refers to the concept of well-being, which is linked to the idea of a perfect balance between the different areas of our lives.

Therefore, peace is to be seen as both internal and external processes that affect us. Most importantly, we must realize and acknowledge quickly that the conflicts we experience daily, whether big or small, are created by us. We know how conflicts and tensions can escalate, and if this is the case, we should also know how to resolve conflicts and tensions. We must also be prepared to use local solutions more often to the many conflicts and violence we face.

The successful implementation of recommendations 1–3 would require a holistic, system-wide approach to designing and promoting peace and non-violence throughout the education system. It is not enough to have peace education in the formal school curriculum; the entire system conveys messages directly or indirectly about peace and non-violence as part of an effort to translate and transmit the values and attitudes associated with peace and conflict prevention. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources recognizes the need for increased attention to ensure education systems help build peaceful and sustainable societies. Therefore, it is critical that the principles and beliefs of education for peace are embedded in the education system as a whole and that all education planning and policy decisions take the education for peace priority into account.

Finally, I would like to recommend to this Parliament House that it considers a national day for truth and reconciliation to be included in the school calendar. It is a day in which all young forward looking Solomon Islanders should commemorate the importance of peace and peace building initiatives and to avoid conflict and tensions. It should be a day to honor the resilience, dignity and strength of peace loving citizens and survivors of violence of all forms and to appeal to everyone

including themselves never to repeat what happened during the ethnic tension or any conflict they may have experienced.

I like the idiomatic expression on the title of the shorter version, which says, 'Rising from the Ashes'. If something rises from the ashes, it means recovery after a serious failure. It means rebirth.

With these, I would like to support the TRC Report and its recommendations and resume my seat.

(Debate is adjourned)

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: I move that parliament do now adjourn.

Question put and agreed to

(Parliament is adjourned at 3:16pm)

[Edited]



Eleventh Parliament

Sixth Meeting

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

Friday, 4 August 2023

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

(Subject to Revision)

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NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**Friday, 4 August 2023**

The Speaker, Mr Patteson John Oti, took the Chair at 09:47.

Prayers.

Business of the House

ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Minister for Infrastructure Development, Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, Minister for Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs, Minister for Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification, Marovo, North West Guadalcanal, North New Georgia, North Guadalcanal, West Makira, Ulawa/Ugi, South New Georgia/Rendova/Tetepare, West New Georgia/Vona Vona, and West Kwaoi.

Motions

MOTION NO.34 DEVELOPMENT BANK OF SOLOMON ISLANDS ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Hon MATTHEW WALE (*Aoke/Langalanga—Leader of Opposition*) (9 :49): I beg to move,

That Parliament resolves itself to the Committee of the Whole House to consider National Parliament Paper No.34 of 2022, the Development Bank of Solomon Islands Annual Report 2020.

It is impressive that we are today examining the 2020 Annual Report of The Development Bank of Solomon Islands, in that DBSI active operations commenced in June 2020. This report is on its activities for the first six months of operations.

Of course, we are in August of 2023 and therefore, we expect annual reports for 2021 and 2022 to be tabled on time. However, given that the organization only recently established, it is good to see that they have tabled the first report of their operations. And I note that the report carries a clean audit report from the Auditor General, this is noteworthy.

It is clear in the report that the establishment issues and market entry products were of primary interest to the bank in the short six months period of operations that is included in this report. The report shows strong demand for its lending products although it is only two and it is a matter of Parliament must take active interest and

keep a close eye on in light of the first experiences of the first liquidated DBSI. It is exactly where timely annual reporting by the bank is important and that the House must take an interest in examining such reports. Lack of Parliamentary scrutiny of the first DBSI contributed to the lack of transparency in its governance, which contributed to its final demise.

All organizations thrive on good governance. It is critical to good sensible decision making. This is even more so for a development bank operating in difficult situation where a normal banking requirements are not usually met. You will noted that we expressed great concerned much earlier regarding both memberships of the bank from its inception concerns that were might and likely brushed aside in favor of political expeditions. It is simply bad practice to start any SOE, let alone DBSI, our Bank with political appointees, that highly likely are to present conflicts of interest.

It is important that board governance is based on the highest standard property. We do have high hopes for and expectations of DBSI to meet and the needs of an important sector in our economy the SMEs. They have the potential to transform our economy in creating jobs for our people in their villages on their own land. Of course we hoped that such businesses are profitable, sustainable and can grow into scale over time. There were some good experiences in this regard with the first DBSI, although those gains were perhaps not sustained to the level that we would like to see.

There is much capacity for growth by the DBSI itself in our economy given the constraints on traditional financial institutions lending to rural based small businesses. I note the bank is taking a cautious approach to its lending policies and activities. This is sensible given the history of its predecessor organization and also its needs to develop its own internal capacity to properly assess proposals and provide support services to its clients especially in rural areas. You will note, that the bulk of its lending to SMEs in the first six months of operations was to Honiara based businesses. Of he total lending of \$7.9 million, 56 percent of about \$3.6 million was to Honiara based businesses. Whilst there is nothing wrong with this over time we hoped that lending to rural based businesses can out phased that to Honiara based businesses.

The bulk of both the population and resources are in the rural areas need funding to tap their potential to improve livelihoods. The life is an interesting product and its uptake are phenomenal in this report. This has by far taken the bulk of the lending portfolio. In that this is fully secured lending based on the collateral NPF pledges. Let us hope that businesses that benefit from it can be sustained. If borrowers default on this product they will lose their NPF savings as well to the extend of the pledges. It is likely that borrowers are turning life as an option simply

because they are unable to access their NPF Savings for their interim business or family needs.

Essentially, this becomes an added cost. Life can become an added cost charged upon their NPF. This is a public policy matter that deserves serious consideration.

I note that the NPF YouSave scheme for self-employed members has a creative scheme to mitigate these issues. YouSave deposits are remitted in half into the preserved account and the general account. And up to half of the general account savings may be withdrawn from time to time to meet members' needs, essential for encouraging saving for a rainy day or to exploit opportunities in the market. The life product, on the other hand, is a cost on that saving. It is not a policy matter for DBSI but it is a matter for public policy consideration.

The place and role of the Central Bank of Solomon Islands small business loan scheme in support of DBSI lending are critical to its outreach to rural businesses. If we are to see any meaningful growth in lending to rural businesses, it is already clear from this report that the funds under the CBSI scheme must be increased substantially. It is likely, that growth in DBSI rural lending will grow proportionally to the increase in guarantees under the CBSI scheme because of the collateral requirement. I would urge the minister of finance to work with both institutions, to consider this matter, and to act on it.

Going forward, it will be interesting to see how DBSI will deal with businesses under stress. I hope it will develop alternative approaches that aim to help such businesses trade out of such difficulties and exhaust all other avenues of supporting such businesses before resorting to collating on loans, which if they do are likely to close down small businesses. Of course, there is risk involved, but this is what effective development banking must do.

If we are to see meaningful growth over the long term and its lending activities and its impacts on the rural sector and small businesses in particular, the development bank will need to be as flexible as possible, not assume too much unnecessary risk, but take on a more creative approach to ensuring its clientele can sustain themselves, including the important matter of financial literacy for its clientele.

Central Bank supervision is critical to ensuring that the DBSI will be sustainable into the long term. However, it is also important that Central Bank supervisory guidelines are contextual to the role of DBSI not being a traditional bank. Some of the requirements on traditional banks are specifically for commercial retail banking and may not be very relevant or applicable to development banking.

I note in the report with some satisfaction that, already in the first six months, DBSI raised funding in the market. Market forces bring various risks and also impose

discipline on what DBSI can and cannot do with those funds. It imposes an incentive to ensure that those funds are lent to the most worthy proposals. Of course, it is early days, and it is important that all stakeholders keep an eye on this. I would encourage the SOE Unit in the Ministry of Finance to collaborate with DBSI to ensure that its next annual report resembles the quality of disclosures and reports by SIEA. We saw that last week. In fact, the SOE Unit should perhaps produce a template for what they expect good cooperate reporting should be and what it should cover for all SOEs. For DBSI, the SOE Unit could collaborate with the Central Bank on this.

Let me close. This motion simply allows us in Committee to examine the report noted its performance for the first six months of its operations and be assured of its future growth and sustainability into the long term.

With those few remarks, I resume my seat.

Hon HARRY KUMA (*North West Choiseul—Minister for Finance and Treasury*) (10:03): Thank you honourable Speaker, honourable colleague Members of Parliament and fellow citizens of our country. Thank you for giving me the opportunity, as Minister of Finance and Treasury, to briefly contribute in the discussion and debate on the important Motion before this Honourable House.

The Development Bank of the Solomon Islands was re-established and revitalized Development Bank of Solomon Islands Act NO.12 of 2018, with bipartition support form both sides of the House . As Parliamentarians we recognized that need for the government to facilitate the provision of our financial services to the citizens of the nation, and especially to the rural areas.

The DBSI reopened its doors on June 8th 2020 by the current Prime Minister, Manasseh Sogavare, who formally launched its operations at the Bank's current premises at the Anthony Saru Building in Honiara.

The Bank had expanded its access points in Honiara with the opening of front office services at the ground level of the Investment Cooperation of Solomon Islands building, Mendana Avenue, in April this year. This year would be the fourth year of the operation and the Bank is already planning on its outreach program to the Western Province and Auki in Malaita.

