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**MP for Central Honiara Constituency**



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**Hon. James Tora**  
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## Terms of Reference

On 11<sup>th</sup> April 2013, the Honourable Member for East Honiara Constituency, Hon. Douglas Ete, presented to the House on behalf of the Young Women's Parliamentary Group (YWPG) a petition concerning the current short routes practices by Honiara public bus services.

The House resolved that, notwithstanding anything contrary in the Standing Orders, a Special Select Committee is established to inquire into and report on the concerns raised in the petition, in particular to –

1. Examine and observe the nature, including operation and ownership, of public transportation, notably public bus services, within the boundaries of Honiara City.
2. Determine the objectives and rationale of short bus routes currently practiced by Honiara public buses.
3. Determine the impact of short bus routes on Honiara commuters. This includes soliciting for any collected data or conducted studies, if any, of the social and economic impact of the short bus routes.
4. Examine, consider, and observe the regulatory framework, including the *Foreign Investment Act 2005* and the *Foreign Investment Regulations 2006*, and current practices of public transportation services, especially public bus services.
5. Examine and evaluate the role of the Road Transport Board established under section 4 of the *Traffic (Amendment) Act 2009*.
6. Examine, ascertain, and assess the role of the Road Transport Board, Honiara City Council, Ministry of Police, Ministry of Infrastructure Development, and any other relevant agencies regarding public transport services.
7. Examine, observe, and ascertain any relating or other relevant issues pertaining to Honiara public transport services, especially public bus services.
8. Report to Parliament by 12<sup>th</sup> July 2013 the Committee's observations and recommendations.

## Chair's Foreword



**Hon John Moffat Fugui, MP**  
**Chairman**  
**MP for Central Honiara**  
**Constituency**

I am pleased to present this report of the Special Select Committee on the issue of Honiara Short Bus Routes.

This Inquiry was instituted by the National Parliament of Solomon Islands in response to Members' concern regarding the current short bus route practices by Honiara public bus services.

Honiara short bus route has had adverse impact on bus commuters and the public. It is timely that this Committee was given the mandate to inquire into this important issue.

This is a major step for Parliament. It reflects Parliament's role in reviewing and recommending improvements to important areas of governance as well as government's policies - in this regard the Road and Transport System.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank all those who have involved in this Inquiry. First, the Young Women Parliamentary Group for initiating this Inquiry. Second, all those who have involved in the hearings that include Government stakeholders, Honiara City Council, Solomon Islands Chinese Association, SINTA, nurses, teachers, students, parents, bus commuters, Bus Owners Association, community leaders and members of public from East, Central and West Honiara Constituencies. Thirdly, special thanks to Solomon Telekom, the Church of Melanesia and the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force for availing their venues for the Inquiry.

I wish to acknowledge the tireless effort of the Committee Secretariat and Hansard staff for supporting the Inquiry. I also thank the Clerk and the staff of Parliament who have devoted their time and effort in ensuring that the Committee had resources to complete this Inquiry.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Committee Members for their participation in this Inquiry.

I commend the report to the Parliament.



**Hon John Moffat Fugui, MP**  
**Chairman**  
**MP for Central Honiara Constituency**

## Executive Summary

The Special Select Committee (“Committee”) was established in Parliament after the petition on the short bus routes was brought to Parliament by the Young Women’s Parliamentary Group (YWPG). This petition was presented in Parliament by Hon. Douglas Ete, Member of Parliament for East Honiara Constituency on the April 11, 2013. Parliament has unanimously supported this petition and then established this Committee under the Standing Order 73 of the National Parliament and referred this issue to a Special Select Committee to make further Inquiry into this issue of short bus routes.

The Committee has conducted a series of Seven (7) Committee hearings during the Committee Inquiry. All throughout the Inquiry, other government line ministries responsible for Transport services in the country were invited to appear before the Committee; for instance, the Ministry of Infrastructure Development, Ministry of Commerce, Immigration labour & Investments and the Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services were invited to appear before the committee. Besides that, other stake holders such the Honiara City Council, the Solomon Islands Bus Owners Associations and the general public were also invited to appear before the Committee.

The Committee in conducting the Inquiry into Honiara Short Bus Routes looks at the existing policies and legal framework that regulates and guides the establishment and functions of public transport system in the Honiara city. The Committee also examines the issues causing short bus routes in Honiara as well as the impact of this short bus routes on the bus users and commuters in Honiara. Furthermore, the Committee in its Inquiry also look at other relevant issues ultimately contributed to short bus routes currently existed and experienced in the Honiara city.

The Committee in its findings noted that:

- The Issue of short bus routes hinges on other factors which point towards the overall provision of government services and the mechanisms established to administer and enforce relevant policies. In this regard, *short bus routes* are an issue which reflects on traffic matters and road transport system in Honiara and the rest of the country.
- The Committee noted that road transport services in the country is primarily the responsibility of the Ministry of Infrastructure Development. However, certain powers of administering transport services are shared by other government Ministries or delegated to other public bodies and agencies. The Committee noted that shared responsibilities are ambiguous and hamper progress when the responsibilities are not clearly defined or properly allocated. In this regard, the Committee is of the view that the *Road Transport Board* and the *Highway Authority* should not perform the same functions and possess the same powers because one is supposed to be a decision-making body and the other an implementing agency.
- The Committee noted that although the Honiara City Council (HCC) should be the appropriate body to regulate traffic and provide transport services within the city, it does not have the legislative powers to enact Ordinances that regulates traffic matters and transport services. It does have the legislative power to enact Ordinances but does not include public transport services. Therefore, it is recommended that the SIG transfers the functions of the Minister under the Road Transport Act 2009 and all of the functions of the highway authority to the Honiara City Council, including the power to regulate traffic related matters.

This Report on Honiara Short Bus Routes is structured and divided into six (6) chapters.

- Chapter 1 of this report provides the introduction on the Inquiry and how the Inquiry is conducted and generally the brief overview of this Inquiry.

- Chapter 2 outlines the brief background on the issues of this issue of short bus routes and how this Committee Inquiry is established.
- Chapter 3 examines the legal framework that regulates road transport system in Honiara. It also discusses the policy framework and instruments that supports and guides the establishment and functions of public authorities that regulates road transport system in Honiara City and the road transport system established in Solomon Islands
- Chapter 4 discusses the Public Transport issues currently existed and experienced at present in Honiara. It also discusses the ownership and operation of bus services in Honiara, as well as contentious issues causing the short bus routes and the impacts of public bus services in Honiara.
- Chapter 5 covers other issues that are also relevant to the short bus route issue and the road transport services in Honiara.
- Chapter 6 underlines the way-forward and recommendations on this Short Bus Routes Inquiry.

The Committee has deliberated on this report and considered that this issue must be approached holistically. This is based on the reasons that the development and management of a reliable, appropriate, sustainable and affordable transport sector in Solomon Islands is essential for economic development and the delivery of services to all residents in the Honiara city.

The Committee acknowledges that the Basic Framework governing Land Transport Services already exist. However, the responsibilities and powers are not clear and properly defined. Furthermore, they are not allocated to committed public agencies for effective implementations. For an effective implementation of responsive and relevant land transport services, the Committee propose the following recommendations.

### ***Recommendation Section A: Public Transportation System and Processes***

- [1] That the Solomon Islands Government conduct an independent, full-scale and comprehensive assessment of the road transport system and its associated policies and legal framework, a report of which must be tabled in Parliament.
- [2] That the Road Transport Board develops Public Transport Service Policy and regulations to regulate public transport services in the Honiara city including the following areas:
  - i. Registration of all bus routes in the Honiara boundaries
  - ii. Buses Licensed and registered to operate along certain registered bus routes,
  - iii. Bus operating along different routes must be numbered, or given colours or signs to indicate the different bus routes each bus provide services to.
  - iv. proper transport schedules and timing of each bus' arrivals and take off at the bus stops
  - v. regulate bus fares for each bus routes.
- [3] That the Solomon Islands Government through the Road Transport Board in the Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID) secure funding under the National Transport fund (NTF) for the improvement, upgrading and constructions of the following land transport services:
  - i. To improve and upgrade the entire road conditions including upgrading the feeder routes outside the Honiara city

- ii. Improve and upgrade the traffic lights, traffic lanes and traffic directions and traffic signs on the road
- iii. Conduct road assessments on road infrastructure in the Honiara city
- iv. Improve and expand bus bays and bus stops in the Honiara city
- v. Construction and establishment of the Central Bus Stations at the centre of the Honiara city for public transport services
- vi. Established and construction of the standard bus stop shelters and bus stands at the bus stops in the city
- vii. Improve the lower Matanikau Bridge to 3 lanes and the upper bridge to 2 lane roads
- viii. Link the current back way roads and feeder roads at some possible points at the back of the city and that the government to be prepared to pay for damages as necessary
- ix. Installed Traffic Control at identified road junctions including the Central Market with reliable power supply such as standby generator in the event of power outage by SIEA.

[4] That the Solomon Islands Government through the Ministry of Infrastructure Development:

- i. reinstate the Road and Bridges Department within MID
- ii. Employ technical staff for the Road and Bridges Department under the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development to undertake road assessment works, implementation of the road infrastructure development plan, and execute and maintain the road network in the city
- iii. Put priority to Invest in maintaining, renewing, and developing new infrastructure
- iv. Set up standard engineering requirements for contractors to fulfil in road maintenance and that these standards are assessed and met by road contractors.

[5] That the Solomon Islands Government through the Customs Excise Division under the Ministry of Finance and Treasury make legislations:

- i. To regulate the importation of vehicles by their production date and their compliance with the current standard of gas emission
- ii. impose maximum bus age limit on public transport vehicles

[6] That the Honiara City Council liaises with company or individual reputable public transport services to provide efficient public transport services for School Children in accordance to the Schedule 5(6) of the Honiara City Act.

### ***Recommendation Section B – Powers and Implementations***

[7] That the Solomon Islands Government establishes an autonomous highway authority separated from the Road Transport Board, in particular the highway authority –

- i. must be a body corporate with perpetual succession;
- ii. must have a common seal;
- iii. may enter into contracts;
- iv. may sue and be sued in its corporate name;
- v. must possess the power to acquire, hold and dispose of property both real and personal; and
- vi. May generally do all such acts and things that are necessary for or incidental to the performance of its functions.

- [8] That the Solomon Islands Government transfers the functions of the Minister under the *Road Transport Act 2009* and all of the functions of the highway authority to the Honiara City Council, including the power to regulate traffic related matters.
- [9] That the Solomon Islands Government transfers to the Honiara City Council the functions of the Minister under the *Town and Country Planning Act* [Cap.154].
- [10] That the Traffic Department under the Ministry of Police and National Security provide effective policing in controlling traffic on the road and at the Bus stops in the Honiara city. However, as soon as the High Way Authority is established and fully functioned, the road policing functions shall be transferred from the Ministry of Police and National Security to be assumed by the High way Authority.

## Acronyms

FIA	Foreign Investment Act
FIB	Foreign Investment Board
GPPOL	Guadalcanal Plains Palm Oil Limited
HCC	Honiara City Council
KGVI	King George VI
LPS	Local Planning Scheme
MCILI	Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Labour and Immigration
MID	Ministry of Infrastructure Development
MP	Member of Parliament
NPF	National Provident Funds
NTF	National Transport Fund
NTFB	National Transport Fund Board
NTP	National Transport Plan
PS	Permanent Secretary
PWD	Public Works Department
RSIPF	Royal Solomon Islands Police Force
RTB	Road Transport Board
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programs
SBR	Short Bus Route
SICC	Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce
SIEA	Solomon Islands Electricity Authority
SINU	Solomon Islands National University
TCPB	Town and Country Planning Board
TOR	Terms of Reference
TPPD	Transport Policy and Planning Division, MID
YWPG	Young Women Parliamentary Group

## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an introduction to the Inquiry, including information of the Committee, the conduct of the Inquiry and brief overview of this report.

### **The establishment of the Committee**

- 1.1 The Special Select Committee (Committee) on the Inquiry into the Honiara Short Bus Routes was established by the Parliament under Standing Order 73 of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands.

### **Role of the Committee**

- 1.2 The Committee was established to inquire into issues raised by the Young Women's Parliamentary Group (YWPG) petition that was presented to Parliament by the Member of Parliament for East Honiara on April 11, 2013. The Committee is given the mandate to inquire into the concerns raised on the current short routes practices by Honiara public bus services with the Terms of References (TOR) outlined in page vi above.

### **The Conduct of the Inquiry**

#### **Submissions**

- 1.3 The Committee advertised and made a public call for submissions on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2013, through the Parliament's website and through the local newspapers and radio stations.
- 1.4 In total, the Committee received eleven (11) written submissions from individuals, a range of organizations and government responsible authorities. The full lists of submissions can be found in Appendix 1.

#### **Hearings and Forums**

- 1.5 Formal public hearings were conducted at the Parliament House on 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> May and 12<sup>th</sup> June 2013. The Committee also conducted three different public hearings at the Telekom Recreational Hall, St Barnabas Leaf Hut and Rove Police Social Hall, areas representing the three constituencies in Honiara, namely East Honiara, Central Honiara and West Honiara.
- 1.6 Public forums were also open to the public at the end of each hearing at the respective venues in the three constituencies in Honiara.
- 1.7 The Committee received evidences from 127 witnesses, representing different organisations and individuals from the three constituencies in Honiara.
- 1.8 The public hearings and forums gave the Committee an opportunity to explore issues raised concerning the short bus routes in Honiara and examine options available to address it (A full list of witnesses who appeared before the Committee can be found in Appendix 2).



*Special Select Committee Public Hearing –Central Honiara Constituency*

## **Transcripts**

- 1.9 Transcripts of the evidences provided during the hearings are also available at the Parliament Hansard Department upon request.

## **Overview of the Report**

- 1.10 This report has been organised into six (6) Chapters. Chapter 2 provides detailed background information on the issue of short bus routes in Honiara and how the Committee Inquiry was established.
- 1.11 Chapter 3 looks at the legal framework currently in place that governs road transportation system in Solomon Islands, particularly in Honiara City.
- 1.12 Chapter 4 addresses issues relating to Public Bus Transportation services in Honiara. It covers bus ownerships, operations, issues relating to short bus routes and impacts of short bus routes services have on commuters and bus owners.
- 1.13 Chapter 5 discusses other evidences and reasons relating to short bus routes that are not captured in the previous chapters.
- 1.14 Chapter 6 presents recommendations and way forward in addressing the issue of short bus routes in Honiara in the future.

## Chapter 2 Background to the Short Bus Routes

This chapter provides the background information on the issue of short bus routes in Honiara and how the Committee Inquiry was established.

### Background to the Petition

- 2.1 Short Bus Routes is an issue that has been affecting citizens of Honiara City and its suburbs since 2011. The two main long routes followed by public bus service providers prior to 2011 are from King George VI (KGVI) to White River along the main highway and the other route is from Border Line area to White River as final destinations for a single trip. By 2011, public bus service providers divided the long routes into several short segments, shortened a single trip to each segment and charge passengers bus fares for each segment travelled. Thus passengers travelling from White River to KGVI are forced to disembark, for instance, at Point Cruz or Central market while the driver sets the next short segment as final destination and call for passengers to board with a new bus fare charge. These short routes and multiple bus fare charges for each segment have caused a lot of social, economic and financial issues to commuters and citizens of Honiara.
- 2.2 As a result of the short bus routes services created by public buses and impacts caused to commuters, there were public outcries in the media in early 2011 and 2012 by ordinary citizens who were seriously affected financially and emotionally by the unfair bus routes<sup>1</sup>. However, there seemed to be lack or no response from responsible authorities.
- 2.3 The Young Women Parliamentary Group (YWPG), a group established under the auspices of the Speaker of Parliament, brought this issue during one of its discussions and decided to take this issue up by way of petition to Parliament for consideration.

### The Petition

- 2.4 Initial petition on the unfair short bus routes in Honiara was designed by YWPG and signed by 4,143 petition signatures from within Honiara itself and also from some citizens of Solomon Islands living abroad.
- 2.5 The petition was later submitted to Members of Parliament for the three Honiara Constituencies to call on the Road Transport Board (RTB) under Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID) to regulate public bus transportation and ban unfair bus routes that are affecting ordinary citizens in Honiara city. This petition was later presented to Parliament by the honourable Member of Parliament (MP) for East Honiara Constituency.
- 2.6 In April 2013, a petition on the short bus routes in Honiara was moved in Parliament under Standing Orders 16 by the MP for East Honiara Constituency, on behalf of the Honiara constituents residing within the Honiara City Council (HCC) boundary, in East, Central and West Honiara constituencies' suburbs. The Parliament resolved and established a Special

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<sup>1</sup> May Kivo, *Island Sun* 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 2011, *Stop Short Routes, Buses told*, accessed 10<sup>th</sup> July 2013, < <http://www.islandsun.com.sb/index.php/business/4659-stop-short-routes-buses-told> > .

Select Committee under Standing Orders 73 and allowed the Committee to inquire into and report on the concerns raised in the petition.

## Chapter 3 Legal Framework

This Chapter examines the legal framework that regulates road transport system in Solomon Islands, in particular urban transport services. It discusses the policy framework that supports road transport system and the policy instruments that guide the establishment and functions of public authorities that regulates road transport system in Honiara City and the rest of the country. The Chapter also considers the views of some Inquiry participants who are questioning the effectiveness of the current system. The Chapter ends with the Committee findings and recommendations that suggest ways to improve the system.

### Overview

3.1 The Committee heard concerns that existing roads and bridges cannot accommodate the increased number of vehicles in the city. The road transport system in Solomon Islands is regulated primarily by the *Traffic Act* [Cap.131] and the *Traffic Regulations* [Cap.131]. The *Traffic Act* was initially enacted as the *Traffic Ordinance 1967*. There were several amendments made to the Ordinance over the years. This includes a consolidation exercise in 1996 which incorporated all the amendments resulting in the *Traffic Act* [Cap.131]. The latest amendment was in 2009 which changed the name of the *Traffic Act* [Cap.131] to *Road Transport Act 2009*. The *Traffic Regulations* was also changed to *Road Transport Regulations 2009*.<sup>2</sup>

3.2 Other relevant legal instruments and policy documents are:

- *Honiara City Act 1999*
- *National Transport Fund Act 2009*
- *National Transport Fund Regulations (Fund Management) Regulations 2010*
- *Foreign Investment Act 2005*
- *Foreign Investment Regulations 2006*
- *Town and Country Planning Act* [Cap.154]
- National Transport Plan 2011 - 2030

### Management of Public Transport in Solomon Islands

3.3 In Solomon Islands, public road transport services are managed by different agencies charged to deliver “an effective transport infrastructure and transport services to support sustained economic growth and social development in Solomon Islands”.<sup>3</sup> These agencies are responsible for the formulation, administration, implementation and review of road transport policies in Solomon Islands.

3.4 Other key agencies which together, directly or indirectly, manage road transport in Honiara are:

- Ministry of Infrastructure and Development
- Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Labour and Immigration.
- Ministry of Development, Planning and Aid Coordination
- Ministry of Finance and Treasury

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<sup>2</sup> See *Traffic (Amendment) Act 2009*.