As part of strategic plan, it envisages the opening of one agency in the Provinces each year to bring the service closer to those who are unable to reach out to our main centers of such services. The appropriate timing for this expansion program will be determine by the financial sustainability and the support from its stakeholders and bearing in mind the major national events that are coming in front of us; for example Pacific Games and others.

The DBSI has also commenced with the long term accreditation journey for direct access to the green climate fund on behalf of the government, working with the National Climate Change Unit, various Ministries and Development partners.

The purpose of the Bank is to be the catalyst for the economic growth and social development within the overall strategy of the government, ensuring the participation of our Solomon Islanders in economic development on the rural sector, supporting manufacturing and processing industries that may strengthen the economy through employment creation, promoting export and import substitution activities that encourage external trade. Encouraging modernization and the use of technology business. To achieve this purposes, the Bank has defined for main strategic objectives and goal from its strategic plan as the overarching guide for its daily operation. These are to support government strategic objectives of improving the social and economic livelihood for all Solomon Islanders, invest in the economic and social wellbeing of our stakeholders in an environmentally sustainable manner, invest in our people by developing the highest standards of service, integrity, and professionalism in the delivery of our services, and of course, to become profitable in a sustainable manner.

The Bank also adopts one definition of its development rule to assist in the entrepreneurial aspirations of the people of the Solomon Islands, especially those in rural areas. In this regard, the Bank has developed several lending products to achieve this purpose and will continue to look at innovative ways of delivering its mandate, providing necessary finance where needed, and undertaking projects of national interest. The DBSI has to protect its interest in ensuring best practice based on the bank's own underwriting rules and criteria as well as the bank's policies, legal and regulatory frameworks, and prudential guidelines of the Central Bank.

It has also adopted and aligned to international standards under the financial and enterprise risks model, communication and IT support, and critical components of its operation that must capture every legal and operational aspect of the banking activities against ongoing global cyber security threats and vulnerabilities of any systems. System enhancement is necessary to avoid major catastrophes.

In terms of capitalization and governance, the bank commends the \$27 million initial capital plus the further COVID stimulus package of \$28 million granted in the 2020 and 2021 periods, closing the total capital at \$55.2 million by the end of 2021. That is, a supplementary grant of \$10 million was further capitalized for the 2022 period, bringing total capital to \$65.193 million at the end of 2022. The capital adequacy of the bank currently remains at 72 percent, allowing room for borrowing and capacity to absorb expected losses. We are also planning for a further injection this year, a small one, but as I have said, that also depends on other priorities of the government and space as well.

The bank's assets have grown from \$79.2 million in 2020 (only 31) to \$102.9 million by the end of 2022, which is yet to be audited, with a net asset position of \$60.5 million. In terms of the DBSI board of directors, the term of the first appointed board of directors expired in June 2023. In accordance with the DBSI Act 2018, The appointment of members of the new board has gone through the usual process and will be assessed under the proper criteria by the Central Bank.

There are three subcommittees that meet on a need-to-know basis to deliberate on strategic and operational matters. The subcommittees consist of directors and management. The first is the executive committee, which deals with all policy development for human resources, information technology, lending policy, and operational issues that require board directors and support. Second, the business risk and compliance committee manages the lending function and the overall enterprise risk of the bank. It has delegated authority to approve loans up to \$2 million before they go up to the board.

Third, the internal audit committee manages the finance and accounting policies and will have a direct reporting and supervisions of the functions and the operations of the internal audit. In terms of management team. The management team comprises of an interim CEO and three senior local bankers who have years of banking experience with the various banking institutions in the Solomon Islands, Pacific and Asia. The interim CEO has had 36 years in development banking with the Fiji Development Bank, various top senior positions for over 25 years. The Manager Finance and Administration comes from a wide scope in banking for 23 years and seven years in financial consultancy ranging from credit, account management, investing in banking and other related fields in the Philippines.

In staffing, the bank is run by small team of 22 support staff with formal qualifications in economics, accounting, tourism, business and agriculture information technology. 83 percent of the staff are young university graduates, who started employment with DBSI after graduating. Few in these recruits are former bank officers from BSP with banking experiences. Training and capacity building have been the focus in the past three years and will be ongoing development program with local and external exposers.

The first year of 16 months audited accounts recorded a loss of \$6.525million as projected. The first 6 months incurred set up costs with high operational cost but fully growth accelerated towards mid-term, hence lower income recorded while expenses triple. The total assets to that adds \$78million with net asset of \$48million. Liability of \$25million represented a term deposit facility from SIG.

Despite the loss situation, the cash position remained positive at \$17.324million. The Office of the Auditor General was satisfied with the compliance with relevant issues

raised in its management letter for improvement. The 2021 Audit is being finalized with the Office of the Auditor General and much improved management letter was issued for management response.

The Bank's lending department headed by the Relationship Manager is separated into two lending units. The life team looks after livelihood and investment facility, in short, LIF. So LIF is hybrid development loan product aimed at working class to encourage them to develop small business or invest into projects that will improve the lifestyles upon retirement. These loans are provided on a fully secured basis of their pledges of their savings with the National Provident Fund and repayments are source from customer salaries rather than the project itself. The current portfolio level under the LIF Product is slightly below 45 percent of the total portfolio of \$90 million. These loans attract the interest rate of 13 percent.

The small to medium enterprises team looks after the SME loan product and portfolio while its credit line support are available under the SME Lending Facility. It includes funding support from government Ministries, Business Loan Pacific, which is under the support of New Zealand, the CBSI EFF Support, Tourism and Agriculture Support and so on.

There is concessional loans offered at five percent interest rate per annum for youth and women micro and small medium enterprise entrepreneurs. These are small businesses under the definition of small to medium enterprises. The enterprises are assessed and assisted under normal credit assessment criteria. These loans attract an interest rate of 8 percent to 15 percent rates.

The Bank has lend to a wide variety of customers and projects under these two lending streams in the construction sectors, distribution, i.e.; wholesale and retail, transportation, agriculture, fisheries and forestry. The Bank is experiencing a slow portfolio in the first half of 2023, mainly due to capital constraints and more time spend on the existing customers who are also facing difficulties in making their financial obligations.

There are challenges in close monitoring and supervision of accounts due to location of project in the provinces. The increase in non-performing loans is a challenge for the bank and although the collateral is secured the recoverability of debt from tendered vendor and public sale is the risk. The sudden growth in non-performing loans are due to various reasons. For example, changes to the business environment affecting business in general, the delay in payment connected to contracts especially from government, customers lacking the business augment and financial discipline to manage business and assess and making it risks, businesses affected due to lack of capital to sustain business during low period, industry readiness, for example; in tourism, has yet to see tourist numbers to the opening of borders in July 2022

depends on other stakeholders such as airline, accommodation and tour operators, etc.

Lending to provinces. Access to DBSI services to the provinces is mainly through electronic mail or telephone contact. The DBSI on one side provide the initial contact point to potential customers anywhere in the provinces. Lending to the province is fairly distributed with low exposures in Rennell and Bellona. Renbel is only \$989,000. Central and Choiseul are \$2.4 million, Temotu and Makira are around \$4 million and so on. The location and distance and the level of economic activities in the province reflects the level of exposure. It is a challenge to the Bank as catalyst for economic development to provide innovative lending products to ceased such economies.

The main role of the DBSI guarantee Scheme is to bridge the gap between the banks collateral security required and the collateral the borrower can provide. The scheme can provide up to 90 percent of the security shortfall amount. 10 percent of the unsecured portion of the loans risks absorbed by the Bank. The Bank has approved a total 64 loans worth \$18.5 million under the CBSI Guarantee Scheme. The total approved amount of \$10.36 million. The scheme allows SME clients to access credit in the absence of sufficient collaterals.

In terms of challenges, one is on funding. Currently there is term deposit of \$20 million rolled over with SIG and \$10 million term deposit being negotiated with National Provident Fund. The direct grant funding agriculture, tourism and commerce has been supporting the Bank well and \$60 million is expected soon.

The Bank's needs for this years 2023 is around \$40 million according to the budget to fulfill its disbursement and growth plan. The Bank currently achieved 80 percent of its annual portfolio growth targets. The Banks plans to disclose \$68 million to grow the portfolio by 25 percent to \$128 million by end of this year.

The additional estimate to establish and operate the first branch in Gizo is around \$12.6 million. Similar cost will be required to open a second branch in Auki. The estimate includes the lending operation for the branch.

The head office relocation. The bank incurred close to \$1 million to renovate the space at the Investment Cooperation of Solomon Islands Building after the earthquake in November 2022, whereby a second office at Level 2 of Anthony was damaged and closed. The Capacity building is an ongoing activity for staff development jointly with the Ministry of Commerce and other technical assistance providers such as ADB, as well as in-house training.

Finally, financial inclusion has a big role to play in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Achieving the SDGs would be tougher without

bringing people into the banking system. The role financial inclusion can play to attain many SDGs includes eliminating poverty, creating jobs, improving gender equality, good health and education, to name just a few. For these reasons, the DCGA government placed the reopening of the Development Bank of Solomon Islands as its flagship policy commitment when it came into power in early 2019.

With these brief remarks, I support the Motion and resume my seat.

Mr. JOHN MANENIARU (*West Are Are*) (10:23): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to also contribute to the Motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition that Parliament resolve itself into the Committee of the Whole House to consider National Parliament Paper No.34 of 2022, the Development Bank of Solomon Islands Annual Report 2020.

At the outset, let me thank the Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Aoke/Langalanga for this Motion. It is a very important Motion in terms of the interest that we have in the Development Bank Of Solomon Islands.

I wish to also thank the Minister of Finance and the government for reviving the Development Bank of the Solomon Islands.

Let me also join the Leader of the Opposition to highlight the timing. We will not comment too much on this, because it is the report for 2020.

As we have reflected on in the debate on the TRC report, timing is also of essence, and that is what I would like to touch on. If we respond positively to the issues of our interest within the right timing, we will really rightfully address these issues and advance them.

When we talk about a report that is two years already, it will not be of much interest, especially when we focus on very specific interests, like the purpose of the Bank, its mission, and core values. It will be good if we complete this report and set a base that we would quickly go into the most recent report so that we begin looking at the bank of our interest, which represents us and government policies in terms of the development aspiration of the 80 percent of resources that are untapped and found in our provinces with our people

On that, I would like to commend the board of directors, the hardworking chairman, who is the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Finance, and the board of directors for the work of reestablishing this Development Bank, with the purpose to include everyone in the country in development. I want to again congratulate the government for the establishment of the Development Bank in our country. Development Bank has already been with us and also we have memories on it; what happened in the past in the previous Development Bank. With that we know that the Board is well guided; the government in terms of policy is well guided so that

we do not follow those road again. It is a challenge, and as I have alluded to; it will be good if we have more update report so that we look on those performances against the purpose as to why we re-establish DBSI. That is what I want to highlight.

On page 1 of this 2020 annual report; has covered 16 months of operation. It is inclusive to rural development. It is a good one. We always complained that our resources are with our people, which is 80 % of our population down there. It is not easy for them to come into those commercial Banks to really work and achieve their good ideas based on the resources that they in the rural areas. If we do not pave way for them; the resources will be down there, located where there is no road, no infrastructure; and then we have difficulties on shipping in our country in terms of transportation, and other needs that our rural people needed will become a big challenge. I agree with the Minister of Finance on his brief intervention; talking about those who receive support from the Bank also face challenges which is true.

If we establish the Bank and connect it on how its investment to the rural areas can be viable; then these challenges need to be looked at in terms of government policies. How we enabled those investment to function, if those challenges are there. I looked at the funding and I am happy about it, and I commend the Bank and the Management, Board of Directors for settling the Bank into a challenging environment on its achievement over that 16 months; but as I said it will be fair to the Bank if we look more to those updated reports last two years that will give true reflection of the Bank, how they have carried on and out the purpose that they established on. I am looking at the funding on agriculture.

We have other sectors there, but we always talked about agriculture in the floor of the Parliament. How are we going to get investment into agriculture and our farmers flowing on those remote places for them to earn their incomes to pay for their loans? as well as their products to have market? At the moment they are struggling. With those challenges, they will also face a lot of challenges to create opportunities to be viable and profitable. So I see that the emphasis and focus should be on agriculture and other sectors as well.

On that, I join the call by the Leader of the Opposition for the government Ministries responsible for the sectors to work with our potential farmers, recommend them, support them throughout the process, and collaborate with DBSI to come up with good, viable projects in the sectors, but they need to be assisted by the ministries responsible; they cannot do it on their own. I think that is a good idea for us to put the ministries to work to support those. For agriculture, you should take responsibility.

Each year, the Ministry of Agriculture should achieve one viable project with farmers in the agriculture sector, refer it to DBSI, and DBSI should support that

environment as well. For the Ministry of Fisheries, you can do the same, and the same goes for Tourism, so that we do not just leave our people struggling with the potential that they have. In the situation that we face today, the economy is not easy, and our people with the potential are also faced with big challenges, and the ministries under the government's policies should aid them.

When it comes to the reporting, the annual report, who is going to help with that? If you look at our farmers in rural areas and remote areas, for them to really make sense of the bank that requires reports and financial reports, who will help them with that? Are they going to provide the bank with those reports? Or even the audited financial statements of those that they borrow from and have established their businesses, are they going to come up with it so that it gives a true picture of how they actually get the money and invest?

Those are areas where I see that if the project proposers and the farmers do not have the opportunity to get support, they will also struggle. As I have said, if we have the most recent reports, it will help us when we compare how they actually perform against this mandate for them to grow the rural economy. They connect it. On that note, the environment is very important. Even though we have DBSI and there is a lot of money in there and they put it into rural projects in remote areas, there is a possibility of it failing because it is not connected.

The government's policy to create a conducive environment for our farmers is not there, and that is a challenge that I see that ministries must take up. We must lead this; we should not just leave money inside DBSI and that's it. The government's policy across all sectors must work so that investors, particularly farmers, can help our economy grow and achieve what the purpose of their borrowed money is for and what the purpose of this development bank is.

As I alluded to earlier, the history that we have is not good for us. There is a lot of money that the government has put into DBSI before, and it was right off; the papers were burned, and that is a good start to this initiative. DBSI, we have that history and it should strengthen us for us to make sure that it work out for us this time around. We will continue to talk about growing our economy if the policy strategy for us to really connect is not focused, then it will not be and it will still challenge us today.

With that, I would like again to thank the mover of the Motion. It is good. The call on the earlier Motion on Solomon Power is also a good one. The government Ministers, Opposition Members, we must take on the reports on. We must make it current, so that the most recent reports that we take will help them, like our SOEs. Let us debate and let us have a great opportunity to see where they are going with the mandate that we are giving them.

If we do not closely and monitor them, then nothing will be right. It will help us to revisit the policy that is why we are establishing them as well. I am talking about the annual reports. If we are reminded, we remind them through the opportunity on the floor of Parliament through Motions, it would be really good and that is the responsibility that we carry.

Ministers, you have that responsibility for your state owned enterprises, bring in their reports and not expecting the Opposition to always move the Motions. You move it so that you report it. You should have the joy in you because it is your SOE. It is your urgency that represents you in the private sector, in our economy, to implement your policies. That is what I would like to highlight again.

I join the call for us to update the reports through the presentation and Motions on the floor of Parliament such as we are doing good in this responsibility so that we can see where we should redirect our policies.

With that, again, I thank the mover of the Motion. I thank the government through the Ministry of Finance for DBSI and let us continue to look forward to the other reports of recent years so that they come quickly. We put them on the floor by motion and so that we are up to date on the issues that they are facing.

With that, I support the Motion and I resume my seat.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA (*Small Malaita*) (10:40): Thank you Mr Speaker. I would like to contribute a bit to this Motion. I would like to thank the mover, the Leader of Opposition, for bringing the Motion so that the House through the Committee can consider and look on this report. It is an important part of Parliamentary scrutiny.

At the same time, I think it is very, very good for the new institution to bring its very first report to the House, and for that, I would like to commend the Minister, the Board of Directors, the interim CEO and staff of the new DBSI for this commendable work.

All the things that both the Leader of Opposition and the Member for West Are'Are said, I agree with, and so I will not repeat those.

I just want to share three points. The first is to again commend the Bank on the policy initiative to, as it will, feel a gap, a very big gap that is created by the existing banking system, in which we cannot reach the majority of the economy. To a very large extent, we call it subsistence sector.

I note some commendable initiatives, that the management and the board has initiated, namely, livelihood and investment loan facility. I will ask a bit more when we come to the Committee on how it works, but I regard that as a very

commendable initiative; this livelihood investment facility, and I think the way they respond to Covid-19 Response loans. That is commendable. That is the only thing I want to debate on.

I see that it is commendable because in Solomon Islands, this is an area or sector that banks shy away from and for very obvious and good reasons. It is risky. Every business in this sector or area is very risky. Not only that they are far away from head quarters and where people can see, but the sectors that are involved, namely agriculture, tourism and those things in the rural areas, these are very risky areas. There is no road and airport. When you are in a hospitality sector, it is dangerous and risky business. People saw it as risky and so when you are investing your investors' funds, that is not where you go.

I would like to commend the management and the board on this. Some of the initiative, which are there, of course it is early days, we will try and see how it works. That is where, I supposed, when we brought this Act, that is what we want to target, the rural masses which is the 80 percent of our people are, where these assets that should enhance, promote and activate the economic activity are just lying idle.

This is again a problem for financial services providers. How you ensure that these assets that you do not even able to describe, how can you help hold them as collateral? It is risky and costly as well. The cost of administering one loan, probably you might be spending \$2 dollars to earn \$1 and \$10 dollars to earn \$5. It is very expensive, so we will see, but this is where the policy is targeting. I want to encourage the Bank and the board to look at this.

Raising funds for a development bank will be and has been a very difficult enterprise unless of course the government, in our case, puts the money all the time or other soft loan lenders have agreed and see that it is viable to lend money to the development banks. So we will also have to find innovative products. So this means we should have good innovations in our portfolio of lending products, but when raising money, we will look for some of funding that is inexpensive to the bank in the long term. I am saying this because our memory of our previous development bank, as stated by the member for West Are, was a very bad one. We do not want to go there again.

The government and even borrowers lost money. Many borrowers and investors lost assets. We do not want to go there. So the board has to really think of innovation ideas for, but be mindful that we have lessons to learn. So I hope these lessons will be on the minds of the board.

I think one of the very important mechanisms we need to make it work is regulating the operations of the bank. I think in the Act, we try to make sure that regulations

come under the Central Bank, and this is something that would be quite important. But I think the best approach is to implement self regulatory procedures in the bank itself. I think this first report has given some good indications that we have some mechanisms in there that will ensure, sustainability in the long term.