<sup>3</sup> Traffic Sector Vision, *National Transport Plan 2011-203*, Ministry of Infrastructure Development, Solomon Islands Government.

- Road Transport Board
- Highway Authority
- Honiara City Council
- National Transport Fund Board
- Royal Solomon Island Police Force

### **National Transport Plan**

3.5 The Transport Policy and Planning Division (TPPD) within the Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID) is responsible for preparing and maintaining the National Transport Plan (NTP) in coordination with the Ministry of Development, Planning and Aid Coordination (MDPAC). The NTP sets the strategies, policies and immediate priorities for development of the Solomon Islands land, sea and air transport systems. The NTP is designed to assist Government, to develop the economy and provide for the social needs of communities. Its implementation will have a significant positive impact on the Government's objective of developing the country, especially the rural areas. The NTP provides the strategic framework and direction for achieving the Government's mission for the transport sector by:<sup>4</sup>

- developing transport sector services,
- developing and maintaining transport sector physical infrastructure,
- improving the competency and capacity of government agencies, and
- developing the transport private sector.

### **National Transport Fund**

3.6 A National Transport Fund (NTF) is established to finance the objectives of the NTP, in particular for the purposes of developing, maintaining and managing transport infrastructure and services in the country.

3.7 The NTF was established by the *National Transport Fund Act 2009* as a special fund in accordance with section 100 of the Constitution. The sources of funding for the NTF are donors development agencies,<sup>5</sup> or a budgetary appropriation as directed by the responsible Minister<sup>6</sup>. The fund is purposely to support the development and management of transport services, particularly in the development, design, construction, management and maintenance of transport infrastructure in Solomon Islands.

3.8 The NTF is responsible for providing financial support to the whole of the transport sector, including road, maritime and air transport. This includes support for shipping services, maintenance and provision of roads, wharves, airfields, and the provision and maintenance of maritime navigational aids. The NTF Board is responsible to Parliament for delivering the National Transport Plan and required to produce annual reports setting out transport development progress.

3.9 The NTF is managed by the National Transport Fund Board (NTFB) and is supported by a secretariat in accordance with the *National Transport Fund (Fund Management) Regulations 2010*.

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<sup>4</sup> National Transport Plan 2011-2030.

<sup>5</sup> Section 4(1), *National Transport Fund Act 2009*.

<sup>6</sup> Section 21(1), *Public Finance and Audit Act [Cap.120]*.

## Road Transport Board

- 3.10 The Road Transport Board (RTB), in conjunction with the MID, is responsible for formulating, implementing, monitoring and reviewing national transport policy.<sup>7</sup> In the exercise of its functions, the RTB is required to prepare and submit quarterly reports to the Minister of MID on the implementation, administration and enforcement of the *Road Transport Act*.<sup>8</sup>
- 3.11 The RTB consists of the following members:<sup>9</sup>
- (a) the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry responsible for road transport, as the Chairperson;
  - (b) the Clerk of the Honiara City Council;
  - (c) the Commissioner of police or a senior Gazetted officer as the Commissioner's nominee;
  - (d) the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry responsible for Provincial Governments or the Secretary's nominee;
  - (e) the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry responsible for Commerce or the Permanent Secretary's nominee;
  - (f) the Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Ministry responsible for roads;
  - (g) a member to represent the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce; and
  - (h) two other members (one is to represent the taxi operators and the other is to represent the bus operators).
- 3.12 Other officers of the RTB are the Principal Licensing Officer, licensing officers, inspectors and examiners, and enforcement officers.<sup>10</sup> The Principal Licensing Officer is responsible for the day to day administration of the Board and shall act as Secretary to the Board.<sup>11</sup>
- 3.13 In the exercise of its functions, the RTB has the power to: inspect, examine, register and licence motor vehicles; test, examine and licence drivers; and enforce the Act in conjunction with the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF), other highway authorities and other enforcement agencies.<sup>12</sup>
- 3.14 The RTB may delegate any of its functions and power to any of the officers of the RTB<sup>13</sup> or to any other highway authority.<sup>14</sup> The power to regulate all traffic and to keep order on public roads has been delegated to the RSIPF.<sup>15</sup>

## Highway Authority

- 3.15 For the purposes of the *Road Transport Act 2009*, the Highway Authority is the Road Transport Board.<sup>16</sup> Prior to 2009, the functions of the Highway Authority are exercised by the Permanent Secretary of the MID.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Section 3A(a), *Road Transport Act 2009*.

<sup>8</sup> Section 3A(c), *Ibid*.

<sup>9</sup> Section 3(1), *Ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> Section 5(1), *Ibid*.

<sup>11</sup> Section 5(2), *Ibid*.

<sup>12</sup> Section 3B, *Ibid*

<sup>13</sup> See Section 5(1), *Ibid*.

<sup>14</sup> Section 4, *Ibid*.

<sup>15</sup> Section 66, *Ibid*.

<sup>16</sup> Section 2 & Section 3(4), *Ibid*.

<sup>17</sup> Section 2, *Traffic Act* [Cap.131].

## **Town and Country Planning Board**

- 3.16** A Town and Country Planning Board (TCPB) is established in each of the provinces, including Honiara city.<sup>18</sup> The main function of a TCPB is to develop and prepare a study of matters which may affect the development of a Local Planning Area (LPA) or planning of its development.<sup>19</sup> The Minister responsible for Town and County Planning may declare any area to be a planning area after having obtained consent or request by a Provincial Assembly or Town Council within whose boundaries the LPA is situated.<sup>20</sup>
- 3.17** A Local Planning Scheme (LPS) is developed for each of the declared LPA. A LPS may allocate or define the sites of and access to proposed roads, public and other buildings and works, air-fields, parks, pleasure grounds, nature reserves and other open spaces, or allocate areas for use for residential, agricultural, industrial, commercial, tourist or other purposes as declared by the Minister from time to time.<sup>21</sup>
- 3.18** The purposes of a Local Planning Scheme are to:<sup>22</sup>
- (a) assist in securing orderly development in the interests of the health, amenity, convenience and general welfare of the community;
  - (b) indicate the general principles upon which development in the area will be promoted and controlled;
  - (c) assist in the selection of, or to define sites for particular purposes, whether by the carrying out of development thereon or otherwise;
  - (d) protect features or areas of social, historical, scenic or architectural importance;
  - (e) safeguard routes for highways, pipelines and other services; and
  - (f) indicate the stages by which development should be carried out.

## **Honiara City Council**

- 3.19** In discharge of its functions, the Honiara City Council (HCC) is mandated to inter alia *...promote the health, welfare and convenience of the inhabitants of the area of its authority and to maintain order and good government in such area...*<sup>23</sup> The Honiara City boundaries is from White River to KGV market along the Kukum Highway.<sup>24</sup>
- 3.20** As a local government, the HCC may perform the statutory functions assigned to it.<sup>25</sup> Within these functions, the HCC has the power to enact Ordinances in respect of the following areas: trade and industry, culture and environment, finance, local matters, housing, rivers and waters, local government, and corporate or Statutory Bodies.<sup>26</sup>
- 3.21** The HCC, in collaboration with the TCPB and the Ministry responsible for land and housing, may allocate building plots or otherwise subdivide any land which it may possess for the purpose of housing or residential schemes, commercial, industrial or any other

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<sup>18</sup> Section 5, *Town and Country Planning Act* [Cap.154].

<sup>19</sup> Section 8(1), *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Section 7, *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> See Part III, *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Section 6(1), *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Section 21(5), *Honiara City Act 1999.*

<sup>24</sup> See Plan No. 1981 Town Land (Honiara) Order 1973

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix 4

<sup>26</sup> See Part II of Schedule 5, above n 22.

purposes within the area of its authority and may sell, let or otherwise dispose of any such plots or subdivisions of land and the buildings thereon.<sup>27</sup>

## Issues and Evidences

3.22 This part of the Chapter examines the issues and the evidences gathered during the Hearings. The discussions are centred around three main themes; functions and powers, policy administration, and enforcement.

### Policy Administration

3.23 One of the issues that arise during the hearing is the ineffectiveness of the mechanisms established to regulate road transportation. It transpired during the hearing that functions and powers necessary to regulate road transport services in Solomon Islands already exist but are becoming inappropriate and confusing because the functions played by the various agencies are not clear as they may overlap with each other, or the powers accorded to the agencies are insufficient to perform the functions entrusted upon them.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, the programs are never acted upon causing delay or non-performance of duties and responsibilities.

### Road Transport Board

3.24 The establishment of the RTB is perhaps an institutional strengthening initiative in an attempt to effectively administer relevant policies. The RTB is a creature of the *Traffic Amendment Act 2009*.<sup>29</sup> However, it is a piecemeal approach to rectifying the overall road transport system because although the functions and powers accorded to the RTB looks good on paper, it is insufficient to effectively perform its functions because it neither has the capacity nor the resources to do so.<sup>30</sup> Firstly, because the members of the RTB are full-time employees of other government agencies and would not have the time to implement the policies it created. Secondly, the RTB would not be able to effectively perform its functions because it is compromised in its functions; it makes decisions and entrusted itself to implement and enforce the decisions it makes.<sup>31</sup> It is suggested that the decision making body must be separate from the implementing agency whose establishment must be autonomous from the mainstream government Ministries.<sup>32</sup>

### Honiara City Council

3.25 The HCC is primarily responsible for, inter alia, urban transport services in Honiara.<sup>33</sup> However, the HCC is restricted in the performance of its functions and the powers to enact Ordinances in respect of its functions.<sup>34</sup> In fact, HCC does not have the legislative powers to enact Ordinances that regulates traffic matters and transport services. It does have the

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<sup>27</sup> Section 27(6), above n22.

<sup>28</sup> Jefferson Hallu, Evidence, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.449

<sup>29</sup> Above, n1.

<sup>30</sup> Jefferson Hallu, Evidence, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.466

<sup>31</sup> Mr. Moses Virivolomo, Permanent Secretary, MID, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.28

<sup>32</sup> Above, n29.

<sup>33</sup> Above, n3.

<sup>34</sup> Above n24 & 25

legislative to enact Ordinances but does not include public transport services. In relation to transport services, the HCC is responsible for providing transport for school children only.<sup>35</sup> Neither traffic matters nor transport services are part of HCC's functions other than collecting business licences and tax rates for operating businesses with the city boundaries.

3.26 However, traffic matters are statutory functions which the central government may transfer to the HCC by way of a devolution order.<sup>36</sup> The functions that can be transferred to the HCC are the functions given to the Minister and Principal Licensing Officer under sections 3 and 4 (Vehicle registration and driving licences),<sup>37</sup> and all functions given to the Highway Authority other than those under section 66, that is the power to regulate traffic which is delegated to the Traffic Section of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF).

3.27 Another statutory function that can be transferred to the HCC is the functions given to the Minister under the Act.<sup>38</sup> The Minister's functions includes the powers, duties and discretions to ...*secure consistency and continuity in the framing and execution of a comprehensive policy for the preservation of amenities and the orderly development of land other than customary land throughout Solomon Islands in accordance with Local Planning Schemes for parts of Solomon Islands.*<sup>39</sup>

### Reserved List of Investment Activities

3.28 Another issue that surfaced during the hearing is foreign ownership and operation of bus services in Honiara. There were claims that foreign business operators (mostly of Asian origin) owned and operated several buses in Honiara. This caused grievance amongst indigenous Solomon Islanders who claimed that ownership and operations of bus services in Honiara, and the rest of the country, is a prohibited investment activity specifically reserved for indigenous Solomon Islanders by virtue of the *Foreign Investment Act 2005* (FIA) and its corresponding Regulations.<sup>40</sup> The FIA regulates and monitors investment activities conducted by foreign investors in the country by providing for a registration and monitoring system that ...*aims to encourage greater levels of foreign investment in Solomon Islands.*<sup>41</sup>

3.29 The area of concern is in relation to the reserved list of investment activities.<sup>42</sup> The reserved list is perceived to be a list of investment activities reserved solely for indigenous Solomon Islanders.<sup>43</sup> An examination of the Hansard debates at the introduction of the Foreign Investment Bill to Parliament in 2005 confirms that the underlying principle of the reserved list is to reserve certain investment activities for the citizens of this country.<sup>44</sup> This sentiment was clarified by the then Attorney General at the introduction of the Bill in 2005.

*"I believe it is very clear from the objective of the Act that the reserve list is really intended for Solomon Islanders. The exception is where a foreigner is already engaged in activity which is later*

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<sup>35</sup> See Appendix 4.

<sup>36</sup> Section 21(2), *Honiara City Act 1999*. See also Appendix 5.

<sup>37</sup> These sections have been repealed by the *Traffic (Amendment) Act 2009* and are now replaced with section 5 of the *Road Transport Act 2009*.

<sup>38</sup> Above, n35.

<sup>39</sup> Section 4, above, n17.

<sup>40</sup> *Foreign Investment Regulations 2006*.

<sup>41</sup> Hon. Walton Naezon, *Hansard Transcript*, 27th July 2005, p.162.

<sup>42</sup> See Appendix 6.

<sup>43</sup> Mr. Lloyd Hatimana, Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.309

<sup>44</sup> Above, n40.

*declared as an area reserved for Solomon Islanders. Although it may not be specifically said in the provision, the whole objective of the legislation is and particularly sections 9 and 10 is essentially reserved for Solomon Islanders otherwise it would have no meaning.”<sup>45</sup>*

- 3.30 It is important to note that the term *indigenous* was rarely used during the debates.
- 3.31 It is also important to note that Section 9 of the FIA does not preclude foreigners from engaging in the investment activities provided for in the reserved list. In fact, a foreigner who intends to invest in any of the areas in the reserved list may apply to the Foreign Investment Board (FIB) to acquire a Certificate of Registration in order to do so.<sup>46</sup> The spirit of FIA, in particular the reserved list, may have been to protect business interests of Solomon Islanders in relation to the specified activities. However, the way Section 9 is worded does not reflect that view as it also allows foreigners to venture into the reserved investment activities by way of registration or in partnership with citizens of this country.

### **Committee Findings**

- 3.32 After hearing all the witnesses and having considered the evidences received during the Inquiry, the Committee noted that this issue of *short bus routes* hinges on other factors which point towards the overall provision of government services and the mechanisms established to administer and enforce relevant policies. In this regard, *a short bus route* is an issue which reflects on traffic matters and road transport system in Honiara and the rest of the country.
- 3.33 The Committee appreciates that a system is already in place that regulates road transport system and traffic related matters. However, the existing system was introduced during the colonial era and the context by which the system was introduced has become irrelevant. The current system we are using was introduced when we are not yet a country. It was subsequently adopted by our independent governments but has never been thoroughly reviewed to cater for changing circumstances such as increase in population and public service, more traffic usage, advancing technology, and a growing country. Very few changes were made to the system by various amendments to the principal (and other relevant) Acts. However, the changes were done on a piecemeal basis without approaching the issues holistically. Some plans and policies were later introduced but implementation and enforcement of those plans and policies are a major obstacle in advancing the ‘good’ intentions of the underlying objectives.
- 3.34 The Committee noted that road transport services in the country is primarily the responsibility of the Ministry responsible for transport. However, certain aspects of administering transport services are shared by other government Ministries and/or delegated to other public bodies and agencies. Whilst this practice may not be uncommon, shared responsibilities could hamper progress when the responsibilities are not clearly defined or properly allocated. In this regard, the Committee is of the view that the RTB and the Highway Authority should not perform the same functions and possess the same powers because one is supposed to be a decision-making body and the other an implementing agency.
- 3.35 The Committee also noted that although the HCC should be the appropriate body to regulate traffic and provide transport services within the city, it does not have the legislative competence to enact Ordinances that regulates traffic matters and transport

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<sup>45</sup> Primo Afeau, *Hansard Transcript*, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2005, p.26.

<sup>46</sup> Section 9(4), *Foreign Investment Act* 2005.

services because it is not one of the functions of the HCC accorded by law. Furthermore, the HCC does not have the necessary capacity and resources to regulate for traffic and transport services.

## Recommendations

- That the Solomon Islands Government through Road Transport Board conduct a full-scale and comprehensive assessment of the road transport system and its associated policies and legal framework, a report of which must be tabled in Parliament.
- That the Solomon Islands Government establishes an autonomous highway authority separated from the Road Transport Board, in particular the highway authority –
  - i. must be a body corporate with perpetual succession;
  - ii. must have a common seal;
  - iii. may enter into contracts;
  - iv. may sue and be sued in its corporate name
  - v. must possess the power to acquire, hold and dispose of property both real and personal; and
  - vi. may generally do all such acts and things that are necessary for or incidental to the performance of its functions.
- That the Solomon Islands Government transfers the functions of the Minister under the Road Transport Act 2009 and all of the functions of the highway authority to the Honiara City Council, including the power to regulate traffic related matters.
- That the Solomon Islands Government transfers to the Honiara City Council the functions of the Minister under the Town and Country Planning Act [Cap.154].
- That the Road Transport Board develops Public Transport Service Policy and regulations to regulate public transport services in the Honiara city including the following areas:
  - i. Registration of all bus routes in the Honiara boundaries
  - ii. Buses Licensed and registered to operate along certain registered bus routes,
  - iii. Bus operating along different routes must be numbered, or given colours or signs to indicate the different bus routes each bus provide services to.
  - iv. proper transport schedules and timing of each bus' arrivals and take off at the bus stops
  - v. regulate bus fares for each bus routes,
  - vi. establishment of the Central Bus stations in the Honiara City

## Chapter 4 Public Bus Transportation

This chapter discusses bus ownership and operation, issues pertaining to operation of bus services and the impacts of public bus services in Honiara.

### Overview

- 4.1 The Committee heard concerns that existing roads and bridges cannot accommodate the increased number of vehicles in the city causing traffic jams that impact negatively on the profitability of operating buses.
- 4.2 There has been a substantial increase in the number of vehicles imported from overseas into Honiara and a significant rise in bus ownership, as more and more people engaged in the providing bus services within and around Honiara.
- 4.3 As a result of the increase in vehicle, particularly bus importation and ownership, competition amongst bus service providers correspondingly increased. Compounded by traffic jams and poor road conditions, this led to the bus service providers finding extraordinary ways to maximize profits. One such action for profit gain was the sectoring of the main long highway into several short routes and multiple charging of passengers' fares. The impacts of this action are discussed in this chapter.