Sir, our experience with the previous bank is that when the government dishes out money, we even put people there to dish it back. It is very weak, and we must ensure against that. Having said that, sir, I want to appreciate the report, and I think what the bank needs to do is put the government at arm's length and work with CBSI. This is the problem with the previous bank. It will be difficult when we ask the regulator to get involved, but I think the products that the bank has implemented for its clients are good ones, and some of them are products that are promoted under the CBSI guarantee scheme.

But in relation to the point made by the member for West Are'Are, the government, must put the bank at arms length and it must play its role in policy direction. But I think one of the things for which the government has to always be there is ensuring this bank does what it is supposed to do. One of which is accountability.

So, minister, at the end of the year, you must ask the minister for your financial report. It should be an essay thing, but that very basic question, we have not asked CEOs in the past. If we do not produce it, it is alright that you still have money in your cash box. That attitude must stop. We cannot continue to do that with this new DBSI.

I just want to end here to again make the point that I am happy in this report. I am also happy on what the Board did, but I want to make this cautionary points to us. Government stay at an arms length, policy direction is good. Make sure the Bank is properly regulated. We will need support, especially in the first couple of years where it will try to put its feet on the ground. We need the support. CBSI must support it too, but especially the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Finance must support and help it. That is my few contribution.

I would like to express my support for the Motion, and I resume my sit.

Hon. REXON RAMOFAFIA (*Fataleka—Minister for National Planning and Development Coordination*) (10:53): Thank you Mr. Speaker for giving me this opportunity to also join the others to make some intervention in relation to this Motion. I also join the others to thank Leader of Opposition for moving this Motion, especially for the Parliament to consider this report as it is important; as we also play an important role in looking at the number of reports that submitted to this House. On that note, I thank the Leader of Opposition.

I also thank the government in the past for the important policy to revive DBSI. We know that DBSI is established under an Act of Parliament and operated in the past, and then that history has been liquidated in the past. So we thank the government especially from 2014 and 2015 for reviving this new DBSI. It is important and it is something that we thank the government then, and also continuous support until now.

I also acknowledged the work of Board and Management, including the Ministry of Finance and ICCSI and other Stakeholders that work closely in bringing up how this bank is operational as it was launched in 2019/2020; and it is now in operational. I think Development Financing is an important need for this country. The challenges that the country face in terms of Finance, we as the government continue to deal with. We know that the environment that we are operating on, whether as a business or private sector; it is really challenging. And so financing mechanism to help people is really important. We know that with commercial banks, accessing finance is one of the most difficult things that we face as a country, the private sector, or businesses. On that note, DBSI is important in terms of supporting development and supporting our people so that we continue to address the development challenges that we face as a country.

The report has highlighted especially the operational part of DBSI, and it sort of looks good in terms of how we try to come up with financial products that people can access here. We see the areas that other speakers have also spoken about, and the number of sectors that are important, like agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and the productive and resource sectors that we can continue to support and finance is very important so that we can strengthen our people so that they participate in the economic activities. That is very important, and we continue to engage with our people through financial mechanisms that they can access so that it helps them grow their businesses. Sometimes they find it difficult to access loans from commercial banks, and so I join the others in really thanking the government for coming up and reviving DBSI so that it can operate and continue to work with the different sectors and the private sector and our people so that we together can support each other in terms of growing our economy.

We Solomon Islands continue to face challenges in areas of development, and the cost of doing business is really costly and even challenging. We find that businesses find that it is not easy, and the production cost to access capital is one of the areas that also limits people from participating in our economy. So here we see the importance of establishing DBSI, which is really important. On that note, the support from the government is something that we continue to support for DBSI, especially for continuous financing. Capital injection into DBSI is so important. Over the years, the government has continued to support SOEs and inject funds into SOEs, but working to inject funds into DBSI is important so that DBSI can give funds

through loans so that people can access them, continue to grow their businesses, and help grow our economy.

The report highlighted how, for the last 6 months, in 2020 and I think what others have mentioned are also important. We are now in 2023 and so we would also like to know how DBSI is operating, especially from 2020 and up, it was a very challenging time in the country. The COVID situation that the country went through affected our economy, including lives of our people. We would also like to thank DBSI for working with the government and people through those challenging times, the support through this Stimulus Package that also supported DBSI. This is how we sort of try to address the challenge that we face during the COVID situation. There is need to continue to support, especially the policy support to our banks, especially DBSI, so that the engagement with our rural people is really important.

As we know, Solomon Islands, most of our population are in the rural areas and they do not really participate in the economic activities. They are not participating in the formal sector. I think empowering our people through some financial mechanism is really, really important. On that note, I support the need to continuously support DBSI so that it can continue to go to the provinces.

I would like to thank the Minister of Finance through his debate that DBSI is now looking at setting up in the Western Province and Malaita. This is really important for us to bring services to the rural areas and right to our people. Bring services so that our people can be able to access financing and that is so important. We see and even as a country to access funds through the funding that is available internationally, to access it is also hard. We find it hard to access climate financing, Green Fund is quite difficult and so making financing easier for us is also one area to look at. How our people can be able access finance so that it helps them to participate in the activities that can help to grow economy and also development.

The governance part and operations of the DBSI is also important. We know from the history of DBSI when it operated in the past, we call for close monitoring or government continue to work closely with the DBSI and in terms of reporting or in terms of monitoring it is also important so that we continue to support it so that it can reach the stage where it can really go out to the provinces.

Our business environment in the country is very challenging especially for the business or even banks like DBSI to grow. It is something that is not easy. We acknowledge it that as soon as DBSI was launched, a number of things happened. We did not anticipate Covid will come. Our domestic issues that have affect the businesses and so our environment is not easy but challenging. The need for working together and support each other is so important.

Therefore, we look at areas of investment and where we want to go into it to grow our economy. Thus, DBSI is so important for us in terms of how we would like to work to address the needs of our country. These are the general comments I want to make regarding the debate on this report.

I am very happy to see, that despite the challenges that we face in the country whether through COVID or shocks in the economy of the global issues or even our domestic issues but still we continue to work to address the need of our country. Thus, reviving DBSI is so important so that it help us to part together to build our country and economy.

With those few remarks I support and I resume my seat.

Hon FREDRICK KOLOGETO (*South Vella Lavella—Minister for Commerce, Industries, Labour and Immigration*) (11:09): Thank you Mr. Speaker for giving me this opportunity to also contribute to this motion moved by the honorable MP for Aoke and Langalanga and Leader of Opposition. My contribution and intervention will be brief as I do not want to repeat myself on what other speakers have stated. As you Mr. Speaker and all of us are aware, this week we debate this TRC Report and DBSI is one of those avenues that government saw that it is a way to address the issues we are talking about. The ministry itself put more emphasis on how to support DBSI.

In the report there are few issues that have been raised but others have stated it too old and we did not really want to dwell on the actual but as leaders we know that there are few things we can learn from. I pick few things in the report. The first is the amount of allocation by certain ministries. As other speakers have stated, I think the government needs to look into it. Where does the money go. Who do they give loans and what sectors. Also if you look at the report, Honiara took the big amount of 56 percent. I do support the idea of opening the other venues for DBSI to operate as stated by the Minister of Finance and Treasury. I think one will be in Auki and Gizo, and that is a good suggestion going forward.

To me, DBSI is not signing aloud but easily singing and we need DBSI to sing aloud so that everyone hear it. Most of the people do not know what s DBSI is, because money has already finish here in Honiara and the people in the village did not know it. Therefore, the good government next year must be serious about this. The economic disparity that is recorded in the TRC report, as I have alluded to, has been addressed by the Ministry of Commerce through DBSI, whereby we inject a certain amount of grant money to help SMEs.

One of the important points that I want to address is monitoring. Mr. Speaker, when applicants applied for a loan, they might have applied to build a bungalow. When they receive the funding, they instead purchase a bus or start a retail shop. So what

I am trying to say here is that it is important that they monitor it to make sure the money is diverted to the right use.

I remember when I went to one of the countries in Africa, whose name I will not mention here, they had an agriculture bank. I am not saying that we establish an agriculture bank, but probably we put certain allocation of money in sectors that will be important. So it avoids the practice of just one group of sector taking funds. We should prioritize the things that we want to do.

But I am happy with the management of DBSI, as well as the director and the minister of finance who is responsible for this SOE, for continuing to push and asking for more money from everywhere we can get. Sometimes I think we should put some of the funds from the RCDF there so that they can manage them properly for us. So that whoever gets the money will feel responsible for the money that they get. So I support this paper, and I thank the opposition leader for bringing it here so that we could consider this report. It could be better if we could take the latest one so that we could address various important issues here.

With these few remarks, I support the Motion and resume my seat.

Hon. BARTHOLOMEW PARAPOLO (*Ngella—Minister for Culture and Tourism*) (11:14): I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for this very important Motion, which is the DBSI report

I also want to thank the staff of the DBSI for the good work that they have done for the last few years and also the recipients of the funds from the DBSI, which includes myself.

I see that we need to inject more funds inside DBSI to support growth, especially in the tourism sector where budget is not much for rural areas. The reform that the Ministry wants to implement now is rural tourism. We need to put more money in DBSI and discourage giving grants to people, so that it will grow and support everyone. Because when we give grants to the operators, they are liable to do something that is unexpected of them and hence not invest in tourism. So it is good that people must be responsible for what they do, especially in the tourism industry.