### Bus Ownership and Foreigners Involvements in Bus Services

- 4.4 In their submission, the Honiara City Council provided the Committee with evidence of the HCC Business license general ledger detail.<sup>47</sup> The record in the ledger shows that there were a total of 413 buses issued with Bus transport license from January 1, 2013 to May 22, 2013. Out of the total 413 buses, 1.9% is owned by Asians and 98.1% are owned by Solomon Islanders. However, this does not take into consideration other buses said to be owned by foreigners but is registered under a Solomon Islanders. If that is taken into consideration with the data provided by the Chamber of Commerce, the total bus owned by Asians would be 16.5%.
- 4.5 As mentioned in Chapter 3 paragraph 3.28 of this report, there have been concerns raised over foreigners' engagement in the provision of land transport services, particularly taxi and bus services. By virtue of the Foreign Investment Act, frequently referred to by witnesses, investments on land transport services are specially reserved for indigenous Solomon Islanders.
- 4.6 As expressed in paragraph 4.4 above and highlighted during the public hearing, there are huge number of buses owned by foreigners using the roads. According to the evidence provided by Chamber of Commerce to the Committee, there are a total of Sixty (60) buses owned and operated by Foreigners living in the Honiara city.<sup>48</sup> These foreigners were using Solomon Islands citizens to front their businesses as spouses or business partners in trying to go around the list of businesses reserve for Solomon Islanders. The Committee received reports that some of these foreigners are married to Solomon Islanders in order to promote

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<sup>47</sup> Submission 10, pp.1-7.

<sup>48</sup> Ms Nancy Kwalea, Senior Executive Officer, SICC, Evidence, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, p.98.

their business interests or register businesses under a local partner to qualify under the current Foreign Investment Act.

- 4.7 During the Inquiry, foreign individuals (of Asian origins) owned up to 20 buses with the motive of maximising profit. They created initiatives or targets for their bus drivers and conductors in revenue collection each day. Several witnesses mention this during the Inquiry:

*"...10 to 20 buses are owned by the Chinese and that is why they made this short bus routes because they have a target to meet. In one day they should earn \$1,000.00 for one bus."*<sup>49</sup>

*"There was an agreement made between the drivers of the Chinese bus owners that if you make more money in one day, you will get an extra bonus for that beside your normal payment."*<sup>50</sup>

*"The law stated that only Solomon Islanders are allowed to run bus and taxi service, but those Chinese registered those busses under the name of their drivers. So that is the first problem that we encountered. Then we begin to realise that they started to operate here and there and take some short routes and that is how this short bus route came about. They got a target to meet. They got \$70,000.00. When the driver collects that amount and gives it to the Chinese who owns the bus, that driver gets that bus. It is a verbal promise they made with the drivers and then they registered his name for that bus. The poor bus driver, being a Solomon Islander got really excited about that and he tried his very best to get the \$70,000.00 as quickly as possible."*<sup>51</sup>

- 4.8 It is of concern to the committee that although the Foreign Investment Act made provision for promotion of indigenous engagement in certain business types reserved for indigenous Solomon Islanders, there is also a provision for foreigners to apply to the Foreign Investment Board (FIB) to engage in reserved businesses. Thus the FIB has the authority to grant or refuse foreigners from engaging in businesses specially reserved for Solomon Islanders. In this provision, there is room for corrupt practices that could disadvantage local Solomon Islanders and there is also a disadvantage of restricting foreign investors from investing money in the country. This piece of legislation should be reviewed and be made clear in a balanced manner.

- 4.9 As mentioned in chapter 3 all road transport service in the country is regulated by the *Road Transport Act 2009*. This law sets up a Road Transport Board to look after the conduct of bus transportation and road infrastructure within Solomon Islands. However, Honiara City Council as the authority responsible for our city is not empowered under the Road Transport Act to look after the conduct of bus services and road infrastructure within its boundaries. This means that the Honiara City Council is not delegated with powers by the national government to regulate the bus service in Honiara. They are only responsible for collecting business licenses from bus owners. This was revealed during the Inquiry:

*"If we look at the legislative competence of the Honiara City Council, there are only eight areas that it can make ordinances on. The first one is trade and industry; culture and environment; finance; local matters; housing; rivers and waters; local government and the eight is corporate or statutory bodies. Transportation is not included and that is why when the HCC appeared before your honourable committee, it said it has no power. It is very true that it has no power."*<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Jack Tuita, Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.225

<sup>50</sup> Reginald Ngati, Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.260

<sup>51</sup> Nathan Fa'ako Leolea, 29<sup>th</sup> May, Evidence, pp.26-27

<sup>52</sup> Jefferson Hallu, Evidence, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.450

- 4.10 Currently the regulation of bus transportation and the management of road infrastructure within Honiara is the responsibility of the Road transport Board under the Ministry of Infrastructure Development.
- 4.11 Under Schedule 2(5) of the Foreign Investment Regulation 2006, operation of bus, taxi and hire car services is in the reserved list of business reserved for Solomon Islanders.<sup>53</sup> The Committee noted that Honiara City Council has the authority to issue bus business license to bus operators operating in the city.
- 4.12 Bus operation is defined as “buses that operates within the city boundary that collect and drop off passengers and are collecting revenue from the public and were issued license by Council to operate in that manner.”<sup>54</sup>

## **Bus Transport Services in Honiara**

### **Issuing of License to Bus Operators**

- 4.13 The Honiara City Council is empowered to issue bus license to any individuals who wish to operate bus services in the city.
- 4.14 The Committee noted that buses licensed to operate within the Honiara City Boundary are also operating outside the Honiara City Boundary within the Guadalcanal Province Government boundary. On that understanding, the Guadalcanal Provincial Government and the Honiara City Council have agreed on a resolution so that revenues are collected by HCC on behalf of the Guadalacanal Provincial Government especially on the vehicle license fees.
- 4.15 The Honiara City Council has highlighted during the Inquiry that the HCC is not mandated and empowered to control traffic, divert traffic and carry out services that relates to buses.<sup>55</sup> In evidence, Charles Kelly, Clerk to the Honiara City Council indicated that:

*“In regards to empowerment of inspection; if we have to go into running route numbers, we really do not have the manpower to monitor and do the checking. We have the law enforcement of the Council by way of City Council ordinances. If we are empowered to do that, then our law enforcement department can check on the vehicles. We can stop vehicles on the roads and check for their licenses, but by way of routes, there is nothing here that mandates us to check on vehicles. But it is a good cause so that if we are asked to do by way of an ordinance, I think we can work on that process.”<sup>56</sup>*

- 4.16 During the Committee Inquiry, the Committee raised concerns as to why non-citizens were given bus registration license to operate bus services in the city.
- 4.17 Mr. Moses Kaukui, Treasurer, Honiara City Council, clearly explained the process of registration before any license is issued.

*“...when people apply for a business license, clearly stated in the application is approval obtained for incorporation of companies and also approval from the Foreign Investment Board (FIB). Those*

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<sup>53</sup> Schedule 2(5), Foreign Investment Regulations 2006.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Charles Kelly, Clerk to the Honiara City Council, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, pp.31-32

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

*are the requirements in the application, which have to be displayed clearly to HCC before HCC considers their applications...<sup>57</sup>*

4.18 Mr. Kaukui further explained that foreigners who wish to run business in the City must ensure they receive approval from the Foreign Investment Board before HCC issues them a license.<sup>58</sup>

4.19 In circumstances where foreigners own the buses and, however, register the buses under any Solomon Islands citizens, on that issue, Mr. Kaukui stressed that HCC regarded that as any other Solomon Islands Citizen:

*"So far we know that most of these buses are run by Solomon Islanders, even if the applicants are Chinese but have acquired Solomon Islands citizenship as naturalized citizens, the HCC will consider them with other Solomon Islanders applications. If an applicant is a foreigner, he/she will indicate on the form that he/she is a foreigner as it is required by the FIB to give approval before HCC issues the licence. One of the requirements is that when FIB grants approval, a certificate must also be attached to the applications and from that the HCC knows whether it is a foreigner or a local person running a bus service."<sup>59</sup>*

4.20 The Committee also raised the question of whether there is a specification on citizenship provided in the registration form to show whether the person applying for the bus registration license is a Solomon Islander or foreigners using the Solomon Islands citizens to qualify them to run the bus services.

4.21 Mr. Kaukui in his evidence informs the Committee that:

*"...the forms provide for percentage sharing, how much is owned by the foreigner and how much by the partner. If the share is 60/40, then we will see whether control or power of management is in the local person or with the foreigner. That is a judgment the HCC has to look very closely at. But that is how the ratio sharing of the business is determined."<sup>60</sup>*

4.22 The Committee raised concerns as to whether there is a control undertaken by HCC to limit the number of licenses issued to foreigners operating bus services to avoid market force run its own course in the city. Mr. Kaukui further clarifies that:

*"... the Council does not look at the profitability of a company but it just issues the license and spreads it to everyone. The companies that register and come to the Council to acquire council licenses are treated as individual activity and so if they own 10 buses, they have to pay 10 different licenses. If one person owns one bus, he also pays the equivalent license. In this particular case, for example, if I owned a bus I have to pay \$800. If you run a lot of buses then you have to pay \$800 for one bus and \$800 each for the other buses. We do not see a person as owning a lot of buses and registers them as one license. No, that is not the case. It is spread out to everyone for fair competition to everyone."<sup>61</sup>*

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<sup>57</sup> Moses Kaukui, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.116

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p.115

<sup>59</sup> Moses Kaukui, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.117

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p.118

## Unregulated Bus Transport Services

- 4.23 The Committee noted that public transport services in Honiara are unregulated. During the Inquiry, it was repeatedly pointed out that the problem of short bus routes now experienced in the city is the outcome of the unregulated bus services and the failure of responsible authorities and institutions concerned to control the public transport services in the City.
- 4.24 The following points were raised during the Committee Inquiry as evidence reflecting the issue of unregulated bus services in the country.
- 4.25 In its evidence, Road Transport Board firstly pointed out that bus services is unregulated; there is no set time for arrivals of buses at bus stops and its going out do not match each other.<sup>62</sup>

*“There are more arrivals and less going out, and that’s why you can see a lot of people waiting at the bus stop because arrivals are greater than the outings, meaning buses either do not arrive on time or if they arrive on time but their capacities are already full, and that is a result of an unregulated system.”<sup>63</sup>*

- 4.26 It was also raised during the Inquiry that since the bus services is unregulated, the commuters began to complain because they spent more money to get to work every day and it is starting to affect all of us, even the economy because majority of the working population lives in Honiara. <sup>64</sup>
- 4.27 Furthermore, the Committee notes that the issue of short bus routes has also affected the performance of employers in the various sectors in the City. Moses Virivolomo, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development stressed that:

*“...most of the time these people come to work very late and even cannot go back home until it’s dark. Sometimes they have to walk back to their home. This is also affecting the performance of workers and their efficiency, let alone when they arrive at their workplaces they have to turn on their computers, clean their rooms and so a person’s utilization at the workplace can be also low. If it is below 75% of a person’s time spent at work, which is low for Solomon Islands, it means it can directly affect the performance of a ministry and the private sector at large. The effect of the bus service reverberates, meaning it flows across sectors and affects our economy at large.”<sup>65</sup>*

## Problem/Issues of Short Bus Routes

- 4.28 Several issues that contribute to Honiara short bus routes were repeatedly raised throughout the public hearing. These are discussed below.

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<sup>62</sup> Moses Virivolomo, Permanent Secretary, MID, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.27

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*



*Frequent bus stop-and-goes that usually create traffic congestion along the road in Honiara*

### **Bus Congestion**

4.29 The existing public transport delay and variability is significant and continuously affect both the economic and social activities in the Honiara city. One of the reasons some of the buses do not want to run long routes is due to bus congestion. In her submission, Ms. Grace Hilly, a Member of the YWPG reported that:

*“...the congestion in town is another reason some buses do not want to run the long routes. Buses are saying that because of the traffic congestion they opted for shorter and more convenient routes in order to avoid getting stuck in the traffic congestion and this is causing a lot of inconvenience to a lot of commuters, especially the peak hours of the morning rush and the afternoon going home.”*<sup>66</sup>

4.30 Furthermore, another reason for bus congestion in the city is the bottle neck at the two Matanikau Bridge. This is evident during peak hours of the day, especially after 10 am till late in the evenings.<sup>67</sup>

4.31 The Committee also noted that the other cause of bus congestion is the waiting period of buses to fill all their empty seats. Buses spend a lot of time waiting for passengers at the bus stop to fill all the empty seats before taking off, thus causing long queue at the bus stops. In its written submission, MCILI suggested that buses should be owned by companies and that time limit should be introduced to minimize this.

*“Buses spend a lot of time at one bus stop trying to fill all the empty seats before leaving, causing a long queue of buses for that bus stop. One suggestion is for the buses to be owned by companies so that a bus system can be introduced where time is an important factor and even if a bus is half full, it can leave the bus stop to make way for other buses.”*<sup>68</sup>

4.32 Coupled with the above reason, bus service delivery is also very long due to bus congestion that results in increase travel times. This in turn results in undermining economic efficiency of the bus transport system.

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<sup>66</sup> Grace Hilly, Young Women Parliamentary Group, Evidence, p.5

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> MCILI, Submission 8, p.1

4.33 The other factor that causes bus congestion is that bus operators compete head to head on the road for revenue intake from number of passengers they take. Buses have frequent stops where there are no bus stops. This causes traffic jams.

4.34 There are other factors that relate to traffic congestion and short bus routes in Honiara. These can be summarized as:

- **Drivers' attitudes**

Bus drivers are very careless by not properly parking their buses along bus bays. In addition, most bus drivers usually travel in a very low speed which slows down flow of traffic in the City. <sup>69</sup>

- **Traffic Rules**

In his submission, Mr. Biti pointed out that most drivers lack the understanding of traffic rules or may have minimal or zero knowledge of traffic rules. <sup>70</sup> Beside, Mr. Biti further indicated that there are young and unlicensed drivers on the road from time to time who fail to understand traffic rules whose attitude may have delayed the flow of traffic on the road.

- **Pedestrians**

Pedestrians also contributed a lot in road congestions. In his submission, Mr Biti revealed that unnecessary crossings and careless attitude of pedestrians walking along the side of main roads have resulted in traffic congestions. <sup>71</sup>



*Pedestrian Crossing at the Honiara Central Market holds up flow of traffic*

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<sup>69</sup> Mr. Beaver Biti, Submission 6, p.2

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

## Existing Bus Stops

- 4.35 Submissions received by the Committee during the Inquiry revealed that one of the issues causing the short bus routes in Honiara is the location of the current bus stops in the city.
- 4.36 The MCILI in its submissions indicated that the current bus stops areas are insufficient to accommodate the increasing number of buses using them.

*"...disorganizing that encourages chaos when rushing to take a seat, therefore causes delay for passengers boarding the buses and also causing queues and slow the traffic. Therefore, a need for expansion and improvement of bus stops. Distance between bus stops perhaps is also an area needing review."*<sup>72</sup>

## Central Bus Terminal

- 4.37 It is noted during the Committee Inquiry that there is no Bus terminal or Central Bus station facilities in Honiara. The Committee noted that this is one of the factors causing short bus routes problem in Honiara.
- 4.38 In his evidence, Mr. Samuel Fangata, Principal of King George VI School, revealed that:

*"Honiara is becoming a city and it is the only city that does not have a bus terminal. To have a bus terminal is good and will help solve the problem of short bus routes and will also help the flow of transport system in Honiara. It will help to address the current problem. It is a very important infrastructure that any city should have. A city should have a bus terminal or a bus centre as it is a means of coordinating how buses travel. It is very interesting to hear that thought and I really support it as it will help to address the problem."*<sup>73</sup>

- 4.39 In addition to that, in its submission, the MCILI indicated that a central bus stand will help reduce traffic congestions<sup>74</sup>
- 4.40 Grace Hilly, in her evidence, firmly indicated that bus terminal would be an ideal solution at the moment because it would help people to know exactly where they should go to catch a certain bus.<sup>75</sup> Many other witnesses such as Ms Kristina Sogavare<sup>76</sup> and Ms Kwalea<sup>77</sup> also support the idea.
- 4.41 The Committee notes that there are several recommendations made for possible locations for the Honiara Bus central station.
- 4.42 In his written submission, Emmanuel Tora, TCSI, indicated that the whole area around compound of Works Mechanical pool from Sea King Restaurant borders to Matanikau River is suitable to create this Central Bus Station. Another witness Mr. Elison Sade, a resident from the East Honiara Constituency stressed that it is best to have the bus terminal in the centre of the city in such area as the *Solomon Islands Ports Authority that has been idle for many years in the centre of the town*<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> MCILI, Submission 8, p.1

<sup>73</sup> Mr. Samuel Fangata, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.75

<sup>74</sup> MCILI, Submission 8, p.1

<sup>75</sup> Grace Hilly, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.5

<sup>76</sup> Christina Sogavare, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.5

<sup>77</sup> Nancy Kwalea, Evidence, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, p.98

<sup>78</sup> Mr. Ellyson Ryan Sade, Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.239

## **Police Traffic Control**

4.43 The Committee noted that if the presence of police is on the road controlling the flow of traffic the problem of road congestion and short bus routes would be avoided.

4.44 In evidence, Ms. Nancy Kwalea, Chamber of Commerce, pointed out;

*"...effective policing at all bus stops will ensure that passengers board buses in order of their arrival so that as soon as the first bus is full and takes off, it leaves space for each subsequent bus."* <sup>79</sup>

4.45 The Committee also noted that if Police are given enough resources to control the traffic during peak hours, they would have controlled the road congestion on the road. In its written submission, MCILI indicated that:

*"Sometimes Police are not at the areas where traffic is heavy to control the flow of vehicles and people crossing the main road, especially at the roundabouts and junctions. This could be because they do not have the capacity to do so. One suggestion is for the police to have enough resources to enable them to control the flow of traffic during peak hours at the busy places mentioned above."* <sup>80</sup>

## **Enforcement of Traffic Rule**

4.46 The Committee understands that there is weak law enforcement on drivers breaching traffic rules in the City. In its written evidence, the MCILI revealed that:

*"Sometimes, some buses can be seen crossing over to the other lane even if there is a traffic jam, thus causing a hold up in the flow of traffic. If this amounts to breaking an offence, then the bus driver should be fined on the spot. Introduce spot fine for careless and dangerous drivers including private and tax drivers."* <sup>81</sup>

## **Road Conditions**

4.47 Poor road conditions in the Honiara city also contributed to Honiara short bus route. Bad road conditions slow down traffic and cause traffic congestions on the road. This was pointed out by Mr Masa in his written submission.

*"Poor road condition... does more harm to transport services operators..."* <sup>82</sup>

## **Impact of Short Bus Routes**

### **Bus Operators/ Bus Owners**

4.48 During the Inquiry, the Solomon Island Bus Owners Association raises concern that operating bus business is expensive and risky. To substantiate their arguments, the following reasons were identified as evidence.

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<sup>79</sup> Nancy Kwalea, Evidence, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, p.93

<sup>80</sup> MCILI, Submission 8, p.2

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Mr. Jimmy Masa, Submission 3, p.3

4.49 Firstly, since 2007 the fuel price continued to increase till now. To cater for the high fuel consumptions, bus owners and bus operators in the City have decided to alternatively increase the bus fares from \$2 to \$3. Furthermore the fuel consumption for reconditioned buses is also very high.<sup>83</sup>

4.50 Secondly is the depreciation cost. The Committee understands that the value and conditions of buses operated for bus business services depreciate over years of its usage. Therefore, bus owners and bus operators prepared for such costs in future.