As we know, we have been in this Industry for the last four to five years, but Solomon Islands still not a popular tourism destinations yet. Something is wrong with our attitude, especially being dishonest with what we are doing. So when we are not honest, curse come to our country because we are not honest.

So I appeal to the public at large; when you take funds at DBSI, be honest. Do the right thing, so that it will grow and support everyone in the country, so that we can see changes happen in our rural areas especially in terms of tourism.

Once this reform tourism industry comes up with rural tourism, we need to work together. Get funds at DBSI and work with that industry, so that we can see the growth of tourism industry in the rural areas. Now you see in Honiara, the room rates are very expensive when the tourists come here. So it is not encouraging for tourist to come here. We need to re-standardize targeting the rural area, so that room rate is cheap.

You might ask how are they going to reach those rural areas? There are ways to do it there, but only us to work on it. You see the industry is just monopoly in Honiara. That is why things is hard for the tourist to come. Only those people who come for work for donor partners, NGOs; these are the only people who come because it is not their money that they use, but it is the organizations money. That is why we said they are tourist, but they are not really tourist. They came for business. So you see, we still not targeting any tourist that use his own pocket money to come here. It is a little bit funny on how we go about this one; but I appeal to our government and all of us here to support that industry because this is a live money; foreign earning. They do not come to do destruction on land, sea etc. They are very friendly. If we do it right for them, they will come; but hope is on DBSI.

My Ministry is looking at putting more guarantee on DBSI so that we can grow this industry through the rural tourism. One thing I want to say is; we do not politicize DBSI. It is because of politicizing that it died during the first DBSI. We put those who are not fit to sit in that board. When they make decisions they politicize it. So this round we must not do it. Get the right people to sit inside this bank. Only those who are qualified must sit in the Board, so that we work with them to grow the economy of our country.

I thank you Leader of Opposition for moving the motion for us to look through the report. I thank the Staff and Directors of DBSI, a job well done that you did to come up with this report. That is very encouraging and my Ministry looks forward to work with you especially in the tourism sector to grow tourism in the country.

With this few remarks I support the motion and resume my seat, thank you.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr) (*East Are Are*) (11:21): Thank you again to the Member for Aoke/Langalanga and Leader of Opposition for bringing this for our consideration here, to consider the Development Bank of Solomon Islands Annual Report 2020. I think colleagues have already shared sentiments that I also wanted to share here; but I just wanted to spend perhaps a broader bigger picture in terms of the policy that perhaps was the basis for this all along. We all know that DBSI predates independence, in fact it was called the Bank for Industry and Agriculture back in the 50s, I think 60s, before we had our independence and then changed the name as we move towards independence in '77 and then of course in '78 with the

independence order so I think it is fair to say that DBSI has always had a central role in terms of the development of this nation and I think it is only right that the previous parliament or the previous government so it fit to revive it after it fell apart for various reasons including the ones that were just outlined by the minister for tourism as well but of course with our own problems during the ethnic tensions and those contributed towards demise as well. I think we all know the history of this, and perhaps many of you know it better than some of us who were outside of the country through much of the tension.

I just wanted to point out the importance of this development bank for the Solomon Islands and the role that it can play if we allow it to play in the development of our nation. We know that we are getting into a space where I personally feel people are getting used to handouts.

This dependency syndrome is coming through various including through the government through the various policies that we have set up perhaps the CDF is also to be blamed there in terms of expectation of people are starting to be hand out driven waiting for what it is that government delivers through the lined ministries through grants and perhaps through members of parliament through the CDF but I think this DBSI stands as a contrast to that that it allows people that obligation to not just depend on hand outs but to be able to have access to finance through certain responsibilities and obligations that they sign on to and I think this is healthy in terms of nation moving forward that we also on top of the grants that is needed have this pathway for which those that are eligible can access finance and have responsibility and obligations attached to them.

I think this is a great counterbalance and counterweight because I think moving forward, our future lies in this. We cannot continue to be a nation of handouts to our people, including school fees, and we have to encourage and empower them so that they themselves look after their own affairs, and I think by doing that, they will be proud citizens contributing back to the nation that we all love. So I think that picture in terms of that overall picture as a policy picture, I know that the government is aware of this as mentioned already by the minister for Commerce in terms of our discussion over this last week and moving the nation forward, I think nation building DBSI contributes to nation building.

I think seeing from that lens I think it will be something that will encourage all of us to support the DBSI moving forward and I would like to thank of course the management and the board of the bank, it has been a tumultuous few years, you launched something and then the next year you are faced with something that is not of our own making and once again exposes our exposure towards the shocks that come in and for a small country like us, we are very vulnerable to these external shocks or the so-called isogonics shocks. It is good to know that despite that, the

bank has continued to do its work. I am very interested to hear about the three committees that are being set up already, and the two lending units within are already doing their work, which is encouraging. But I think the big issue here continues to be, as I see it, access to finance by the people that might need it the most. I think some of the numbers that we hearing in terms of Honiara being the biggest beneficiary, perhaps does not yet reflect what we are trying to do with the DBSI. I think, if you look at the Act itself in 5(b), one of the mandates of the Bank is to focus on rural development and rural development is really many of us around here are also focusing on and I think successive governments since Independence has always had this as their priority regardless of which is the government of the day.

So, I think there is a convergence here that we have in terms of our focus on rural development. So think some innovative ideas might need to be thought of in terms of how to increase access to folks in the rural areas. I think perhaps like the Minister of Commerce referring to the country in Africa that it does not want to name, there are DBSI or development Banks in Africa too that do have some innovative approaches in terms of collateral and allowing more people to have access to finance. You can hear, read about cattle stock being put aside as assets for collateral so that they can have access to finance.

I think Honiara is very much the focus now because of the assets that are here and the registration of those assets, property, vehicle those sort of things not in the rural areas. So, I think the idea and the policy in terms of adjusting and encouraging those in the rural area to participate might mean more innovative thinking and perhaps the context from which Solomon Islands has a very much subsistence based yet economy would need to be factored in as well.

Of course, there standards that Banks need to abide by that is very much welcomed but at the same time, I think we can that creativity to explore perhaps other ways and means through which those might want access can easily or more easily have access to funds and that. Goat herd, cattle and those sort of thing in Africa are being used in their development Banks as well as collateral. I do not know what the similarity would be for us here but it does not mean cut and paste. It just means having a look at what is available and how we can tailor it for our own context and our own situation here.

Of course, the big policy would be that as many people as possible to have access to finance , that should be the driving policy I think behind this as well. When it comes to the funding, I think it is important as well that we look at that holistically as well from a policy level. We know that there is already mentioned here about perhaps CDF can be used, why not? Those who might want to be involved should allowed to be involved in these kinds of ventures.

Of course, it can be forced on all of us but I think it is a good pathway for those within the constituencies that are able to or should be able to have access to funds if they are willing for the obligations that come with it. That would be allowing us to perhaps hold a portion for some of our CDFs through that. Some of our constituencies are only trying out these revolving funds ourselves as income generating, in terms of getting people interested in interest rim or access to small finance. But that is very small. But we are willing to work with the Bank for example in terms of telling the Bank who has been the best performers in our own constituencies that might be able to graduate towards the Bank, knowing the history that they have had in our own constituencies through our own so called revolving fund mechanisms that some of us had set up with mixed results. But there are some performers too that we think warrant a better support from institutions particularly the DBSI in terms of what they are doing and growing their businesses and thereby impacting the economy; not just the constituency but the wider economy of the nation.

But the holistic approach of this, I think would involve things like funds, like the fisheries funds, FFA funds, PNA funds. Portion of those are coming through the Banks as well, and if they are already doing that, why are we not increasing it.

We want to congratulate the Ministries that have put money in here. Also the Minister for Tourism, I am aware that they have done this in the past reports and they have come to the media. Those are very welcomed and can be added on in terms of what other funds that we have. We know that the government is talking about this citizenship investment for citizenship investment schemes.

Those are other means and streams of revenue that might be used to perhaps also support the DBSI. This holistic approach is something that I would like to encourage in terms of policy. We also welcome the fact that government through the minister has an direct access to give policy guidance in the Bank and that is welcomed. But I would support others as well who raised here that when it comes to operational I think enhance of approach is best, but the policy guidance is very much needed and welcomed in terms of how the Act sets it out.

With those few remarks I support and I resume my seat.

(Speech in reply)

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I acknowledge everyone who have spoken and various responds that have been made. Particularly, I thank the Minister for Finance and Treasury in giving us some more update information up to the end of 2022 and current position. Of course we are looking forward to the audited annual reports to give us a much better and far more accurate look at how the Bank is trending.

There are a lot of ideas for us to do. Of course the Bank is in its early rejuvenation and the cautious approach they take is understandable. The idea of the Minister of Commerce, Labour, Industry and Immigration are very good ideas. We want the chorus to be very loud during singing. When the member stated this, I think and unfortunately logging is up to its completion. Our people saw their place themselves so that they will not crook us on the transfer price all the time. They sell it themselves and all the money come back and develop our people themselves and not the Chinese took it, run away with it and hide it and even mining. However, it is good that DBSI grow into that.

Obviously the scale of that requires a certain level of capacity and competence is probably might not there yet but also the literacy side of it. Those who might be borrowers but we must not think small on our people and so DBSI could be at a leading edge of that spear in terms of poking our people to stand and do things that have mercy to be a bit over powering and overwhelming for them but it would be the way for us to redeem and regain control over our economy than the people from outside come and do these big things.

There is nothing hard about cutting tree, bring it down to the sea shores, load it on the ship and send it. Is it the Chinese to do it. Those are the ideas like that. Moreover, you dig the ground, load it to the truck and took it down to sea shore, load it in the ship and go. We are looking down on ourselves and it is not really good. Therefore, DBSI allows us to do that and we are not just thinking of the small Kava or cassava farmer but we must think of them as well. The tribes and land owners who owns the tree and minerals should be able to do it. Yesterday the Minister of Lands voiced and cried on this word 'alienation' when he talks about alienation of land. It will be worse that even if your land is customary but your tree is alienated from you. This is even worse, but DBSI actually represents a wonderful opportunity. The practice where someone from another palace comes and takes license to cut your trees and carry grounds from your land is totally an immoral idea Mr. Speaker. But because our people do not have access to finances, we think that is the way this capitalist world works, but it need not be.

So DBSI must not think small but big, and of course a cautious approach is good at this stage. But it must start by thinking big about how it could expand and empower our people in these sectors.

Sir, with those few remarks, I move that we resolve into Committee now to consider this report.

Question put and agreed to

(Report committed to the Committee of the Whole House)

(Committee Stage)

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Thank you, sir. As I noted earlier, the issue of consolidated governance and board appointment of membership. It is important that these be as independent as possible. So perhaps you can give us a more detailed update on the status of the board now. We note that the PS for Finance was chairman, and he may no longer be. He was the chairman at the time but also on the Central Bank Board as a regulator. For the political appointees, I only see on in the pictures here and the Attorney General. But are there any changes in the lineup of the board to date?

Hon HARRY KUMA: Thank you Leader of Opposition for that question on the Board. Those that appear on the report as you have alluded to were interim board at that time. You will see that the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance is also there. It was an interim process of the establishment of the Bank; but as you have alluded to that he is also the ex-officio in the Central Bank, then that interim arrangement has gone and we now put together a new board, which does not include him, and includes new members.

For your information, the new members of the board are; Peter Sogoelo Chairman, Tobias Bule Deputy Chairman and members are David Faradatalo, Pamela Alamu, Dr Mclean Vagalo, Trevor Manimanga, John Muria Jnr, and Alfred Ghemu.

So these appointment of the members, the process is that it was advertised, scrutinized by the board itself, went through a fit and proper person test by the Central Bank and then recommended to the Minister to make the appointment.

So these members, even the current ones, went through that process, especially the fit and proper person test by the CBSI.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: My question, I think will reach page 12 as well, but in page 11, one of those products that the Bank came up with is the life loans. I am just intrigued by the method of repayments. It says "Repayments source from borrowers salaries". So I am assuming those who are employed only will get loan under this product. I want to know how exactly it works. Those government and private employees as well?

Hon HARRY KUMA: Yes, this life loan, we try to call it as new hybrid kind of lending product by the Bank as well that targeted especially the employed, so that they can loan; not just for a personal loan for the assets that they want, but also for the livelihood to start off any income generating activity in preparation for their retirements. So we are targeting those that have salary. That is probably why you see a lot of loans around Honiara as well. Of course it is secured by their pledge from the NPF as well. It is that kind, and not just for government employees. No! It

is across all businesses, private sectors and government and SOEs so everyone that earns salaries are potential customers for this product.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I want to know how it actually works, what is the interest rates for the loans? My question is really on how to sustain it from salaries, I mean if the interest rate is \$100 per month, but if the person's salary is \$1000 per fortnight and you take the half of that for the loan, I want to know how does it work practically?

Hon HARRY KUMA: It is based on the salaries of each employees. Of course the bank's careful assessment on that is there as well so that we do not over burden that salary earner or employee, so that at the same time he does not risk the bank too so there is proper assessment to weigh so those side of things, affordability of that employee we cannot over commit a loan that he is not able to afford in terms of repayments. It is big enough for that person to repay it.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: The other part of my question is the interest rate of the loans, this product. I do not know, this interest, apart from this interest, you have to pay the principle. I am just wondering, the salaries must be big salaries at first, how does this work on a normal Solomon Islander working at the public service, because I look at my salary and if the interest rate is high then I am not able. That is the point that I would like to know.

Hon HARRY KUMA: Again, I will just emphasize this affordability of its borrower and employee to get a loan. So that is how it is assessed and the bank would also like to recover it later on as well so that risk assessment is very strong at the bank so it is 13 percent interest rate to that part of your question and it is for a five-year term. So in the five years we must recover it.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: In terms of products, of course at this there are two the SMEs and this life product, and of course there has been two years since and whether there has been any development of further products. Say, if he wants us to go do logging on his land, for me there are only mangroves left so I have no place but if say a tribe wants to log their own place, and they came to the DBSI ,you do not have any facilities or any products that you can support this?

Hon HARRY KUMA: My apologies Leader of Opposition I did not quite catch your question.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Yes, just in terms of the number of products available or facilities at the bank, in this report there are two that we see and these two targets the small ones, salary based which is really constraint to affordability like you said and the SME one is again a small level funding. But those that are doing loggings would like to come and buy some excavator to do logging in their own land or some

Lucas mill and so forth. I would think that support which the Ministry of Commerce gives might be something or it is such that you can support them with. Whether there are products available for those? It is slightly larger than you would expect for a SMEs?

Hon HARRY KUMA: I think that is a very, very important question where it also questions the capacity and capability of the bank DBSI as well. As you know well, now it is only three years old, this baby, it is still and infant and toddler walking around here so we would like for a child like that to just run around the small grasses where it would fit not to fall down and get hurt. Not able to go to the big bush or lo to the sea by it self. I think that is a kind of analogy that I would like to answer in that question.

That we start with you know what the bank can afford as well in terms of capital that is available in the funding of it so we are targeting the LIF Product and of course these SMEs as well where it is sort of secured for the bank as well and at least it starts to help the people, the small income earners and our some farmers and all that.

The bank also sees the for example logging, one is the capacity to lend and capital available. Actually, it needs more capital so that its lending portfolio is at the level where it can sustain itself. We are not there yet, so perhaps, I should say that we build on to that but we are not there yet but that is a good idea. It is a very good idea where the people can harvest their resources and benefit out of themselves. But at this stage, one is capacity to lend to that and also, the bank still sees some risk there.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: I appreciate those comments. As you know of course, POB when it was set up, it was only in its four months but it gives loan to those things, so it also wore nappy like DBSI but it also went into the bush so we must not look down on our child I think it can be done and it should be done. It actually must be done for really for it to power our people. And it need not be capital injection from government, they are raising finance from market, you know those enterprises that kind of industry is very profitable and so it should be able to run on commercial sources or funds which the DBSI can secure.

Also, we see with BSP Finance and Credit Corp, the lease financing products and I think DBSI is an ideal vehicle for that so that collateral is a moveable property that would be acquired under such a scheme. But I suppose my caution is for you not be too cautious or for DBSI not to be too cautious that we are still a child and we need two to three years or need five or 10 years. We must not be like that. We must hit the ground running. For capacity, you buy the capacity, do not be constrained to develop it, all of it in house, that is constraining the economy. You bring in the

experience and the idea platform and the technology that is available elsewhere, the banking platform and all those. Buy it! That is what capital injection was for. So buy that capacity to be able to hit the ground running and expand fairly rapidly. Of course good governance is key to all of this. Decision making has to tick a number of boxes but an overly cautious approach, I think will constraint the economy for too long.

Hon HARRY KUMA: Thank you Leader of Opposition for that very important comment of cautious and to be over cautious, but to also take on the risks. We are a bank and we should take on the risks and lend to such proposals as well.

Still I will say that compare with POB, for example, they also hit the road and running. But its parents is different, a different baby and DBSI's parent is different as well. You know, if the parent has a lot of money and well off, the baby is looking at you or if it has a lot in its pocket. Even the big investments and proposal that has come has led to logging. For DBSI is a different kid and we need to take extra cautious so that we must not repeat as we always stressed in the past DBSI but it is a good point we should build to it.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: You know POB started with a \$26 million capitalization and DBSI started with \$58 million, or whatever it is, when we add everything together. Actually DBSI's parent is much stronger than the parent of POB. Do not hold back. These issues you are looking at like lease financing products. Even getting the added benefit of handling the foreign receipts that would come from exports is a big source of income and that would be an additional income stream to DBSI, which of course would require some corresponding banking relationship protocols in place. I suppose my main message is do not be a kid for too long. We need you to stand up because DBSI is the tool to empower our people to get into serious business not just a cramps that fall of the table with serious business. That is the way we redeem our economy. I suppose thought there.

Just one question Chairman, in terms of the banks thinking going forward in terms of additional products to the two that are reported here. What was the idea on this one?

Hon HARRY KUMA: At this stage, we do not move into any new product but still on those two in particular.

Mr BODO DETTKE: I just want to ask the good hard working Minister. I am very happy about this DBSI. I think it is meant to help our people in the rural areas, especially for our farmers. One question I want to ask to you, Minister, and it is just common sense. I would advise my people and farmers never to borrow money from your Bank at 13 percent. It simply means, if I borrow \$100,000.00 from you, but your interest 13 percent and carried out for 10 years, this simply means I pay you back

\$130,000.00 on top of this \$100,000.00 that I borrowed. We will go bankrupt. It is not practical. My people would lose their assets. Could you consider something a little bit lower to help our people? This is really for our people in rural areas that do not have access to commercial banks, unlike a lot of us who have access to commercial banks.