4.51 In evidence, Mr. Geoffrey Samuel, President of SI Bus Association giving an example below:

*“As bus owners we see depreciation as a cost that needs to have funds set aside for it because it is not depreciation in just figures but it is a replacement cost.”<sup>84</sup>*

4.52 As well as that, the Committee also noted that the bus owners also responsible for payment of salaries and wages of their bus drivers and bus conductors.

4.53 The Committee understands that the in the Traffic Act, the Minister has the power to make regulation to regulate the condition of services for public transport services in the country. Nevertheless, it is noted that there is no specific provision provided under that regulation to determine the condition of services including the salary level of workers such as bus conductors and bus drivers.

4.54 From evidence, it was raised that bus drivers and bus conductors are paid on certain percentage agreed to by both owners and bus drivers after each day’s earning. In evidence, Mr. Geoffrey point out that:

*“...bus drivers and conductors are expecting a good fortnightly salary and some bus owners these days are using percentage to calculate the cost of meeting drivers and conductors bus fares. They use this percentage to calculate their workers’ salaries. And this means bus drivers and conductors must work hard in order to get good salaries at the end of a fortnight.”<sup>85</sup>*

4.55 On that same point, the salaries of the bus drivers and bus conductors are calculated and deducted from each day’s earning. There is a calculation used to show how bus owners calculate the salaries of the bus drivers and bus conductors. To authenticate their reasons, the Solomon Islands Bus Association uses a case scenario to explain how bus salaries and wages of their bus drivers are calculated.

4.56 Using a 15 seater bus, there are only 14 seats available for passengers to be used multiplied that by \$3. One gets \$42, deducted that by \$12.40 for 1 litre fuel, one gets \$29.60.<sup>86</sup> In his evidence, the President of the Solomon Islands Bus Association stated that: Using the base figure of \$29.60 that is left after fuel, \$7.40 is the amount that must be paid as the wages of the two people – the bus driver and conductor for one trip taken, calculated at 25 percent. With that only \$22.20 is the amount left. Often bus drives take into consideration of replacement costs, therefore, bus drivers often put aside \$14.15 as replacement costs for the bus. Minus that from \$22.20 one gets \$8.05 and with this \$8.05, repair and maintenance has to be paid, license fee at the Ministry of Finance has to be paid, which is \$476 every three months and then multiply that by four times plus other licenses.

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<sup>83</sup> Mr.Geoffrey Samuel, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.62

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Mr Bai Animamu, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.66

<sup>86</sup> Mr.Geoffrey Samuel, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.62

- 4.57 It was noted during the Inquiry that the costs of spare parts and tyres<sup>87</sup> and mechanical faults repairs are quite expensive<sup>88</sup>.

#### **Bus Commuters - Common Impacts**

- 4.58 The Committee notes the issue of this *short bus routes* has put extra financial and economical expenses on the commuters.
- 4.59 In evidence, Mr. Moses Ramo, a resident of Alligator Creek expressed the difficulties his family faces with this issue of short bus routes and the financial expenses his family experienced so far. In his evidence before the Committee, he stated that:

*"Each day I travel from Alligator to the City Council, I travel by the Guadalcanal bus, \$5 when I go back after work. I took another bus from the market, I came to Fishing Village \$3, I travel again from Fishing village to Discount Auto another \$3. Discount to Lungga market another \$3, now its \$9 and the from Lungga market I took another bus to Henderson but we reside at Alligator so its \$5. If you add this per day it should be \$19 that is for me alone. My wife would pay extra because when she change from the G- Province bus at Point Cruz and takes the Rove bus it would cost her extra \$3. Therefore I spend \$19 per day and she spends \$22 per day. For both of us per day is \$41, so it means I spend \$95 per week, per month I spend \$380 and for the two years \$4,180. That is my experience between 2010 & 2011. Now you do not experience the short bus route from the G- Province routes, those of us residing at the main street first experience it. My wife spends about \$22 per day, \$110 per week, \$440 per month, \$4,840 per year. When you talk about experience and experience per day, this expense is not included in the salary. This is an extra expense that puts burden on the family."*<sup>89</sup>

- 4.60 Ms. Karen Tanabose, in her evidence raised an example showing the impact of short bus routes on mothers. She pointed out that:

*"It is costly to our grassroots. For example, women would like to travel in time to do their marketing but they never make it. They might arrive late at the market."*<sup>90</sup>

#### **Lateness to work**

- 4.61 Employers have reportedly confirmed that the issue of the shorter bus routes have cause significant lateness amongst employees and have made attempts to solve the issue at their capacity in vain.

*"We have been trying our best to address this issue of transportation by writing to staffs many times telling them to come to work on time as we are dealing with people's lives. We told them they are supposed to be at their respective work places by 8.00am; however, we found out that our staffs arrive at the clinics at 9.00am and some as late as 10.00am."*<sup>91</sup>

- 4.62 Parents have indicated that they have to take their children to school first before going to work which also cause lateness to work.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Mr. Bai Animamu, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.66

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Moses Ramo, Evidence, , 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.245

<sup>90</sup> Ms Karen Tanabose, Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.263

<sup>91</sup> Mr. Moses Karuni, Evidence, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, p.136

<sup>92</sup> Mrs. Gretel Sendersly, Evidence, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, p.137

### **Waiting long hours at the bus stops**

- 4.63 The long waiting hours at the bus stops was also raised by witnesses in their submissions to the Committee. Commuters are waiting long hours at the bus stops for a space in the bus before getting another bus to town or vice versa before. As previously mentioned in the report, witnesses expressed that this has led to lateness at work and poor service delivery by workers.

*“One personal experience of mine is this waiting time for the buses. A lot of people agree with me that waiting time is a very frustrating thing. I think there a lot of solutions but how to go about them all is a problem.”*<sup>93</sup>

*“...effect of the short bus routes on staffs working at the service delivery area. The public is expecting quality service in terms of attending to sick patients in time and this short bus route has significantly contributed to staffs arriving late at their workplace. Most times their excuse is having to take two or three buses before reaching Matanikau Clinic. And whilst waiting to catch the next bus it also takes time and thus their late arrival. While our sick patients expect us to be on time, nurses do not arrive on time mainly because of this short bus route. Because of late arrivals the nurses also are not in a position to provide quality service for sick patients. That is one of the effects the short bus routes have impacted the clinics and medical services.”*<sup>94</sup>

### **Constraints on individual budget**

- 4.64 As expressed by one of the witnesses in paragraph 4.59 above, it is evident that the short bus routes has constrained individual budgets as spelt out in some of the accounts by witnesses:

*“First of all, we note the cost of daily travel for individual commuters. The cost of travel for individuals commuting in more than one public bus to and from work places is on average \$12 to \$24 a day.”*<sup>95</sup>

- 4.65 And it disrupts the budgeting commitment as noted in the evidences:

*“...some nurses complained that the short bus routes is adding extra burden on them because their bus fare for the next day has been committed today when they have to be off-loaded along the way and by the time they arrive at the clinic they are already late. .... An analysis on that shows that nurses spend about \$18 per day on bus fares so a rough calculation shows that before the fortnight nurses spend about \$180 on bus fares.”*<sup>96</sup>

### **Expensive for bus users**

- 4.66 The issue of the short bus route has made transport cost in Honiara to increase. This is evident from a witness' submission:

*“the outcry is by employees and employers and the low income earning people who are using the service. In the Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Labour and Immigration's observation, this short bus routes is attributed to many factors...”*<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Mr. Ben Abana, Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.259

<sup>94</sup> Mr. Sam Tagini, Evidence, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, p.137

<sup>95</sup> Nancy Kwalea, Evidence, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, p.91

<sup>96</sup> Mr Moses Karuni, Evidence, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, p.137

<sup>97</sup> Mr. Hence Vaekesa, Evidence, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, p.92

4.67 It was further discussed that:

*“Employees earning a minimum wage of \$4 an hour would be earning \$32 a day at eight hours a day. Hence with this daily bus fare, they would only be making a saving of \$8 from their daily earnings. Considering the high cost of living in Honiara and the income levels of the majority of local employees, this travelling cost is a huge burden on many families living in Honiara.”<sup>98</sup>*

4.68 The financial impact it has on users:

*“Almost everything you do or receive is taxable. This is a huge negative impact on the cost of living. We think the higher we go in the hierarchy in terms of our salaries, the more money we will get but at the end of the day it is not true. Say for example if you are earning \$60,000+ you are taxed at 40%, and when you go to the shops to pay for goods and services which are also taxed, so again you are taxed in that sense. Everything we do are taxed so at the end of the day, even the high income earning people do not get much out of the money they work for. Yes, the cost of living is very high and I think something seriously needs to be done on the taxation system in the country.”<sup>99</sup>*

### **Economic Impact**

4.69 The Committee notes that the current short bus route has economically and financially affected the bus users and commuters in the Honiara city.

4.70 In his evidence, Pr. Peter Baeoro, resident from the West Honiara Constituency expressed the economic challenges this has on his family budget:

*“I know that Honiara is just a small town and our economy is not that strong and not everybody receives \$1000.00 per fortnight. Some people only receive maybe \$250 a fortnight and that is not enough to provide for bus fares for their children to go to school as schools in town are located in different areas. How can those who do not have enough money get their kids to travel to school in a week? Not only that, but kids also need money to pay for their lunch. Imagine if a child needs \$30.00 per day to go to school, multiply that by five days and if the parents do not earn enough money, how can they afford that? There are so many things to meet as family living in two but money is not enough. I just found out that \$100 can be spent within a second. How can we solve this short bus route issue in order to cater for those that earn small salaries in order to help their families in terms of education?”<sup>100</sup>*

4.71 As well as that, Mr. Simon Tagie, also spoke about the financial impact this short bus routes has on his budget:

*“As a father, I found out that the Honiara short bus route is affecting me financially. Before the Honiara short bus route came into effect, my budget for travelling from White River to my place of work is \$6.00 both ways and that is \$30.00 for five days so it is \$60.00 before I receive my next fortnightly pay...And this is really affecting me.”<sup>101</sup>*

4.72 The Committee notes that this issue of short bus routes has bigger financial burden as well on students living with their relatives in town and as well as on parents and guidance whose children are studying in schools in Honiara.

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<sup>98</sup> Ms. Nancy Kwalea, Evidence, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, pp.91-92

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p.97

<sup>100</sup> Pr. Peter Baeoro, Evidence, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.471

<sup>101</sup> Mr. Simon Tagie, Evidence, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.473

4.73 In his evidence, Mr. Nelson Kay, indicated that:

*“Those of us live at Rove and get to school at King George we have to catch two or three buses and that means spending about \$4.00 or \$6.00 on bus fares for one way. That also puts extra burden on us as students. This is even more challenging for some of us students that live with relatives in town. Our parents at home have to look for extra money for our bus fares and also for our pocket money”.*<sup>102</sup>

## **Bus Commuters – Specific Issues**

### **Public Servants**

4.74 Service delivery is also affected due to short bus routes. Public officers working in government ministries are also facing the challenges posed by short bus routes. This is also true for officers working for other organizations. Discussed below is a case which can be related to other workers in other public or private offices.

### **Nurses**

4.75 Nurses are part of an essential service that the Government provides duly for his citizens. However, it is evident that the issue of shorter bus routes has its impact on the work force that provides this service. As one administrator alludes to:

*“At the administration level, this short bus route is becoming a major issue at this point because it is really affecting our work force.”*<sup>103</sup>

4.76 Thus with the introduction of the shorter bus routes, Government employees such as the nurses cadre who despite their eagerness to serve, are victimized as noted:

*“Some of these nurses are low wage earners but they play a great role in providing health services to our people.”*<sup>104</sup>

4.77 Some of the relevant services provided by the department are also at the cross road, given other related issues which resulted in the shorter bus routes. The impacts are such that the said sector is debating importing vehicles to carry out important services given that “this chronic traffic jams”<sup>105</sup> and vehicle importation should be limited.

4.78 When inquiring into other initiatives that the employers could take, SICC mentioned the pressure it will place on the employers in terms of tax as Employers pay the goods and services tax, corporate tax and employees NPF contributions.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Nelson Kay, Evidence, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.153

<sup>103</sup> Mr. Moses Karuni, Evidence, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, p.136

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Ms. Nancy Kwalea, Evidence, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, p.95

## Education

### Commuting

- 4.79 The Committee has noted that around ninety-three percent of the Primary and Secondary High Schools within the vicinity of the Honiara City are non-boarding institutions. Therefore students in particular are day scholars and attend to school activities five compulsory days each week. Their sole means of commuting to school is via the usage of the public buses as there are no school bus services available for that matter. Most parents, whose children are attending elementary or lower primary schools, often use the public buses as well to accompany their children to and from school.
- 4.80 The teachers similarly to the students may not live on or near the school compound, but somewhere else within the city; hence regularly use the public bus service as their means of transportation to their work places. Thus the operation of public transport services such as the bus service is vital for the purpose of moving students, parents and teachers in the process of acquiring education in Honiara.<sup>107</sup>
- 4.81 Students who appeared as witnesses before the committee have expressed concerns as to how the *short bus route* services have affected them. This is in terms of arriving late to school as students have to board three to four buses,<sup>108</sup> being late for school assembly<sup>109</sup> and get punished<sup>110</sup> for being late.
- 4.82 The teachers on the other hand viewed that the issue at hand has instigate a tendency of being late to their duties as expressed by teachers. A teacher honestly claimed that:

*"We are always late for the first two periods."* <sup>111</sup>

- 4.83 Hence it is obvious that students are without a teacher and no instruction for much of the earlier hours of the day as described by another as:

*"Classes cannot start properly at 8.00am sharp. Students are left unattended to. We have a culture now in our school, especially the smaller ones in Kindy and Primary that if there are no teachers in their classes, they go about playing."* <sup>112</sup>

- 4.84 As for non-attendances to the scheduled lessons, the teachers admitted that:

*"We are always late in our programs and this is affecting our work plan. When we do not teach one lesson, it means we are drawn back in our teaching program."* <sup>113</sup>

- 4.85 And the cost of lateness at which the teachers have to be accountable to is meeting the due datelines, as required by the program. This was emphasize by one teacher:

*"Another point I would also like to touch on which was touched on earlier is that I think teachers have work plans and a topic that must be completed in a week or a term, a semester or a year....which they will be assessed on at the end of the term or semester or at the end of the year."*

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<sup>107</sup> Philip Funubana, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.158

<sup>108</sup> Fatimah Santa, Evidence, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.154

<sup>109</sup> Sharon Totorea, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.155

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> George Inomae, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.165

<sup>112</sup> James Lengi, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.163

<sup>113</sup> Robert Manekeha, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.156

*This means the topics will have to be carried forward to the new semester or term which also has its own topics that needs to be covered.”<sup>114</sup>*

- 4.86 It is then definite and obvious that the tendency of lateness by both the students and the teachers does backfire at the cost of getting entangled with disciplinary actions as well as being behind in disseminating the requirements by the syllabus or curriculum’s schedules.

#### **Finance**

- 4.87 The Committee has also learned that the introduction of the shorter bus route has inflicted extra financial constraints on public bus users at large of which students, parents and teachers are of no exceptions. The cost of travelling is on an alarming increase.

- 4.88 In ensuring that their children do attend to classes parents have to make extra allocations to cater for their children’s transport expenditures including their own. Students claimed that they do also felt the financial impact the short bus routes have cause to increase of their spending capacity on bus fares alone. The students themselves have felt the impact as such:

*“An example is finance where my parents spend a lot of money on bus fares because of the short bus routes ....\$4.00 or \$6.00 on bus fares for one way. That also puts extra burden on us as students.”<sup>115</sup>*

- 4.89 Students who reside with their guardians other than parents find it more difficult to request more than what is allotted to them each morning. Therefore they are succumbed to facing unnecessary misfortunes such as having to walk back home on foot or go hungry at school.

- 4.90 The teachers reported it as such that:

*“...before the short route was introduced I used to spend \$3.00 for travelling in a bus from White River to King George VI School but after this short route was introduced I now have to spend \$9.00, which is an increase of about 200 percent and that increase is very big. From King George VI School back to White River, sometimes I have to catch two buses, for example, from King George to Point Cruz and then from Point Cruz to White River... it also creates unexpected expense for us, especially for teachers and also employees in other sectors. This increase ranges from 100 percent to 200 percent and this is quite big. If I have to travel in two buses, I have to spend \$6.00, and that is an increase of 100 percent from previous times. If I have to travel in three different buses then I have to spend \$9.00, and that is an increase of 200 percent. Today, we have to spend about \$120.00 to \$150.00 on bus fares on top of what we used to spend in the past. For us teachers, everybody is aware that teachers are within that average earning - most teachers on average earn a salary of about \$600.00.”<sup>116</sup>*

- 4.91 Another teacher mentioned that:

*“To us the teachers of St. John, the short bus route is very expensive as already expressed by our other colleagues today, for example, I have to take three buses from Borderline to Kukum and Kukum to Point Cruz and then from Point Cruz to St. John School. This is very, very expensive for me.”<sup>117</sup>*

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<sup>114</sup> Binneth Sisimia, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.161

<sup>115</sup> Nelson Kay, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.153

<sup>116</sup> Robert Manekeha, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.156

<sup>117</sup> George Inomae, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.157

- 4.92 Teachers with average salaries have to either resort to finding extra ways to meet their needs or live on credit until the next fortnight.
- 4.93 Parents in turn are not able to cope with their commitments to the school and got blamed for failing to turn up to do their duties.<sup>118</sup>

### Quality Education

- 4.94 The Committee has heard that the argument of whether the pupils are receiving quality education as intended is questionable. Students knowing the value for having a Teachers claimed that in most cases they miss classes which resulted in a set back on the progress of their teaching program. A senior administrator registered that:

*“The Issue at large: In terms of education, it is important for me to register that this issue is undermining, discouraging and thus diminishes values of education that we are delivering in our schools on a day to day basis. ... Actually, the effects of this issue are killing a progressive life and operations of schools within Honiara.”<sup>119</sup>*

- 4.95 Students felt possible threats to their education:

*“This short bus route is affecting my learning because if my parents do not have money to support me I will not go to school because I only depend on them. Therefore, this short bus route should be stopped and the routes go back to the normal routes as in the past.”<sup>120</sup>*

- 4.96 Students are distracted and have to serve suspensions for accumulating excessive lateness to school. The act of being late to attend to classes as claimed by students:

*“As students, arriving late at school also leads to problem of concentration in school. Our teachers expect students to gain knowledge and skills they teach. If students do not concentrate in class it means that the objective of teaching is not achieved.”<sup>121</sup>*

- 4.97 In the long term a student claimed that:

*“Waiting for buses in the mornings always makes us miss our first classes in the mornings. Also, some of our teachers miss their lessons in the mornings. This results in having piles of notes that we have to study for ourselves, but as students we do not have private times to do our own studies. As a result you will see students do not perform well during examinations because they always miss classes in the mornings and they do not get the notes because they are late for their class.”<sup>122</sup>*

### Social Implications

- 4.98 Thus the predicament at hand can be seen as a plight for the education system in our country. This can lead to other social crisis. Even a student can notice the impact it has on the society:

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<sup>118</sup> Remy Fenton, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.169

<sup>119</sup> Samuel Fangata, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.152

<sup>120</sup> Remy Fenton, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.169

<sup>121</sup> Christina Lioa, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.167

<sup>122</sup> James Lidiome, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.159

*“Since the short bus routes come into play, we can see its impact on the ordinary lives of people to be very big and has really affected the very people of our society, the majority of whom are struggling for survival in this town.”*<sup>123</sup>

**4.99** The attitude of being dishonesty crept slowly but steadily as alluded to by witnesses who appeared before the Committee. The bus drivers claimed that the reason for these shorter bus routes is the traffic jam. Witnesses say that this is a poor and untruthful excuse. Because they off load passengers at one point, only to collect a new set of passengers just meters away.<sup>124</sup>

**4.100** Workers’ attitude to work is also affected due to short bus route issue. Workers use the excuse of short bus routes for being late to work even though some of their lateness is not related to it. It is feared that if this practice is passed on to students, it will have adverse effect on their education. All these behavioural changes were expressed by a teacher as:

*“This short bus route is also causing a change in behaviours and this is a threat to the future of our country. I came across some friends or I even experienced it myself that bus has become an excuse for most workers to arrive late at their work place. When their bosses ask why they are late, everyone will say bus problem and everybody seems to believe that but in reality that person is still at his home at 8 o’clock. It slows down things and so it starts to develop that idea. Also, if this idea is passed on to the young generations, especially our students if they start practicing coming late to school or going late to work, what will be the future of our country be like? It is therefore very important for us to address this issue.”*<sup>125</sup>

**4.101** The Committee heard from Inquiry participants that students and children are being discriminated by bus operators. Rude comments were made to them when they refuse to board buses due to lack of clear indications of their destinations. In some cases, the buses deliberately refuse to pick the students since their fare is lower compared to adult passengers. In other instances, the children are robbed. This was told by one of the witnesses:

*“...a kid about seven years old sits right at the back next to me. The kid handed \$10.00 to the bus conductor and the bus conductor handed the change to me and when the kid checked the change he noticed that the bus conductor had taken \$3.00 from his money. That is daylight robbery. The kid is seven years old and we know that he is just a kid and the bus fare for kids is only \$2.00.”*<sup>126</sup>

**4.102** In other related instances the students put themselves at risk by travelling on foot to school at<sup>127</sup> early hours of the morning, because they could not afford the bus fares meant to be spent due to this shorter bus routes.