That is what I see, and it saddens me because I think this is not meant for urban business people but to take care of our unfortunate people in the rural areas. Like we already said, agriculture is our backbone. So we should utilize this for our people out there that cannot meet the criteria of the commercial banks in Honiara. It saddens me. I hope, Minister, we can be flexible to these people, but for the setup of the bank, I appreciate it.

Hon HARRY KUMA: I appreciate that. It sounds like an expensive rate for our people. But that of course, reflects the risks that are attached to those proposals that are coming from our people, and it is 13 percent.

But there are other flexibilities that are offered for certain loans, in particular with SMEs. For example, for any proposal that is proposed by any youth group or targets any youth group, and women group. That, comes down to 5 percent and that has to be carefully assessed as well.

The other loan that is making use of funding from, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture, also reduces to 10 percent. The other facility that is also available is the export financing facility provided by the Central Bank, which targets the export center. Make sure of that, because it will reduce to 7 percent as well. So perhaps 13 percent are for the type of very risky proposals that are submitted. But there are other products within the SME areas and exports targeting youth and women that are flexible as well.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I am on page 12 of the policy direction that the Bank tries to implement to invest in the economic and social well-being of our stakeholders in an environmentally sustainable manner. For the Bank to successfully achieve this, it must operate in the areas where about 80 percent of the country's citizens reside; that is the policy goal that they try to achieve here.

So my question is that, I suppose, part of this is reaching out to this 80 percent of the population, and I heard the Minister say that we have already reached Auki and Gizo. So that is what the Minister wants to do. So can he inform the House of this plan?

Hon HARRY KUMA: Ultimately, the vision or purpose for which we establish the bank is to have a rural focus, and as far as we can. We go wider in our rural areas. We are not there yet, as it is reflected in the report. We are still focusing a lot on

Honiara. But the plan is to go out to the rural areas and start with Gizo and then Auki to open the branches there so that we give access further to our rural people on those two places, and then we will slowly move on to other Provinces as well.

As we know, now technology come in as well on mobile banking services. This is an area where DBSI worked very hard on it to look at how this new technology can be used so that our rural people have mobile banking system that they can access products of the bank. Wider policy initiative of the government, this is in line with the broad band towers that we have just started as well, so that as far as we can go their rural areas can be connected; and if there is mobile banking services that linked to; for instance DBSI, and there are other commercial banks work on this as well, we can reach out and widened this for our people that have access to banking services, including DBSI.

Mr BODO DETTKE: Sorry, I was going to thank the Minister for his explanation.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Yes, just in terms of products and of course this emphasis to push out to rural areas, whether the banks thinking somewhere down the line of course, in retail banking. We have a problem of course with current banks. Technology is there and any kind of wallet they advertised, but it is mostly accessible to those in urban centers, or those who have access to urban centers. Now to apply to open a bank account on one of the banks is really hard. All these talk about inclusivity is just rubbish as cheap nonsense. They just make it so difficult, and then if you relate to us, the politically exposed persons (PEPS), you will be looked at as evil. They are not interested in you. I do not know why things ended up like this.

I note that the supervisory guidelines from the Central Bank is the source of this problem; and I do not know where that is come from. This is our country. We should have control over it. But I think DBSI offers us an opportunity to get out from this nonsense. It really is nonsense. How do you expect someone in the rural area, like Busurata, in Central Kwara'ae who grows taro to sell. In the past, you can just go and easily open a savings account. Nowadays you have answer three to four pages of paper. Those questions even I as an educated person cannot even answer them properly. For those in the rural areas, it is just too difficult. So DBSI opens a tool for us to make it easy for our people to bank. Is this something that is being thought about? If it is, how long into the future can this become available?

Hon HARRY KUMA: I really appreciate the concern that it is very difficult for our people to open their bank account in our commercial banks. Even some of us in Honiara find it difficult. How much those who are in rural areas that did not earn regular income? That is a fact and I totally agree and with that question to be raised with the appropriate authority, in particular our commercial banks and of course

CBSI as well. But those are commercial banks that have their foreign headquarters, and they risk their money as well. So they are careful with who has accounts there.

For DBSI, we are not there yet. If you know, we have not gone into retail banking and received deposits from people yet, but the Act provides it, and it is open for it to move that way as well. We can go there, and the long-term plan is there for us to keep moving into that because we consider ourselves to be a Bank for our people, and we must make sure that we offer services that are beneficial to them.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Do not push too much for the long term. For example, if an operator is here and he value add on coconut and he goes down to Lambi, he must carry \$100,000 with him in his bag while travelling in a vehicle to go and pay for the nuts. The same is true for Noni. So vehicles that go to load Noni must carry \$100,000 or \$1 million in cash. There is no such thing. What kind of economy will work from this kind of thing? Those farmers should have accounts, payments should be done through the bank. They go quietly and get their money whenever they need it.

If we do not have this available, it just is a clog that weighs down on the economy, it just weighs it down. Too many risks at the wrong places. It is making it cumbersome, inefficient, unnecessary costs and risks on the economy. So if there are investors wanting to invest in those things, that would be one of the big things they are worried about. If you are carrying that kind of cash going down the road, you must have a few security guards. So do not push it too far out because our commercial banks are never going to touch it. So really we have no options. DBSI must do it and do not push it too far.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: So this point that the mover of the Motion, the Member for Aoke/Langalanga, stated is something for DBSI to think about because it is to help DBSI much more than anyone else. I do not think about the deposit accounts, but so that the clients of DBSI can make their repayments efficiently and cost effectively. So I think if the management has not thought about that one yet, please make it so that all the clients and those who come to borrow money have an account there so that you do not go to pay through other banks. My question is on page 14, and apart from some very beautiful-looking ladies, the picture interests me. I want to know if St. John's ambulance is a client of DBSI.

Hon HARRY KUMA: I also take note of the emphasis on moving rural so that we can give our people access to the banking services of DBSI. If technology improves, it might not be necessary to have a physical presence there, but mobile-wise, they can make their repayments, so we are looking at those options as well. On this photo, this is a fine example of what DBSI also offers and lends out to this St. John;

this is under the COVID-19 product support that DBSI gave. So at that time, this St. John ambulance took that loan.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Thank you for that clarification. So it is not a client like your other clients. It is not and does not own any accounts, like a borrower.

Hon HARRY KUMA: As I have said, it borrowed from DBSI. So it is a client in that sense. But there is a support. The government through DBSI lend out and that is the COVID-19 support. In the speech, I mentioned it a bit on the \$28 million that government put through DBSI on the stimulus package.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I want to thank the Minister for confirming that St John Ambulance is one client of DBSI. My question is on page 15, on the training. This is absolutely essential. So I would like to know the kind of training. Is it in-house training or using other institutions and which institutions and what kind of training specifically did the Bank do for its staff?

Hon HARRY KUMA: Yes, I have said, training is central to the development of DBSI. We have to train our people. So, these trainings are in-house trainings. There is a training program that supported by Asian Development Bank as well that is offered to our staff, as well as training conducted in conjunction with the Ministry of Commerce for the staff.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Just on 16, it talks about equity and the minimum is 20 percent and in the case of farming, sweat equity in lieu of cash could be considered. The normal collateral, what is normal collateral?

Hon HARRY KUMA: I think the normal collateral and that is the key thing in the question is normal as always. It is security to cover that loan.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: So, in the case of a farmer who plants his crop or his noni on customary land and does not have any registered title nor does he own a vehicle or the usual movable property. Is his crop enough to be taken as a collateral or such type of farmer cannot access DBSI? Or even take a fishermen for example, need a fishing net or such things as that?

Hon HARRY KUMA: Yes, there are instances where farmers would not be able to provide that security or normal collateral for cover their proposed loans. But when that proposal looks good and can make repayments on time and have the capacity to repay, this is where this guarantee scheme comes in. For example, DBSI talks with Central Bank to guarantee and put it as a collateral security for that loan. Up to 90 percent of the proposed loan here, the other 10 percent the bank will take the risk to make sure that that loan must work. The guarantee scheme of CBSI comes in to support on that.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: This is an important point because the vast majority of people we want to help were in this category. There will be good proposal, there is no problem for planting but a problem for the security for the collateral for banks. This small business guarantee scheme amount at Central Bank is too low. It is good for the minister and Permanent Secretary to talk with the Governor to increase it and so the next investment for the government is in that guarantee scheme so that it can cover more people and the amounts that could be secured could be doubled or triple or what it is at the moment.

Hon HARRY KUMA: Thank you that important comment. It is a very useful scheme at CBSI. In fact the Ministry of Commerce, Labour, Industry and Immigration usually budget for that. We have plan to increased that so that coverage on the loans that are qualified is there.

Mr BODO DETTKE: I also want you to help me out here. Probably by next year, North West will be producing up to 400 tones of Noni juice and will be on order per month for the USA. For example, we will be running around the bush down there with probably around \$6 million in cash. With that system, if bank can solve it, because as Leader stated, we are afraid to carry such amount of money around in the bushes.