## **Committee Findings**

**4.103** After listening to the witnesses and reflection on all the evidences provided to the Committee during the Inquiry, the Committee noted that the issue of public transport services currently experienced in the Honiara capital city were caused by various factors.

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<sup>123</sup> Philip Funubana, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.155

<sup>124</sup> Robert Manekaea, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013, p.155

<sup>125</sup> Philip Funubana, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.160

<sup>126</sup> Margret Rita Siata, Evidence, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, p.168

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

The bus operation and bus ownership and unregulated transport services in the Honiara city has contributed to this.

- 4.104 The Committee in its finding realises that there are number of foreigners especially Asians operating bus services in the country. The Committee through its Inquiry is informed that some of these Asians have registered these buses under the name of local Solomon Islanders. However, any bus that is registered under any Solomon Islanders is regarded by HCC as property owned by Solomon Islander.
- 4.105 The Committee understands that the unregulation of public transport services in the Honiara city contributed allows open market on how bus services is operated in the Honiara city and seriously required regulation to control this Market in the Honiara City.
- 4.106 The Committee in its finding noticed that the bus ownership and bus operation in the Honiara city is expensive and risky. The costs of fuel and spare parts increase almost every week. As well as that, costs of maintaining the condition of buses and hiring of mechanics to service the bus daily is very costly. Beside, bus owners also paid the salaries of his/her bus drivers and bus conductors fourth nightly therefore, added another extra burden and costs on the bus owners and is very expensive. Therefore, to meet these demands, bus drivers decided to resort to short bus routes in order to collect more revenue to cater for all these costs faced by the bus owners and bus operators as well as their salaries.
- 4.107 The Committee in its finding also noted that the poor road conditions and road infrastructure in the Honiara city plays part in these issue of short bus routes as well.
- 4.108 The Committee in its finding recognises that that the negative impact of this short bus routes has affected the families, students, employees and employers, other bus users, commuters and more especially all the residents of Honiara city economically, financially, socially, educationally and commercially.

## Recommendations

- That the Solomon Islands Government through the Road Transport Board in the Ministry of Infrastructure Development(MID) secure funding under the National Transport fund (NTF) for the improvement, upgrading and constructions of the following:
  - i. To improve and upgrade the entire road conditions including upgrading the feeder routes outside the Honiara city
  - ii. Improve and upgrade the traffic lights, traffic lanes and traffic directions and traffic signs on the road
  - iii. Conduct road assessments on road infrastructure in the Honiara city
  - iv. Improve and expand bus bays and bus stops in the Honiara city
  - v. Construct and establish the Central Bus Stations at the centre of the Honiara city for public transport services
  - vi. Establish and construct the standard bus stop shelters and bus stands at the bus stops in the city
  - vii. Improve the lower Matanikau Bridge to 4 lanes and the upper bridge to 2 lane roads
  - viii. Link the current back roads and feeder roads at some possible points at the back of the city and that the government to be prepared to pay for damages as necessary

- ix. Install Traffic Lights at identified road junctions including the Central Market with reliable standby power supply in the event of power outage by SIEA.

## Chapter 5 Other Relevant Issues in Transportation Services

This chapter covers other issues that are also relevant to the short bus route issue and the road transport services in Honiara. In the course of the Inquiry the committee became conscious of the fact that the issue of short Bus Routes is pertaining to a number of other important road infrastructures and issues affecting Road transport services delivery in general.

### Road Infrastructures

#### The Matanikau Bridges and Road Reserves

- 5.1 The Committee is concerned that road and bridges cannot accommodate the growing number of vehicles in the city.
- 5.2 There is overwhelming evidence from the public, including bus and taxi drivers, that the two bridges of Matanikau River in Central Honiara are causing traffic congestions that is experienced daily on the main road from Point Cruz to Bahai.

*"Firstly, the two lanes Matanikau bridge need to be widen and secondly, the old Matanikau bridge, needs to be widen. The flow is hindered by the bridges"<sup>128</sup>*

- 5.3 Evidences received by the Committee suggest that traffic congestion is a reason why bus drivers resort to shorter bus routes. Bus owners argued that they make less money in one hour as most of the time they are caught up in the jam.
- 5.4 However, a witness giving evidence raised that when bus owners say that they earn less money because of the traffic congestion, that is just an excuse:

*"...buses are only busy when people go to work and children go to school and then after 10am to midday you will see them going on the short routes again. It is unstable and not consistent. They blame the traffic congestion but when there are no passengers you will see they start putting up long distance routes signboards. So their excuses are not valid."<sup>129</sup>*

- 5.5 The Committee reasons that the current traffic jam is a transport issue in the city and affects all road users, students and working commuters that use public transport. While bus owners argued that traffic jams lead to short bus routes, this is not entirely a case to support shorter routes as on weekends the traffic is lighter, however, public buses still serve by shorter routes. Or as the above evidence suggested, buses only resort to short bus routes on peak times during the day when commuters really need to get to and from their places of work and school.
- 5.6 In evidence, the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID), Moses Virivolomo highlighted to the Committee that Honiara city is not properly planned. According to the PS, the road corridors should be 60 metres wide for purposes of road expansions in the future. He argued that this is not true for the roads in Honiara city.

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<sup>128</sup> Mr. Lloyd Hatimana, Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.313

<sup>129</sup> Mr. Isaac Manu, Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.288

The strips of road reserves in Honiara are taken up by other needed utilities such as water, electricity and communication lines. The presence of these utilities in the road reserves are obstructions to road developments. The PS highlighted that allocation of lands within the road reserves seriously affects the expansion of roads:

*“... what we call road reserves ... in some places it is only 40 and in some places it even goes down to 20 and in some places it goes down to 15 meters. This only goes to show a city that is growing but reflects poor planning ... The zoning allocation of land, which is the responsibility of another government agency, is not being properly done.... Although the MID manages the road reserve, power is vested on the Commissioner of Lands and most of the time some of these land areas are allocated without consultations with MID ... I am raising this because it also restricts planning of the road reserve in terms of what should be in the reserves.”<sup>130</sup>*

- 5.7 The Committee is concerned that while the need for the development of roads and bridges is eminent, the actual land for such expansion is not available as they have been taken up by other service utilities or those lands have been allocated to other persons already for development leaving the roads with no space to expand.

### **Traffic Control Lights**

- 5.8 The development of Honiara city in terms of population and the number of vehicles on the road requires that road infrastructures are developed and improved to control the flow of vehicles and orderly use of the road both by drivers and pedestrians.

- 5.9 It was noted that there used to be a traffic control light at the Central Market highway in the late 1980's which worked very well at that time. The light was removed in the early 1990's during the construction of the current two (2) lane roads of the main highway.<sup>131</sup>

- 5.10 In evidence, members of the public and senior officials from various government organizations advised that Traffic control lights should be installed in several areas to control traffic and ease pedestrian crossings along the main highway.

*“It is time that Honiara roads should be introduced with traffic control lights to manage and control the flow of traffic. Traffic control lights can also ease the attitude problem of slow driver's at the road junctions.”<sup>132</sup>*

- 5.11 One of the areas of concern is Honiara Central Market area which is populated by commuters crossing the road. According to the Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Labour & Immigration (MCILI) submissions this normally cause delays in the movement of vehicles and suggest that it is important to install traffic control lights in this area.”<sup>133</sup>

### **Road Crossings**

- 5.12 In relation to road infrastructures, the Committee noted that Honiara city has some road infrastructures that are never utilized by the public. These include the overhead bridge in China Town and two underground crossings at Point Cruz and near the Central Market.

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<sup>130</sup> Moses Virivolomo, Permanent Secretary, MID, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.26

<sup>131</sup> Hon. Johnley Hatimoana, Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.185

<sup>132</sup> Mr. Beaver Biti, Submission 6, p.4.

<sup>133</sup> MCILI, Submission 8, p.1

## Quality in Road Works

- 5.13 The Committee is concerned on the condition of roads in Honiara. Poor road conditions are one of the reasons given for short bus routes. Witnesses that appeared before the committee gave views on the standard of workmanship on the roads:

*"I want to ask the committee, do you award the contracts because the contractor will give you something in return? If so, I want us to stop this attitude. You cannot mix cement with tar. Tar is tar, you do not mix cement with tar and then add gravel to it. If it rains in the evening it will just wash it away..... We bus owners pay many different license. But it only goes to those who fix the roads that last only one day ... give the contract to those who have real engineering backgrounds. Not those who are related to the authorities."*<sup>134</sup>

*"In Papua New Guinea ... if any contractor is on the road, there has to be a works/MID engineer for really supervising whether that work is done according to the specification or not. Is it meeting the required standard or not ... my husband will stand on the road and he'll tell the contractor to peel it off if it's not according to that specification ... So I think our engineers should execute what is really in specification of job that the contractors are doing."*<sup>135</sup>

- 5.14 In evidence, the PS of the Ministry of Infrastructure Development admitted before the Committee that the standard of performance on roadwork by contractors is poor:

*"...our contractors are not performing well. We only came out of force account in 2006. When I say force account, I mean MID does all the work on its own and those potholes would never have existed had we were in that time. This is because whilst the holes are still small we attend to them very quickly. What is happening now is called reform or outsourcing. In the past you hardly can see any contract work in Solomon Islands, even local ones because MID did everything"*<sup>136</sup>

- 5.15 The PS also informed the Committee that the Ministry does not pay contractors if they do not do the job properly. The Committee appreciates that a contractor must not be paid for a job half done, however, the ministry needs to do more in terms of supervising contractors and producing of reports on payments made to these contractors.

- 5.16 Comparisons were made on the quality of the materials used and the standard of work produced by companies contracted by MID to do road repair works with the job used to be done by the **Road and Bridges** section of the former PWD. Witnesses that appeared before the Committee expressed those road contractors are not doing quality value for money repairs to the roads in the city. Witnesses have spoken highly of the work done by former officers of PWD when it was still functioning. The members of the public who came before the Committee strongly argued that such a department as PWD should be reinstated back into the Ministry of Infrastructure Development to do road constructions and repairs in the city because road works by current contractors are no longer of quality as is currently witnessed in Honiara. In addition, it is argued that the government spends a lot of money in paying contractors who do nothing good to the roads while the officers of the former PWD were paid a public servant salary yet they did quality work on the roads.

*"Our population is small, thus, PWD should not be abolished... It should remain...the Government should revive the Works Department rather than contracting it. My view is maybe we should have*

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<sup>134</sup> Mr. Robert Satu, Chief (Fishing Village), Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, pp.255-256

<sup>135</sup> Ms Delilah Buarafi, Evidence, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.389

<sup>136</sup> Mr Moses Virivolomo, Permanent Secretary, MID, Evidence 21<sup>st</sup> may 2013,p.45

*the Works Department to look after the City so that they act like a Mobile team. When the road work needs maintenance in the Province they can go there. When I was working we do the Town Council roads. They call it the dry high roads, they only pay fuels for the works Ministry and we do all the roads during the Weekends. When they privatized it, ruts and pot holes appear.”<sup>137</sup>*

*“... PWD or MID should take over that responsibility ... old men who do not have good education ... were the ones who fixed those places. They did a good job.... the tar is mixed properly with the aggregate, and it lasts longer. But what we see now is that we did not see any tar, only stones or soils are seen, the next day the condition returns to its deteriorating state.”<sup>138</sup>*

*“In terms of the road maintenance ...when I travel past and see people working at odd times. ...I said to myself, ‘this group is starting to fund raise’...”<sup>139</sup>*

- 5.17** The Committee put forward the fact that many countries in the world, including Australia and Vanuatu, have used cement in road constructions which fortifies the road structures making roads to last a very long time. In evidence, witnesses agreed that if cement roads is cheaper and lasts longer, the Solomon Islands government should now consider constructing roads with cements in place of tar.

*“I would like to ask how many tar sealed are used in the Honiara roads but nothing good came out of them and so we spend a lot of money on temporary things. If we can use cement on our roads would be good because if cement is used now on our roads our children and grandchildren can still see the cement and our great grand children will also see the same cement in their time. We are not going to spend a lot of money on the roads so that money is saved to be used on other activities for the welfare of our nation.”<sup>140</sup>*

- 5.18** The *Road and Bridges Division* of the former Ministry of Transport, Works and Utilities which was responsible for road maintenance was abolished after 1997 when the government inclined to accommodate major structural adjustment programs (SAP) pushed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

#### **Bus Service at the Back roads**

- 5.19** The Committee is aware of the need for bus service in the back roads of Honiara as most of the lower and middle level income earners live at the back of the city and had to walk to the bus stops to wait for buses. Witnesses support the idea of buses serving the entire city as compared with other Pacific Island countries, where people get off the bus right at their home or just some few meters away.

*“Each Bus must have a business operation licence to service a specific route. This means that this particular bus must have a large and clear permanent written label on both sides of the bus to indicate the route destination which the bus will provide the bus service. Bus owners can have multiple bus service licence to different routes. However owners must allocate specific buses to certain routes with specific permanent route labels under each allocated business licenses.”<sup>141</sup>*

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<sup>137</sup> Mr. John Kena, Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013 pp.269-270

<sup>138</sup> Ms Hazel Kausua, Evidence, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013, pp.339-340

<sup>139</sup> Mr. Patrick Turanga, Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.256

<sup>140</sup> Mr. Peter Baeoro, Evidence 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.484

<sup>141</sup> Mr. Emmanuel Tora, Submission, p.2.

5.20 In support of the above proposal, another witness suggested for the back road routes to be sold to interested operators since most bus operators prefer servicing routes in the city where a lot of people travel.<sup>142</sup>

5.21 In his evidence to the Committee, the Clerk to the Honiara City Council responded to this proposal requesting for the Council to be empowered.

*"I would like to see a little empowerment on the Council to be able to do that because we have to take it to the highest level of the Council, which is the Executive and then the Assembly so that it can be enacted by way of an ordinance so that when license is issued to the buses, it is a license to only run Route No.1 or Route No.2 or No.3 and so forth. That empowers us to direct buses which routes to run. Right now there is nothing for the HCC to do that."*<sup>143</sup>

5.22 The sentiment raised by the City Clerk is substantiated by Mr. Jefferson Hallu in his analysis of the legislative competence of the Honiara city council, when presenting his submission to the Committee:

*"Transportation is not included and that is why when the HCC appeared before your Honourable Committee, it said it has no power. It is very true that it has no power. However, if we look at Schedule 4 of the Honiara City Act, there are certain functions that may be transferred to the Honiara City Council from the central government. And one of them is traffic and functions of the highway authority... Therefore, capacity and legislative competence is an issue here."*<sup>144</sup>

5.23 In response to the proposal, the Bus Owners Association expressed that the above are good suggestions, however, the profitability aspect of the back way routes coupled with road conditions in these areas must not be ignored by relevant authorities. In terms of profit, the back roads are uneconomical areas as frequent commuting does not happen there compared to the main highway.

*"...if the condition of providing that service is a flat playing field for everyone, then we would not mind operating the routes in providing service to our people ... we want to see regulations to improve service, we want to see a subsidy that supports us in providing the service when we provide the service and did not benefit. It would be good if the government or the Honiara City Council or the authority that is responsible of providing service in transportation has to discuss with bus operators."*<sup>145</sup>

5.24 The Bus Owners Association further added that the Honiara city Council and bus owners can come up with some form of arrangements where buses servicing back roads can have scheduled times for these roads and then run the economical routes outside of the scheduled time to compensate the empty seats during the day.<sup>146</sup>

5.25 Evidences given to the Committee further suggest that there should be regulations on the carrying capacity of vehicles used in the public bus services. The big buses with space and capacity are licensed to serve on the main highway, while mini vans serve the shorter sub roads.

*"Restrict licensed buses with sizes range from 25-50 Seats to operate along the Honiara City Highway road from White River to Henderson. 15 seats buses should be granted licence to operate*

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<sup>142</sup>Mr. George Wale, Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.235

<sup>143</sup> Mr Charles Kelly, Clerk to Honiara City Council, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.54

<sup>144</sup> Mr Jefferson Hallu, Evidence, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.451

<sup>145</sup> Mr Geoffrey Samuel, Bus Owners Association, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.70

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

*only on the sub roads within Honiara City such as Lengkiki, Mbokonavera, Naha, Tuvaruhu etc.”<sup>147</sup>*

- 5.26 The Committee acknowledges that the road transport system in terms of public bus and taxi services in the city is inadequate and disorderly and needs to be organised through the responsible authorities.

## **Other factors affecting transport services in Honiara.**

### **Vehicle Importation**

- 5.27 An important issue that is brought up over and over again throughout the Inquiry is the rate of vehicle imports into the country. According to the Permanent Secretary of MID, the country receives around 90 imported vehicles (including reconditioned ones) per month.

*“A few years back you can only buy vehicles from certain dealers and there were only three dealers in town at that time. But nowadays anybody can buy a vehicle themselves. Can the Committee look into how that can be regulated whether a normal business man can buy several vehicles and resell them again in town? Are there any regulations that can be put in place so that a private vehicle owner can just have a private vehicle and not to order more than 10 and sell them like a dealer is doing? ”<sup>148</sup>*

*“...regulations must be taken on the importation of vehicles just for control measures on the actual capacity of our roads.”<sup>149</sup>*

*“There are no clear second hand vehicle import policies. How old vehicle / mileage should we import into the country? Our Islands are not continent. They are just islands. Mark my words, if no control to importing of second hand vehicles, in 20 or 30 years time all beaches and bushes where roads are existing we will have old trucks and vehicles will be all over the places. SI will be a dumping place for second hand vehicles from Japan, Korea, China and other industrialized countries.”<sup>150</sup>*

- 5.28 It is understood that importing vehicles is a freedom of choice for citizens, however, witnesses believe that importing of vehicles should be regulated to what it was like in the past where licensed dealers import vehicles then sell it to individuals. Furthermore, this freedom of importing vehicle by individuals will also increase number of buses on the road, creating very high competition in the bus service. As a result, bus income earnings are also affected.

### **Road Worthiness of Vehicles**

- 5.29 It was expressed during the Committee hearings that significant numbers of vehicles that are not road worthy still run as public transport. In his disagreement to what he currently observed, Hospital Secretary of the National Referral Hospital pointed out that currently many vehicles run with many defects right in front of the eyes of the responsible authorities

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<sup>147</sup> Mr. Emmanuel Tora, Submission 2, p.2

<sup>148</sup> Ms Grace Hilly, Young Women’s Parliamentary Group(YWPG), Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.5

<sup>149</sup> Mr. Elwyn Talo, Evidence, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.407

<sup>150</sup> Mr Jimmy Masa, Submission 3, p.7.

(MID, HCC, Police, Commerce and others).<sup>151</sup> He further outlines the unworthiness of such vehicles in his written submission<sup>152</sup> to the Committee:

- Buses and taxies not fitting to be on the road but are still on the road. This causes big competition and they not providing transportation services they suppose to be because their intention is just to make money for the day.
- Vehicles running in nights with one head light or just with park lights
- Too many lights/head lights added to original as required by international traffic rules
- Brake lights, park lights not functioning properly
- Vehicles running with no number plates either in front or at rear
- Vehicles have unsecured seats in public transport

5.30 The Hospital Secretary pointed out that all these defects if properly controlled, will not allow too many vehicles running on the road. This will minimize long lines of vehicles, big competition on public transport and that public transport owners will provide quality service for the general public.<sup>153</sup>

### **Varying Costs of Second hand Spare Parts**

5.31 During the Inquiry, the bus owners Association raised the issue of the varying cost of spare parts in the automobile parts dealers in town. It is argued that, most of the parts are second hand; however, the price is too expensive and is not the same in all the shops in town.

*"...we often go to spare part shops and ask for the cost of spare parts and we would be told it is \$300-00. You go to another shop and the same spare part costs \$500-00. This is a difference of \$200 or \$100-00 in the price. How are these spare parts priced like that? Because the price of spare parts is connected to bus services, it is an area that needs to be investigated."*<sup>154</sup>

5.32 The Committee has the view that pricing is determined by many factors. Shops in the city order their parts from different countries and dealers so the mark up pricing will vary according to quality and import prices. However, it is still an important issue to look into as the transportation is a service and in the past, there have been bus owners and individuals calling for tax exemption on spare parts so that parts are cheaper for taxi's and buses.

### **Improvement on Service Delivery of Public Transportation**

5.33 The Committee heard from evidences that another key issue following causes of the short bus routes is the need to improve service delivery on public transportation, particularly the public bus service.

5.34 In the course of rallying for signatures for the petition on Short-Bus Routes, members of the YWPG claimed that complains were made by the public on how bus drivers and conductors portrayed poor quality services in terms of personal health & hygiene and customer care.

5.35 This sentiment is supported by other witnesses that came before the committee:

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, Evidence, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.360

<sup>152</sup> Mr. Jimmy Masa, Submission 3, p.3

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>154</sup> Mr. Gerald Hatigeva, Evidence, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.416

*“Let’s bring Solomon Islands to some sort of higher standard... that the driver and the bus conductor dress up properly, have some proper shower in the morning. Groom like... going to church.”<sup>155</sup>*

- 5.36 Furthermore, the unprofessional manner in which bus drivers and conductors have and courtesy for customers at some instances in the bus is emphasized by the Chairlady of YWPG.

*“Sometimes if a bus is not filled to capacity with passengers, maybe only one passenger is in the bus and so if the bus probably gets to, say Talise and there is only one passenger inside, the bus would ... drop off that passenger halfway to the final destination because ... that is uneconomical.... passengers like mothers and children have to walk the rest of the way to their final destination. This kind of practice exposes passengers like children to the risk of walking by themselves on the road as well as mothers having to walk some distance to their house carrying goods.”<sup>156</sup>*

- 5.37 Such attitudes of bus drivers and conductors were strongly condemned by some of the witnesses during the Inquiry, expressing that buses are serving the public and passengers should not be treated unfairly.”<sup>157</sup>

## **Social Services**

### **Children and People with Special Interest**

- 5.38 The Committee noted that public bus services operated in the city is not designed in a way where people with disabilities can have proper access in the bus. Furthermore, there is no seat in the public bus transport reserved for people with these special needs. The Committee notes that public bus transports operate in the city must design and provide "reasonable and adequate" access for people with disabilities.

- 5.39 A witness in his submissions highlighted two disadvantaged groups who are often denied their right to access and travel in the public bus transport in the Honiara city. In his evidence, Moses Ramo indicated that:

*“...buses just go pass if they see school children at the bus stop. I see this occurrence often at Burns Creek, Kukum and also in Central Honiara. If you travel in a bus and they see children standing there they will not pick them, but just drive passed to the next stop.”<sup>158</sup>*

- 5.40 The other group is the people with disabilities. In his evidence, Moses Ramo stated that:

*“...if they see the people with disability standing at the road or bus stop they will not stop but continue on, that is what I see within the thirty four years. Abuse of right to travel is a constitutional right.”<sup>159</sup>*

- 5.41 In her evidence, Ann Mildred, a resident from the Central Honiara Constituency, pointed out children’s right to sit where they want in the bus were not respected. She has given an example describing such problem:

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<sup>155</sup> Mr. Simon Houma, Evidence, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.310

<sup>156</sup> Ms Kristina Sogavare, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.6

<sup>157</sup> Mr. Simon Houma, Evidence 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.310

<sup>158</sup> Moses Ramo, Evidence, , 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.245

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

*“...if a child has already seated on a seat, and the conductor noticed a passenger outside , they will ask the child who has already paid his \$2 to leave the seat and sit near the door where the conductor usually sits. And this is a sad situation, because in my view she or he had the right to sit there, and why does he has to go and sit where he supposed not to. And this is an issue that we really deal with, because we as Solomon Islanders have to really deal with our own issue regarding our attitudes.”<sup>160</sup>*

5.42 Witnesses made an important recommendation that there should be some tailored Hospitality trainings for bus drivers and conductors for the improvement of service delivery in the buses. The Committee agreed that this is important and should be provided at the Solomon Islands National University (SINU) targeting specific needs such as customer care services.

### **Formal Employment of Bus Drivers and Conductors**

5.43 One of the issues raised by the YWPG is the need to have the formal employment for bus drivers and bus conductors properly systemized. Currently, public buses operate on an unregulated basis and are usually privately-owned entities.

*“Comments were made whether bus driving can be a proper employment where drivers are taxed, they contribute to NPF and they must have over 10 year’s experience of driving.”<sup>161</sup>*

5.44 YWPG further clarified that in order to systemize the employment of drivers and conductors, the bus service industry should be merged into companies. The view to form and register bus companies is also shared by other witnesses that appeared before the Committee. Vice President of the influential Social media group, Forum Solomon Islands International (FSII), Mr. Ishmael Nori, expressed that the proper registration of Bus Companies would ensure formal employment of bus drivers and conductors and enables such registered entities to be subject to auditing by the responsible authorities.

*“...if they are registered and they are subject to auditing...two other important points for doing that exercise is that we create formal employment for our bus drivers and our bus conductors. This will enable the bus drivers and conductors to benefit from NPF and other privilege such as holiday pays and so forth.”<sup>162</sup>*

### **Varying Evidences in Bus Fares and Earnings - Honiara City and Guadalcanal Province Boundaries**

5.45 During the Inquiry, many reasons were given for bus owners and drivers resorting to short bus Routes. One of the reasons is the \$2-00 bus fares paid by adults instead of \$3-00, which bus owners’ claim is not enough to meet the high operating costs of running a bus service.

*“From Point Cruz to Lungga is about 10 kilometres. For a 15 seater bus, only 14 seats are available for passengers, therefore, if you collect \$3 bus fares for the 14 seats you should collect about \$42 from Point Cruz to Lungga.”<sup>163</sup>*

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<sup>160</sup> Ann Mildred, Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2012, p.334

<sup>161</sup> Ms Grace Hilly, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p4

<sup>162</sup> Mr Ishmael Nori, Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.72

<sup>163</sup> Mr Geoffrey Samuel, Bus Owners Association, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.62

*“Not all bus owners get the same income at the end of the day. Some get less from \$500-\$600 and some buses if they are new can get up to \$1,000. So you will see that not all bus owners receive the same income at the end of the day”<sup>164</sup>.*

- 5.46 As opposed to the evidences given above, a witness claimed to have interviewed a bus owner who drives his own bus. In his submissions the witness expressed the bus owner’s views as follow:

*“...he operates from White River to King George and vice-versa six days a week and...collected the same amount of money collected by those operate on the short routes...he usually...picks a passenger at White River and that passenger pays \$3.00 and drops at Point Cruz and a new passenger comes in at Point Cruz and pays \$3.00 for that same seat and drops at the central market. Another passenger boards the bus at the market and pays \$3.00 for the same seat and drops at Kukum. That same seat again is taken up by another passenger up to Ranadi shopping area and drops there and another passenger comes in. He said by the time he reaches King George, he collected \$15.00 to \$24.00 just from one seat. He said that he is not happy with the excuse of using short routes to collect money. He said he proved it and he cannot believe that operating on short route is a way to collect money. So when he explained that to me, I see the economics of it and the merit of his explanation and I said, ‘Fred, you continue to do that, I think that is what the public wants.’”<sup>165</sup>*

- 5.47 In light of the explanation given above which the Committee believes is a case of reality for public buses, a bus serving within the boundaries of Honiara city will collect somewhere between \$200 to \$300 for one trip from White River to KGVI. In total the bus may receive \$400 plus in a return trip. However, if a bus is running short routes to the destinations between White River and KGVI, the Committee holds the view that the bus will earn well over \$400 by the time it completes the last leg of the routes at KGVI and \$600 to \$700 in a return trip of short routes during busy hours. This shows a significant difference on the intake taken between the two buses serving different routes.

- 5.48 Bus commuters who came before the Committee gave average calculations of the money they spend on bus fares in a day after the short bus route is introduced. A witness living in White River stated that he spends \$9-00 in adult bus fares for one way only travelling from White River to KGVI. So in a return trip, he spends an average of \$18 to \$21.<sup>166</sup>

- 5.49 Some witnesses that appeared before the Committee work in the city, however, are residents of the provincial boundaries and areas of Guadalcanal province such as Tenaru and Tenavatu areas. In their submissions they expressed that buses servicing areas from Honiara to outside of Honiara boundaries are more organised and the bus fare is cheaper than the ones running the shorter routes inside Honiara. A lady witness who resides in the Tenaru area shares this with the Committee:

*“I live outside of the town boundary. I live at Alligator Creek. The bus service for Guadalcanal on the eastern side ... is much more planned. ...we wait at the Central Market, and there are two areas to wait for the bus at the Central Market. The front area is for passengers for Tenaru and Fox Wood and next to it is for GPPOL passengers. If you go inside a GPPOL bus wanting to go to Alligator, the bus will not stop for you at Alligator ... it is a bit organized and the bus fare is fair because it is \$5 from Alligator, Tenaru, Foxwood to town and the buses stop at the right places. The bus stops at Barack for anyone wanting to do a bit of shopping before it goes. If that is what*

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<sup>164</sup> Mr Bai Animamu, Bus Owners Association , Evidence , 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.66

<sup>165</sup> Mr Patrick Turanga, Evidence , 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.278

<sup>166</sup> Mr. Gerald Hatigeva, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.414

*happens for those outside, what is the problem inside the city? Because for those living outside, the bus runs well, when we wait for the bus, the bus comes and we pay \$5 and we are happy with the service there.”<sup>167</sup>*

- 5.50 The above views was also expressed by another witness in comparing bus fares from his residence to town following the two routes practiced by buses both operating in town and well beyond the town boundaries:

*“Each day I travel from Alligator Creek to the City Council, I travel by the Guadalcanal buses, which costs \$5. When I go back after work, I took another bus from the market, I came to Fishing Village, which is \$3.00, I travel again from Fishing village to Discount Auto, and that is another \$3.00. From Discount to Lungga market, another \$3.00, now that is \$9.00, and from Lungga market I took another bus to Henderson but we reside at Alligator so its \$5.00...you do not experience the short bus route from the G-Province routes.”<sup>168</sup>*

- 5.51 From the evidence given by these witnesses, the Committee assumes that in a return trip from the centre of Honiara to the Foxwood, an area outside of Honiara boundaries and back, a bus will receive a total \$140 in bus fares. This figure does not match up with the average amount of \$400 which a bus taking shorter routes from White river to KGVI can earn in a return trip.
- 5.52 The Committee acknowledged that while some adults pay a bus fare of \$2-00, there are also many people who are faithfully paying the adult fare of \$3-00 per trip. In terms of operating costs for the buses, the committee understands that all businesses, including the bus service has to meet operating costs.

### **Calculation of Bus Fares**

- 5.53 One of the witnesses that appeared before the Committee presented an analysis on how people spend on bus fares. In his evidence,

*“A person on average paying \$18-00 an hour, in that person’s annual pay he will have to spend 20% if he spends \$12-00 on return and in one fiscal year he would spend about 12%. And if you consider this minimum wage of \$4-00/hour, that person will spend about 53% of his annual income on bus fares so that most of his wages goes for bus fare only. It’s something to think about because it is the common people that are really affected. Something therefore needs to be considered because everyone has to be responsible.”<sup>169</sup>*

### **Proposed eleven (11) Bus Routes**

- 5.54 The Committee acknowledged the awareness and knowledge MID has about the *short bus route* issue. And in their response to the problems of *short bus routes* experienced in Honiara, MID developed and presented a proposal of the board where the Honiara City Council will license buses according to Bus Routes. According to the PS, the bus fares for these routes will remain \$3. The eleven (11) proposed routes that will be trialled are<sup>170</sup>:

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<sup>167</sup> Kristina Sogavare, Evidence, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.22

<sup>168</sup> Mr. Moses Ramo, Evidence, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, pp.246 -247

<sup>169</sup> Mr. Elwin Talo, Evidence, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013, p.421

<sup>170</sup> Road Transport Board, Submission 11 , pp.1-2

**Route 1:** White River Market to Point Cruz (Market) and return using HCC roundabout.

**Route 2:** Point Cruz Market to Henderson (Domestic Terminal) and return using hot bread Kitchen roundabout.

**Route 3:** Point Cruz Market to Naha Boarder via Vura Road and Naha return using the Ministry of Finance round about.

**Route 4.** Point Cruz Market to Gilbert Camp, Naha Border via Kola ridge road and return using Ministry of Finance roundabout.

**Route 5:** Point Cruz (lower Holy cross) to Tuvaruhu and return using HCC roundabout.

**Route 6:** Point Cruz (back of HCC) to Mbokonavera 4 to skyline loop using HCC roundabout.

**Route 7:** Point Cruz (Back of HCC) to Vavaya Ridge, to Mbokonavera 1 loop using HCC roundabout.

**Route 8:** Point Cruz (Mission Place) to Mbumburu via Hibiscus Avenue and Lengakiki road and return same routes using Hot Bread Kitchen roundabout.

**Route 9:** Point Cruz to Mbaranamba Market via Tanakake Road and return through the same route using the Hot Bread Kitchen roundabout.

**Route 10:** Boaderline, Jackson Ridge road, Mbaranaba, Tanakake, Burns Creek, Vura Road and Boaderline (round trip –Boaderline return).

**Route 11:** Point Cruz, Rove, Tasahe, NPF and return through the same route using HCC roundabout.

- 5.55 The proposed Eleven (11) Bus Routes was put forward to the public and public opinion was sought on these planned routes. There was general support by the public for regulation on bus service in Honiara where eventually Bus Routes will have to be created by the relevant authorities. However, looking at this proposed plan the public generally argued that this plan will still not solve the problem of having to change buses and paying bus fares more than once. Witnesses opposed the idea since it will only worsen the current difficulties faced by students, parents and other bus commuters. An employed mother in her response to the proposal argued that there should be specific longer routes running from White River to KGVI or White River to Borderline.

*“We all know that schools are in White River, KGVI, Vura and many areas in town. One of my concerns is ... to zone the routes into 11 bus route zones, ... if a student lives at KG6 and attends White River school, the student has to drop at Point Cruz and catch another bus to go to White River. That is extra bus fare. Or if a student lives at White River and attends KGVI School, the student will also have to stop at Point Cruz and catch another bus, which is also another expense ... Our children find this stopping along the way as a big problem, especially for mothers who are not working. They sometimes have to wait for their children until night but their children don't get home early due to shortages of bus fare as a result of paying more bus fares at the first place, thus having no fare to return home in the afternoon. So they have to arrive very late, maybe because they have to walk home or maybe the bus just turns back at the High Court all the time leaving them sitting all day there and becoming hungry too at the bus stop for having to wait for*

*the bus to take them home. I feel very sorry for these children...We want laws, rules and regulations to go in-line with people's views and thinking so that they are happy.*"<sup>171</sup>

- 5.56 Another witness suggests that there should be specific express routes for long distances such as White River to KGV and Henderson.

*"Bus Fares would vary depending on the Routes, but the longer routes with direct Service to destination would be much higher because of the direct service that would be provided with no extra cost and time wasting for passengers."*<sup>172</sup>

- 5.57 Although there are dissecting views from the public on the proposed eleven bus routes, the Committee welcomes these trial routes proposed by the Road transport Board. It is a gesture of taking steps to solve the short bus routes issue of Honiara. The views and suggestions of the public on the routes are also important to provide some way forward which the Road Transport Board and relevant authorities can consider to develop the public bus system in Honiara for better.