The problem we are facing is that a lot of these people have a lot of land that are not registered. Can the Bank be lenient? If we have some contracts in place and LCs in place to avoid risk to the Bank, so that we can do some business to the people in the rural areas. We have now 60 shops in Los Angeles selling our products and start to take up big positions in sales in these shops right now, which is a good news for the country. I will bring the report sometimes to give to our good prime Minister so that he can see it and be happy with me as well.

However, the problem I have is money. For me, to work around Malaita in the highlands with \$6 million, I will not be coming back or in another provinces. I am afraid. We have to make it in some way easy so the money reaches these farmers in a safe way. Is there any way the Bank can help out on this one because it is going to be a lot of money when these things come into play. That is the question I want to raise to you and the Bank rep there, if they can help out in the future to help make our life easy on how to put money in the hands of the farmer in a safe environment.

Hon HARRY KUMA: A lot of good things have been discussed. For example, DBSI can work with buyers, especially to help them. We have been doing that with Oil Palm out growers to support and work close with GPPOL so that repayment is secured as well. That arrangement can be done and has been done, and we can do that with the Noni farmers as well. It is good that buyers and farmers have a good

understanding with the Bank; then we can extend that, and with the capital coming in, we can be able to help our farmers.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: My question has to do with the small and medium enterprise scheme and, more specifically, the CBSI guarantee scheme. As I look at the amounts listed in the table on page 70, these amounts are very small. Mr. Chairman, I want to know is it the ceiling under this guarantee scheme is the limitation factor or the amount of loan that the development is able to lend?

Hon HARRY KUMA: One of the limitations that we have here is the amount of fund that is available for us to guarantee those loans. Of course, these loans must be assessed to be bankable. But the limitation is the fund that is available in guarantee scheme.

Mr BODO DETTKE: I just wanted to thank the minister for his explanation because I would also like the Noni program to extend to those hard-working farmers in Malaita because I have already made a visit there and they are waiting for this program and also down to the Western side. So I hope it will grow. Like I say, this is very easy product for our people in the rural areas to get money from. So if we can make it easier for them to receive their money, we will achieve something big. So I just want to thank you for it and try to pursue it with the bank to consider that. So that we will change the livelihood of our people to improve their standard of living in the provinces. So let us try something new that has some good money on it.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Chairman I am on page 17 in table 2. I again notice these sectors and want to applaud the bank. My question would be in terms of the transport sector. I want to know about the loan approval of \$800,000. Is it for outboard motors, ships, buses, taxis, or what?

Hon HARRY KUMA: Mainly, that is for land transport like buses, taxis, and 3 tons.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I thank the minister for his answer. When I look at the amount, supposing they use it to pay 3-ton trucks, I think it would be just 3 or 1 truck that they will get with this amount. But the same question goes to the livestock sector. Are you also lending to cattle farmers, and how many?

Hon HARRY KUMA: Only poultry farmers and piggery are covered there.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I am on page 19, loans approved on Chart No.5 and I think a point that has been highlighted by those that talked on the paper is there. More than half of the loans approved are from Honiara. I want to know what did the bank will do for this Honiara to drop down and Provinces to go up, reverse this.

I want to know what sort of actions or steps are being taken to change this equation or this proportion that we have now thank you.

Hon HARRY KUMA: Yes, that was the data for 2020. It is already dropped for Honiara less than 15% already. You do not worry. We are moving onto rural areas now. You know first time it was set up here so those people who are surrounding only will be quick to know, so they keep on coming. Slowly as the chorus was sung to those in the Provinces, slowly they are coming. So this slice in Honiara will eventually small. That is our eventual aim; and when this new offices will be establish in Gizo and Auki , that is part of the plans for us to make sure that we reach out to our rural areas.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Just for clarification only. It start in 19 chat three and four, but it goes to 20/21 those table there. Outstanding balance is it suppose to be a function of loans approved and loans disbursed? for those two products? and even for the sectors? They do not add up. I am not very good at math's so if may be clarify this.

Hon HARRY KUMA: Yes it is the function of those two loan amount and loan disbursed. The total outstanding that is yet to be recovered or repaid by the borrower.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Chairman did you call page 22?-I am on page 22-

Mr CHAIRMAN: It is ok. Have not call it yet, but you may start off with.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Page 22 at the top that says "the only reason alone maybe rejected after all information is loaded is when a negative credit report is received". I just want to know who normally produce this report? Whether it is positive or negative? Is it the internal staff that did this assessment or any other organization outside?

Hon HARRY KUMA: So it means that loan proposal is also assessed by collecting sort of a credit worthiness of that particular applicant from other sources as well. For example, other banks, whether they have any outstanding loans that are still hanging there, or other bills hanging on Solomon Power. Those are things that are considered as well in the assessment of the proposals.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I am assuming this criteria or this report that is coming up is to do with this livelihood and investment facility. Has the bank asked the employer to produce any report to support this application?

Hon HARRY KUMA: Yes, of course that is one of the basic information that all banks including DBSI has done to make sure that that particular applicant is surely employed there or so, so they also consult with employers.

Mr PETER KENILOREA (Jnr): Just to follow up on the question asked by Small Malaita, in terms of the 80 percent that we are trying to reach, I am guessing that a lot of them do not have credit histories. How are you going to address that if there are no reports coming from them? That is just my wild guess, but I assume that could be the case. What is the bank's plan for that? I think the majority of our people do not have a credit history in the traditional sense for banks.

Hon HARRY KUMA: Sorry, I do not quite get that, but I was referring to where we could get those credit reports for applicants or customers that are in rural areas. Basically, we can consult with church leaders to provide some additional information about them.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Just for the minister to affirm or say whether I am wrong with my assumption. I am assuming that this facility is necessary given that the repayment of the loans really depends on the salaries. So I am assuming this facility is specifically for employees and not for all sorts of people. Let me ask you, is that correct?

Hon HARRY KUMA: Yes, that is the main focus. Those are the applicants that earn wages, and they can apply for that; that is the key focus, but it also extends to those that are self-employed and have their own businesses, and they too can use that. Those who earn something from their businesses, whether they are formal wage earners, self-employed, or even an employee who has some sideline small businesses that he has going on, can be counted for as well.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: I am still on page 22, but on another part, the tab below table six, this sector investment is nearly 90 percent of the total portfolio approved under this disbursement. I want to know whether you have a breakdown. I note the report says that Bank is currently working to re-classify these. I do not know if there is already a re-classification done and whether that can be provided because it seems to me that is very chunk of the portfolios on the loans.

Hon HARRY KUMA: That investment sector which is almost 90 percent of the total in fact reflect this LIF loans and mainly, if you refer back to chart 8 on the top, it is the building construction and building capital working capital. Those ones take the major part of that chart as well. So those are the areas that are part of that chart as well. Those are the areas that are reflected in investment on that particular table.

Hon MATTHEW WALE: Just only a comment for the bank keep a close eye on that but perhaps record it. We recognise given the geographical sparseness of our islands, the operating cost is to be more expensive than banks who are just here in Honiara for instance.

Also, recovering loans and because of that too it cost more so maybe in the recording systems, it will good to delineate what costs are really more social costs. They are more like community service obligations, the bank is doing something and somewhere where it is not economically viable but it is doing it. And those cost could be then quantified for dialogue with Ministry of Finance so to see this are not matters for capital injection but they could be costs that could qualify for CSO subvention because there will be those costs. It is more expensive and if the bank is forced to absorb that, it will just keep eating into the capital that is available for lending. It is just a comment.

Hon HARRY KUMA: Thank you Leader of Opposition for that very useful comment which we are slowly moving into. As you know, the government inject capital to DBSI and we hope that we are risk conscious on it and make sure that we make prudent use of those funds that we have lend and also to administer the loans.

DBSI as we know is not yet an SOE where this community service obligation scheme of government administered under. But there are other avenues that we can look into and perhaps support DBSI on maybe subsidising it is not a good word but subsidising all those uneconomical services or logistic wise that is needed.

Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA: Before I ask my question, but that is a very, very pertinent issue for any financial institution, especially DBSI. Its outreach will be very, very expensive and Minister you have to be ready for CSO. But I suppose the bank made those assessments and we will see it in the next report whether those assessments on community services obligation, the Bank can cover, which I do not think, as a policy matter, the Bank should not cover it in its own operations. I think it is something the government should cover it.

My question is on page 24. At the bottom is capital raising. The report stated, the Bank also raised \$25 million at market rates. I want to know in what form does the bank has raised this \$25 million. Is it public deposits, bonds, treasury bills and the rates, the interest rate do you give the public?

Hon HARRY KUMA: That is a \$25 million of term deposit by the government on DBSI and has an interest rate of 1.5 percent. Just for the further information we are also arranging one term deposit as well from NPF but that is yet to be included.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I think the Committee has adequately considered the National Paper, No.34 of 2022, The Development Bank Of Solomon Islands Annual Report 2020.

That concludes proceedings of the Committee of the Whole and the mover of the Motion will report to Parliament when the House is resume.

(Committee of the Whole House dissolved)

Parliament is resumed

Hon MATTHEW WALE: I report to the House that the National Parliament Paper No.34 of 2022, The Development Bank of Solomon Islands Annual Report 2020 has passed through the Committee of the Whole House.

The SPEAKER: Honorable Members the Member for Aoke/Langalanga has reported according to Standing Order 18(2) that Committee of the Whole House has considered the report.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE: I move that Parliament do now adjourn.

Question put and agreed to

(Parliament is adjourned at 12.50pm)