### **Support for Solomon Islanders in other Businesses**

- 5.58 As alluded to in chapters 3 and 4, a prominent issue during the Inquiry is the involvement of Asians in the Bus and Taxi service industry which are reserved for Solomon Islands citizens in the *Foreign Investment Regulations 2006*<sup>173</sup>. A witness shared this sentiment stating that many indigenous Solomon Islanders (including Asians) ventured into the bus and Taxi business because it is cheaper to do so, but there are other sectors which Solomon Islanders can engage in to do business, however, they are not able to do so due to high capital costs. Government support for local Solomon Islanders to go into business is posed to the Committee during the Inquiry.

*"...our government needs to work together with financial institutions to try and have some understanding so that we encourage primary industry activities in our country. The reason is so that not everybody can go for bus or taxi. We need to get involved in other primary industries."*<sup>174</sup>

- 5.59 The Solomon Islands Government is urged to consult with financial institutions to provide unsecured loans of \$100,000 and below to assist indigenous Solomon Islanders to engage in Businesses. There are economic potentials in the primary industry sector which Solomon Islanders can venture into so that there is business opportunity for everyone instead of just cramming into the bus service industry. A witness in his submission questioned the government policy that can address minimal capital for someone wishing to start his or her business such as small manufacturing industries (soap making, mattress production, dried peanuts etc.) and also value adding industries, other than all going for taxi or bus services.

<sup>175</sup>

- 5.60 The committee notes that involving local Solomon Islanders in other business sector is an important point which any government would have to seriously consider.

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<sup>171</sup> Mrs. Constance Namu, Evidence 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013, pp.463-464

<sup>172</sup> Mr Beaver Biti, Submission 3,p.6

<sup>173</sup> Foreign Investment Regulations 2006.

<sup>174</sup> Mr Jimmy Masa, Evidence, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013, p.364

<sup>175</sup> Mr Jimmy Masa, Submission 3, p.5

## Committee Findings

- 5.61 The Committee heard from evidences that one of the infrastructure causes of *short bus routes* are the bottle neck effect of traffic lane at the two Matanikau bridges at China Town. Traffics are usually slowed down during peak hours of the day at these two bridges. It would be better to have four lanes at the lower Matanikau Bridge and two lanes at the upper Matanikau Bridge to ease the congestions that usually occur there.
- 5.62 The other infrastructure causes of traffic congestions is lack of proper traffic controls for vehicles at junctions or lack of proper pedestrian crossings in the city. As expressed by various witnesses in this report, traffic congestions usually occur at roundabouts or at junctions along the main highway which usually causes long queue during peak hours of the day. Furthermore, coupled with lack of proper pedestrian crossings at certain busy areas in the city such as at the Central Market, this contributed a lot to the already congestions created from traffics at the junctions or roundabouts.
- 5.63 One of the main complains from bus operators are the poor road conditions due to lack of proper maintenances on the serviced roads. Contractors are not doing quality road maintenances compared to when PWD was still under the Ministry of Works. It was reported that though roads are maintained regularly by contractors, road conditions usually deteriorated within a very short time. This shows that the quality of road works is very poor and there should be proper monitoring for quality works by the MID.
- 5.64 It was raised during the Committee Inquiry that there is increase in vehicle importation into the country per month due to no proper regulations in place. Furthermore, individuals can order vehicles and then resell them again later. This has resulted in uncontrolled entry of vehicles into the country. The Committee sees that regulating the importation of vehicle would lessen the increase number of vehicles using the already crowded road in Honiara.
- 5.65 While the Committee acknowledges the poor conditions of road in Honiara which contributed to deteriorating conditions of vehicles in Honiara, Inquiry participants complained that there is significant number of public vehicles that are not road worthy servicing the public. The Committee sees merit that traffic policing should be tightened to monitor vehicles that have defects not to run on the road.
- 5.66 The Committee acknowledges concerns raised by Inquiry participants that there should be customer care service encouraged in all public transport services, including public bus services. This would also include proper treatment of people with disadvantages, children and people with special interests that are using the services provided.
- 5.67 The Committee acknowledge the challenges raised by Honiara bus operators in having to compensate the expenditures incurred in providing public bus transportation services within Honiara boundary through multiple bus fares from shorter routes created. However, there is no correlation of this explanation from other bus operators who are also servicing the Honiara city, including the boundaries outside of Honiara. Bus operators that service longer routes reaching as far as outside of Honiara boundaries have expressed that imposing lower bus fares when serving longer routes like Central market to Alligator Creek can still make good income as opposed to complains raised by bus involving in shorter routes to make minimal profit.
- 5.68 The Committee heard from concerns raised by Inquiry participants that most indigenous Solomon Islands venture into bus and taxi services business. Unlike other small primary

industries, bus and taxi businesses although may require higher initial capital cost, they only require payments of vehicles to begin with.

## Recommendations

- That the Traffic Department under the Ministry of Police and National Security provide effective policing in controlling traffic on the road and at the Bus stops in the Honiara city. However, as soon as the High Way Authority is established and fully functioned, the road policing functions shall be transferred from the Ministry of Police and National Security to be assumed by the High way Authority.
- That the Solomon Islands Government through the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development:
  - i. reinstate the Road and Bridges Department within MID
  - ii. Employ technical staff for the Road and Bridges Department under the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development to undertake road assessment works, implementation of the road infrastructure development plan, and execute and maintain the road network in the city
  - iii. Put priority to Invest in maintaining, renewing, and developing new infrastructure
  - iv. Set up standard engineering requirements for contractors to fulfil in road maintenance and that these standards are assessed and met by road contractors.
- That the Honiara City Council liaises with company or individual reputable public transport services to provides efficient public transport services for School Children in accordance to the Schedule 5(6) of the Honiara City Act.
- That the Solomon Islands Government through the Customs Excise Division under the Ministry of Finance and Treasury make legislations:
  - i. to regulate the importation of vehicles by their production date and their compliance with the current standard of gas emission
  - ii. impose maximum bus age limit on public transport vehicles

## Chapter 6 Way-forward and Recommendations

This chapter outlines the way forward and the recommendations on this Committee Inquiry.

The Committee acknowledge the views expressed by witnesses and participants in addressing this significant issue. The Committee recognise that the Honiara short bus issue hinges on other factors relating to the development of national road transport infrastructure and services. The Committee believes that this issue must be approached holistically since the development and management of a reliable, appropriate, sustainable and affordable transport sector in Solomon Islands is essential for economic development and the delivery of services to all parts of the country. Therefore, this issue must be given a thorough review and proper assessment with a view to embed well-planned transport services. This is to cater for the arising needs of our nation's growing population. To that end, the Committee proposes the following recommendations to achieve that purpose.

Recommendation Section A covers Public Transport System/Process. Recommendation Section B covers Power and Implementation and Recommendation Section C provides short term alternative solutions to Honiara short bus routes as way-forward while Recommendations A and B are addressed.

### Recommendation Section A: Public Transportation System and Processes

- [1] That the Solomon Islands Government conduct an independent, full-scale and comprehensive assessment of the road transport system and its associated policies and legal framework, a report of which must be tabled in Parliament.
  
- [2] That the Road Transport Board develops Public Transport Service Policy and regulations to regulate public transport services in the Honiara city including the following areas:
  - i. Registration of all bus routes in the Honiara boundaries
  - ii. Buses Licensed and registered to operate along certain registered bus routes,
  - iii. Bus operating along different routes must be numbered, or given colours or signs to indicate the different bus routes each bus provide services to.
  - iv. proper transport schedules and timing of each bus' arrivals and take off at the bus stops
  - v. regulate bus fares for each bus routes.
  
- [3] That the Solomon Islands Government through the Road Transport Board in the Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID) secure funding under the National Transport fund (NTF) for the improvement, upgrading and constructions of the following land transport services:
  - i. To improve and upgrade the entire road conditions including upgrading the feeder routes outside the Honiara city
  - ii. Improve and upgrade the traffic lights, traffic lanes and traffic directions and traffic signs on the road
  - iii. Conduct road assessments on road infrastructure in the Honiara city
  - iv. Improve and expand bus bays and bus stops in the Honiara city

- v. Construction and establishment of the Central Bus Stations at the centre of the Honiara city for public transport services
- vi. Established and construction of the standard bus stop shelters and bus stands at the bus stops in the city
- vii. Improve the lower Matanikau Bridge to 3 lanes and the upper bridge to 2 lane roads
- viii. Link the current back way roads and feeder roads at some possible points at the back of the city and that the government to be prepared to pay for damages as necessary
- ix. Installed Traffic Control at identified road junctions including the Central Market with reliable power supply such as standby generator in the event of power outage by SIEA.

[4] That the Solomon Islands Government through the Ministry of Infrastructure Development:

- i. reinstate the Road and Bridges Division within MID
- ii. Employ technical staff for the Road and Bridges Division under the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development to undertake road assessment works, implementation of the road infrastructure development plan, and execute and maintain the road network in the city
- iii. Put priority to Invest in maintaining, renewing, and developing new infrastructure
- iv. Set up standard engineering requirements for contractors to fulfil in road maintenance and that these standards are assessed and met by road contractors.

[5] That the Solomon Islands Government through the Customs Excise Division under the Ministry of Finance and Treasury make legislations:

- i. To regulate the importation of vehicles by their production date and their compliance with the current standard of gas emission
- ii. impose maximum bus age limit on public transport vehicles

[6] That the Honiara City Council liaises with company or individual reputable public transport services to provide efficient public transport services for School Children in accordance to the Schedule 5(6) of the Honiara City Act.

## **Recommendation Section B – Powers and Implementations**

[7] That the Solomon Islands Government establishes an autonomous highway authority separated from the Road Transport Board, in particular the highway authority –

- i. must be a body corporate with perpetual succession;
- ii. must have a common seal;
- iii. may enter into contracts;
- iv. may sue and be sued in its corporate name;
- v. must possess the power to acquire, hold and dispose of property both real and personal; and

- vi. May generally do all such acts and things that are necessary for or incidental to the performance of its functions.

[8] That the Solomon Islands Government transfers the functions of the Minister under the *Road Transport Act 2009* and all of the functions of the highway authority to the Honiara City Council, including the power to regulate traffic related matters.

[9] That the Solomon Islands Government transfers to the Honiara City Council the functions of the Minister under the *Town and Country Planning Act* [Cap.154].

[10] That the Traffic Department under the Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services provide effective policing in controlling traffic on the road and at the Bus stops in the Honiara city. However, as soon as the High Way Authority is established and fully functioned, the road policing functions shall be transferred from the Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services to be assumed by the High way Authority.

## **Recommendation Section C - Short Term Alternative Solutions to Honiara Short Bus Route**

Outlined below are views expressed by Inquiry participants and are presented only as short term alternatives to the current issue of short bus routes while the responsible authorities work on the main recommendations (A and B). The alternatives presented below can be used separately, or combinations of more than one would hopefully alleviate some of the problems faced on Honiara *Short Bus Routes*.

### **[1] Eleven (11) Routes:**

#### **Advantages:**

- i. Could be a more organised routes for buses to operate
- ii. Other back road areas can be accessed and serviced

#### **Disadvantages:**

- i. Will only worsen the current situation of short bus route
- ii. Commuters travelling from White River to KGVI will still pay two bus fares to reach final destination
- iii. Students will be affected worst, especially those studying on the schools at these two extreme ends of Honiara
- iv. There will be overlap of routes creating more traffic congestions at certain junctions on main road

**[2] Allocating/Assigning certain Specific Bus Stops for Specific Routes. E.g. Buses travelling to KGVI from Point Cruz need to have certain bus stops at the main congested areas like the Central Market and those taking shorter routes, like those going to Kukum, Didao etc. are allocated different bus stops to avoid crowded people waiting at the same bus stops.**

**Advantages:**

- i. Passengers travelling to required destinations will have a choice of place to wait for buses
- ii. Bus stops will not be overcrowded like the current situation
- iii. Bus operators will have a choice of bus stops to pick passengers thus reducing congestions when competing for passengers head to head

**Disadvantages:**

- i. Shorter routes will still not be solved
- ii. Passengers will still pay the same multiple bus fares to reach final destinations

**[3] Having Buses servicing Specific Destinations labelled separately. E.g. having permanent colours painted on buses to denote specific routes or permanent labels written on the buses.**

**Advantages:**

- i. Passengers can easily identify buses to board
- ii. Buses can be easily monitored
- iii. More organised bus services

**Disadvantages:**

- i. Bus owners will now have no alternative choice of routes to service as in the current situation

**[4] Having Express Services provided for longer routes such as White River to KGVI or White River to Border. Also express buses should be bigger than the current minivans.**

**Advantages:**

- i. Passengers can easily identify buses to board
- ii. Shorter time travel to reach longer destinations
- iii. Buses can be easily monitored
- iv. More organised bus services
- v. Students residing at one end of Honiara and are attending schools at the other end are not victimised as in the current state

**Disadvantages:**

- i. It is anticipated that very few operators will choose to service these routes

**[5] Similar to (d) above, however, express buses will service routes from White River to Central Market and from Central Market to KGVI or Central Market to Borderline. Also express buses should be bigger than the current minivans.**

**Advantages:**

- i. Passengers can easily identify buses to board
- ii. Shorter time travel to reach longer destinations
- iii. Passengers have choice to get off at Central part of Honiara City where most activities occur without having to take multiple buses to reach this place.
- iv. Buses can be easily monitored

- v. More organised bus services

**Disadvantages:**

- i. Still will have to take two buses when travelling from White River to KGVI or from White River to Borderline.

**[6] Responsible authorities regulate bus fares based on distances/zones of bus services**

**Advantages:**

- i. Bus fares is based on distances covered
- ii. Bus fares reasonable for passengers and operators
- iii. Bus operators will not have excuses for excess charges or passengers will not have to pay lesser amount than the required fares for the route travelled
- iv. More organised bus services

**Disadvantages:**

- i. Justifying distances for allocated bus fares. E.g. Distance covered by current routes is not the same.
- ii. There will be no standard bus fares. Bus fares will have to vary, thus having too many fares to be imposed for different routes

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Submissions

No	Author
1	Julian Treadaway (Resident - West Kola'a Ridge, Honiara)
2	Emmanuel Tora (Finance Manager- Telecommunication Commission of Solomon Islands)
3	Jimmy Masa (CEO -National Referral Hospital)
4	George Saemane (Principal-Florence Young Christian High School)
5	James Lekafanadodo (Chief - Wanengunguta Village, Malaita)
6	Beaver Biti (Resident - Lower West Kola'a Ridge, Honiara)
7	Jefferson Halu (Resident - Riffle Range, Honiara)
8	Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration (MCILI)
9	Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce (SICC)
10	Honiara City Council (HCC Business License)
11	Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID)

## Appendix 2 Witnesses

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position and Organisation</b>
Tuesday, 21 <sup>st</sup> May 2013	Ms Kristina Sogavare	Chairlady, YWPG
	Ms Grace Hilly	Member, YWPG
	Ms Jasmine Waleafea	Member, YWPG
	Mr Moses Virivolomo	Road Transport Board (PS/MID)
	Mr Henry Murray	Road Transport Board (Director Mechanical/MID)
	Mr Geoffrey Samuel	Road Transport Board (Bus Owners Association)
	Mr Charles Kelly	Road Transport Board (City Clerk/HTC)
	Mr Geoffrey Samuel	President, Honiara Bus Association
	Mr Jack Wainao	Bus Owner
	Mr. Bai Animamu	Bus Owner
	Mr Edmond Sikua	PS/Police, National Security & Correctional Services
Wednesday, 22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2013	Ms Nancy Kwalea	Senior Executive Officer, Chamber of Commerce
	Mr Harvest Maebule	Director of Nursing/HCC
	Mr Moses Karuni	Nurse Educator
	Mr Samo Tagini	Nurse In-charge – Kukum
	Ms Gretal Sendersley	Nurse In-charge – Naha
	Ms Alice Fasi	Nurse In-charge – Matanikau
	Mr Hence Vaekesa	PS/Ministry of Commerce
	Mr Derrick Aihari	Director of FIB
	Mr Joseph Heroau	Director of Business
	Mr Edwin Saramo	Registrar of Companies
	Mr Charles Kelly	Clerk/HCC
	Mr Robert Madeo	Law Enforcement Unit/HCC
	Mr Harvest Miabule	Director Nursing/HCC
	Late Dr Henry E. Daiwo	Director Health Services/HCC
Mr Moses Kaukui	Treasurer/HCC	
Thursday, 23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2013	Mr. Samuel Fangata	Principal - King George
	Mr Nelson Kay	Form 5 student - King George VI
	Ms Sharon Totorea	Form 5 Student - King George VI
	Ms Daffodil Wanerofea	Student - King George VI
	Mr Robert Manekaea	Teacher - King George IV
	Mr Philip Funubana	Teacher - King George VI School
	Ms. Bennet Sisimia	Teacher - King George School
	Mr James Lengi	Teacher - St. Nicholas School
	Mr. George Inomea	Deacon/NTS - St. John School
	Ms Christina Lioa	Student – St. John School
	Ms Margret Rita Siata	Teacher – St. John School
	Mr Remy Fenton	Student - St. John School
	Ms Angela Hazel	Form 4 Student - St. John School
	Mr James Lediome	Student - St. John School
	Matthew Quan	Chairman, Solomon Islands Chinese Association
Tuesday, 28 <sup>th</sup> May 2013	Mr Chris Tagini	Resident – East Honiara
	Mr Ben Hou	Rep - Lau Valley community, East Honiara
	Mr Jack Tuita	Rep – Fishing Village community, East Honiara
	Mrs Mary Masa	Rep - Kombito 1 Community, East Honiara

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position and Organisation</b>
	Mr George Wale	Rep - Kukum Ward 9, East Honiara
	Mr Henry Bata	Rep - Burns creek community, East Honiara
	Mr Robert Satu	Chief – Fishing Village, East Honiara
	Mr Robert Diga	Resident – Adeliua Community, East Honiara
	Mr Ellyson Ryan Sade	Resident – Lau Valley, East Honiara
	Mr Jimmy Riunga	Resident – Lau Valley, East Honiara
	Mrs Rachel	Resident – Kombito, East Honiara
	Mrs Ruth Maetoni	Mother – Kombito, East Honiara
	Mr Ashley Keni	Resident – East Honiara
	Mr Augustine Waki	Resident – East Honiara
	Mr Moses Ramo	Resident – Alligator Creek, Honiara
	Mr Patric Turanga	Resident – SINU Compound
	Mr. Ben Abana	Resident – East Honiara
	Mr Reginald Ngati	Resident – Kombito, East Honiara
	Mr Andrew Folia	Resident – East Honiara
	Ms Karen Tanabose	Resident – East Honiara
	Mr Jonathan Futai	Resident – Borderline, East Honiara
	Mr Willie Asubae	Resident – Kombito, East Honiara
	Mr John Kena	Resident – East Honiara
	Mr Isaac Manu	Student - Honiara
	Mr Kerry Wate	Resident – East Honiara
Wednesday, 29 <sup>th</sup> May 2013	Ms Fatimah Santa	Student – Honiara High School
	Ms. Sylvana Manele	Teacher - Honiara High School
	Ms. Lynette Gua	Teacher - Honiara High School
	Mr. Lloyd Hatamani	Chaplain - Honiara High School
	Mr. Jethro Hanimae	F6 Student - Honiara High School
	Mr. Ian Sihatia	F6 Student - Honiara High School
	Ms Helen Kili	Student – Honiara High School
	Mr Simon Houma	Cathedral Councillor - Honiara
	Mr Nathan Fa’ako Liolea	Bus Owner
	Mr Benjamin Afuga	CEO - FSII
	Mr Mathias Maebir	Resident – Talise, Central Honiara
	Mr Noel Billy	Student – USP Centre
	Mr Webster Nguni	Student - SINU
	Ms Hazel Kauzua	Mother - Honiara
	Mr Noel Buto	Resident – Naha 4, Central Honiara
	Mrs Anne Mildred	Women rep - Honiara
	Ms Florine Wanega	Youth Rep – Central Honiara
Friday, 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2013	Mr George Keso	Resident – West Honiara
	Mr Elwyn Talo	Rep – Youth Advocator, Youth For Change
	Mr John Paul	Teacher – Secondary School
	Ms Margaret Hale	Rep – Women for Peace
	Ms Daphne Mamu	Early Childhood Teacher – Tamlan School
	Mr Lazarus Munamua	Retired Bishop - Honiara
	Mr Derald Hatigeva	Resident – White River, West Honiara
	Mr Henry Isa	Rep - Tolu Community(Lengakiki), West Honiara
	Mr Godfrey Abia	Rep – Rove Police Married Quarter community, West Honiara

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position and Organisation</b>
	Mr Bartholomew Lanu	Resident - White River Seaside community, West Honiara
	Mr John Tope	Resident – West Honiara
	Mr Simon Eloni	Resident - White River Area, West Honiara
	Mr Michael Haomae	Resident - Tolu street( Lengakiki), West Honiara
	Mr Clay Ledi	Rep - Wind Valley community, West Honiara
	Mr Peter Ramosaea	Resident - White River, West Honiara
	Mr. John Fugui	Rep - Tasahe community, West Honiara
	Mr John Reni	Resident – White River, West Honiara
	Mr Jefferson Hallu	Resident – Riffle Range, West Honiara
	Mr Patrick Billy	Resident – White River, West Honiara
	Mr Peter Sipoli	Resident – Borderline, East Honiara
	Mr Stephen Siapu	Founder/Consultant – Solomon Islands National Student Federation
	Ms Constance Namo	Mother/Resident – Tasahe, West Honiara
	Ms Karen James	Honiara resident
	Mr Paul Maesulia	Honiara resident
	Mr Simon Tagie	Father/Resident – White River, West Honiara
	Mr John Tepue	Honiara resident
	Ms Mary Sade	Honiara resident
	Ms Rose Mae	Honiara resident
	Ms Huddie Namo	Honiara resident
	Mr Joseph Oli	Honiara resident
	Ms Grace Hilly	Resident – Lengakiki, West Honiara
	Pr Peter Baero	Resident - Honiara
	Mr Baddeley Agu	Resident – White River, West Honiara
Wednesday, 12 <sup>th</sup> June 2013	Mr Charles Kelly	City Clerk/HCC
	Ms Juanita Matanga	Acting Police Commissioner

## Appendix 3 Minutes of Public Hearings

### Minutes of Proceedings Meeting No.5/2013

#### Committee Hearing (Day 1)

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, CR II Parliament House, 10:35 am

#### 1. Attendance

##### Committee Members:

Hon. John Moffat Fugui (Chairman), MP  
Hon. Johnley Hatimoana, MP  
Hon. Andrew Manepora'a, MP  
Hon. Douglas Ete, MP

##### Apologies

Hon. Derek Sikua, MP  
Hon. James Tora, MP

##### Secretariat

Wilson Orisi  
Emily Kupenga

##### In-attendance

Liam Sau - Hansard Dept  
Fred Osifelo – Media Dept

##### Witnesses

Ms Kristina Sogavare - Chairlady, Young Women Parliamentary Group (YWPG)  
Ms. Grace Hilly - Member (YWPG)  
Ms. Jasmine Waleafea - Member (YWPG)

**2. Welcome and Opening Statement** – The Chairman welcomes members of the committee, officials from the committee secretariat, and the members of the Young Women Parliamentary Group to the first hearing of the . Chairman made a brief opening remarks and the witness

He informed witnesses that this Inquiry is a follow up to find out on the immediate steps the responsible authorities have taken on the impacts of short Bus Routes raised by the public in the past hearings. He reminded witnesses of their protection from prosecution under *parliamentary privileges*

The Chair then invites the witnesses to make their presentations.

#### 3. Hearing into Issues raised in the Short Bus routes Inquiry

The witnesses make their presentations before the committee.

The committee questioned the witnesses, made comments and seek clarifications from witnesses on the immediate steps they have taken to address the short bus Routes issue in Honiara.

Evidence concluded and the chairman made his closing remarks and thanked the witnesses for their attendance and presentation.

#### **4. Close**

The meeting closes at 12:52 pm.

## **Minutes of Proceedings Meeting No.6/2013**

### **Committee hearing (Day 2)**

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, CR II Parliament House, 10:30 am

#### **1. Attendance**

##### **Committee Members:**

Hon. John Moffat Fugui - Chairman

Hon. Johnley Hatimoana – Member

Hon. Andrew Manepora'a - Member

Hon. Douglas Ete - Member

##### **Apologies**

Hon. Derek Sikua, MP

Hon. James Tora, MP

Hon. Vika Lusibaea

##### **Secretariat**

Wilson Orisi- Committee Secretary

##### **Parliament officers in- attendance**

Hansard

Media

#### **2. Welcome and opening Statement**

The Chairman of the Special Select Committee on the Short Bus Routes in Honiara welcome the members of the Special Select committee, officers of Parliament and stakeholders who are teachers and students of various secondary school s in Honiara.

The Chairman thanks stakeholders for accepting the invitation, gave a background of the Inquiry and clarify the protection of witnesses through Parliamentary privileges.

The Chair then invites the witnesses to make their presentations.

#### **3. Committee Inquiry into the Short Bus Routes of Honiara**

##### **The following witnesses came before the committee:**

Mr Charles Kelly - Clerk/HCC

Mr Robert Madeo - Law Enforcement Unit/HCC

Mr Harvest Miabule - Director Nursing/HCC

Late Dr Henry Edwin Daiwo - Director Health Services/HCC

Mr Moses Kaukui - Treasurer/HCC

Ms Nancy Kwalea - Senior Executive Officer/Chamber of Commerce

Mr Hence Vaekesa - PS/Ministry of Commerce

Mr Derrick Aihari - Director of FIB

Mr Joseph Heroau	- Director of Business
Mr Edwin Saramo	- Registrar of Companies
Mr Harvest Maebule	- Director of Nursing/HCC
Mr Moses Karuni	- Nurse Educator
Mr Samo Tagini	- Nurse In-charge – Kukum
Ms Gretal Sendersley	- Nurse In-charge – Naha
Ms Alice Fasi	- Nurse In-charge – Matanikau

#### **4. Hearing into Issues raised in the Short Bus routes Inquiry.**

The witnesses make their presentations before the Committee.

The Committee questioned the witnesses, made comments and seek clarifications from witnesses on the immediate steps they have taken to address the short bus Routes issue in Honiara.

Evidence concluded and the chairman made his closing remarks and thanked the witnesses for their attendance and presentation.

#### **4. Close**

The meeting closes at 4:30pm

### **Minutes of Proceedings Meeting No.7/2013**

#### **Committee hearing (Day 3)**

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, CR II Parliament House, 11:00 am

#### **1. Attendance**

##### **Committee Members:**

Hon. John Moffat Fugui (Chairman), MP

Hon. Johnley Hatimoana, MP

Hon. Andrew Manepora'a, MP

Hon. Douglas Ete, MP

Hon. Vika Lusibaea, MP

##### **Secretariat**

Wilson Orisi- Committee Secretary

##### **Parliament officers in- attendance**

Hansard

Media

#### **2. Welcome and opening Statement**

The Chairman of the Special Select Committee on the Short Bus Routes in Honiara welcome the members of the Special Select committee, officers of Parliament and stakeholders who are teachers and students of various secondary school s in Honiara.

The Chairman thanks stakeholders for accepting the invitation, gave a background of the Inquiry and clarify the protection of witnesses through Parliamentary privileges.

### **3. Committee Inquiry into the Short Bus Routes of Honiara**

**The following witnesses came before the committee:**

Mr. Sam Fangata - Principal, King George VI School  
Nelson Kay - Student, King George VI School  
Sharon Totorea - Student, King George VI School  
Daffodil Wanerofea - Student, King George VI School  
Mr. Robert Manekaea - Teacher, King George VI School  
Mr Philip Funubana - Teacher, King George VI School  
Ms. Binnet Sisimia – Teacher, King George School  
Mr James Lengi - Teacher, St Nicholas Community High  
Mr. George Inomea - Teacher, St John School  
Ms Christina Lioa – Student, St Johns School  
Ms Margret Rita Siata - Teacher, St Johns School  
Mr Remy Fenton - Student, St Johns School  
Ms Angela Hazel - Student, St Johns School  
Mr James Lediome - Student, St Johns School

The witnesses gave evidence before the committee. The committee questioned the witnesses.

Evidence concluded and the committee suspends at 1:30 pm

The committee resumes at 2:26 pm.

**The following witnesses came before the committee:**

Mr Walter Tesuata - General Secretary (Atg), SINTA  
Hilda Takarobo - Chair Lady, SINTA Women's Network  
Ellen Gwali - Vice President (Female) SINTA  
Mr John Wesley Tsanguri - Vice President (Male) SINTA  
Albert Moli - Guadalcnal Province, SINTA branch  
Lawrencia Ma'ahanua - Deputy Principal, Tuvaruhu School

The witnesses gave evidence before the committee. The committee questioned the witnesses.

Evidence concluded and the committee suspends at 3:42 pm and resumes at 3:50 pm.

**The following witness came before the committee:**

Mr Matthew Quan - The Chairman of the Solomon Islands Chinese Association

Mr Quan appeared before the Committee.

Mr Quan gave evidence before the committee. The committee questioned Mr Quan.

Evidence concluded.

**4. Adjournment** -The committee adjourned at 4:30 pm

**Minutes of Proceedings  
Meeting No.8/2013**

**Committee hearing (Day 4)**

Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, Telekom Recreation Hall Ranadi, 10:08 am

**1. Attendance**

**Committee Members:**

Hon. John Moffat Fugui (Chairman), MP  
Hon. Johnley Hatimoana, MP  
Hon. Andrew Manepora'a, MP  
Hon. Douglas Ete, MP  
Hon. James Tora, MP  
Hon. Derek Sikua, MP

**Absent:**

Hon. Namson Tran, MP  
Hon. Vika Lusibaea, MP

**Secretariat:**

Wilson Orisi- Committee Secretary

**Parliament officers in- attendance**

Alice Willy - Secretariat  
Emily Kupenga - Secretariat  
Esther Turangaluvu - Hansard  
Joy Rikimae - Media

Witnesses, the public and media were admitted.

**2. Prayer & Welcome**

Hon. James Tora said the opening prayer. The Chairman of the Special Select Committee on Short Bus Routes in Honiara, Hon. John Moffat Fugui acknowledged and welcomed members of the committee, the witnesses, the public, media and officials of the National Parliament office.

**3. Inquiry into the Short Bus Routes in Honiara**

The Chairman made an opening statement and briefly highlighted the basis of the enquiry.

**The witnesses were examined in these following groups:**

**Group 1**

Mr Chris Tagini – Border Line  
Mr Ben Hou – Lau Valley Community  
Mr Jack Tuita - Fishing Village  
Mrs Mary Masa – Kobito One Community  
Mr George Wale - Kukum  
Mr Henry Bata - Burns Creek Community  
Mr. Robert Diga  
Chief Robert Satu – Fishing Village

*Break*

**Group 2**

Mr. Ellison Ryan Sade – Lau Valley  
Mr. Jimmy Riunga  
Ms Rachel – Kobito community  
Mrs Ruth Maetoni-  
Mr. Ashley Keni - East Honiara  
Mr. Augustine Waki  
Mr Moses Ramo  
Mr Patrick Turanga - Panatina

*Break*

**Group 3**

Mr Ben Abana  
Mr. Augustine Ngati  
Mr Andrew Folia  
Ms. Karen Tanabose – Henderson Area  
Mr. Jonathan Futai - Border Line  
Mr. Willie Asubae:  
Mr. John Kena  
Mr Isaac Manu- Student, Lunga  
Mr Kerry Wate

*Break*

***Public Forum***

Mr. Ben Anisi  
Mr. Robert Fugui  
Mr Ishmael Nori - Vice President FSII  
Mr Reginald Ngati  
Mr Patrick Turanga  
Mr. Isaac Manu

Each group of witness presented evidences before the committee. The committee questioned the witnesses.

Evidence concluded.

**4. Close-** The Public hearing and forum ends at 4: 57pm

**Minutes of Proceedings  
Meeting No.9/2013**

**Committee hearing (Day 5)**

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013, St Barnabas Leaf Hut, 9:40 am

**1. Attendance**

**Committee Members:**

Hon. John Moffat Fugui (Chairman), MP  
Hon. Johnley Hatimoana, MP  
Hon. Andrew Manepora'a, MP

Hon. Douglas Ete, MP  
Hon. James Tora, MP  
Hon. Derek Sikua, MP  
Hon. Vika Lusibaea, MP

**Absent:**

Hon. Namson Tran, MP

**Secretariat**

Wilson Orisi- Committee Secretary

Witnesses, the public and media were admitted.

**2. Welcome**

The Chairman of the Special Select Committee on Short Bus Routes in Honiara, Hon. John Moffat Fugui acknowledged and welcomed members of the committee, the witnesses, the public, media and officials of the National Parliament office.

**3. Inquiry into the Short Bus Routes in Honiara**

The Chairman made an opening statement and briefly highlighted the basis of the enquiry. The witnesses were examined in these following groups;

**Group 1**

Ms. Fatimah Santa - Student, Honiara High School  
Ms. Sylvana Manele – Teacher, Honiara High  
Ms. Lynette Gua- Teacher, Honiara High  
Mr. Lloyd Hatamani - Teacher, Honiara High  
Mr. Jethro Hanimae - Student, Honiara High  
Mr. Ian Sihatia – Student, Honiara High  
Ms Helen Kili - Student, Honiara High  
Mr Simon Houma - Counsellor, St Barnabas Cathedral

**Group 2**

Mr Nathan Fa'ako Liolea – Bus Owner  
Mr Benjamin Afuga – President, FSII  
Mr Mathias Maebir  
Mr Noel Billy  
Mr Webster Nguni  
Ms Hazel Kausu'ua - Naha  
Mr Noel Buto  
Anne Mildred  
Ms Florine Wanega

**Group 3**

Eric Tema – Councillor, Honiara City Council  
Mr Alick  
Ms. Matilda Fa'amae  
Ms. Ketish Tafolehe  
Mr. Bobby Kaka  
Mr. Festus Irobiu  
Mr. George Luilamo  
Mr Geoffrey Tafolehe

**Group 4**

Mr. Jimmy Masa – CEO, National Referral Hospital  
Mr Matthew Lee - Cana Hill  
Mr John Pipi  
Ms Delila Buarafi  
Ms Diana Lolley  
Mr Keith Fakaia  
Mr Johnny Nelson  
Mr Vincent Anisi  
Mr Henry Wale  
Mr Beaver Biti - Varramatta  
Mr. Francis Mete

Each group of witness presented evidences before the committee. The committee questioned the witnesses.

Evidence concluded.

**4. Close-** The Public hearing and forum ends at 6:19 pm

**Minutes of Proceedings  
Meeting No.10/2013**

**Committee Public hearing (Day 6)**

Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013, Police Social Hall, Rove, West Honiara Constituency, 10:18 am

**1. Attendance**

**Committee Members Present:**

Hon. John Moffat Fugui (Chairman), MP  
Hon. Johnley Hatimoana, MP  
Hon. Andrew Manepora'a, MP  
Hon. Douglas Ete, MP  
Hon. James Tora, MP

**Members Absent:**

Hon Derek Sikua, MP  
Hon. Vika Lusibaea, MP

**Secretariat**

Wilson Orisi- Committee Secretary

Witnesses, the public and media were admitted.

**2. Prayer & Welcome**

Hon. James Tora said the opening prayer. The Chairman of the Special Select Committee on Short Bus Routes in Honiara, Hon. John Moffat Fugui acknowledged and welcomed members of the committee, the witnesses, the public, media and officials of the National Parliament office.

**3. Inquiry into the Short Bus Routes in Honiara**

The Chairman made an opening statement and briefly highlighted the basis of the enquiry.

The witnesses were examined in these following groups:

**Group 1**

Mr George Keso  
Mr Elwyn Talo  
Mr John Paul  
Ms Margaret Hale  
Ms Daphne Mamu  
Mr Lazarus Munamua  
Mr Derald Hatigeva

*Break*

**Group 2**

Mr Henry Isa  
Mr Godfrey Abia  
Mr Bartholomew Lanu  
Mr John Tope  
Mr Simon Eloni  
Mr Michael Haomae  
Mr Clay Ledi  
Mr Peter Ramosaea  
Mr. John Fugui

*Break*

**Group 3**

Mr John Reni  
Mr Jefferson Hallu  
Mr Patrick Billy  
Mr Peter Sipoli  
Mr Stephen Siapu  
Ms Constance Namu

**Group 4**

Ms Karen James  
Mr Paul Maesulia  
Mr Simon Tagie  
Mr John Tepue  
Ms Mary Sade  
Ms Rose Mae  
Mr. Huddie Namu  
Mr Joseph Oli  
Ms Grace Hilly  
Pr. Peter Baeoro

Each group of witness presented evidences before the committee. The committee questioned the witnesses.

Evidence concluded.

**4. Close-** The Public hearing and forum ends at 6:20 pm

**Minutes of Proceedings  
Meeting No.12/2013**

**Committee hearing (Day 7)**

Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2013, Parliament CR II, Parliament House, 11:51 am

**1. Attendance**

**Committee Members:**

Hon. John Moffat Fugui (Chairman), MP  
Hon. Johnley Hatimoana, MP  
Hon. Andrew Manepora'a, MP

**Apologies**

Hon. Derek Sikua, MP  
Hon. James Tora, MP  
Hon. Douglas Ete, MP

**Secretariat** - Wilson Orisi

**In-attendance**

Liam Sau- Hansard Dept  
Fred Osifelo – Media Dept

**Witnesses-** Ms Juanita Matanga- Commissioner of Police (Acting)  
Mr. Charles Kelly- City Clerk, Honiara City Council

**2. Welcome and Opening Statement**

The Chairman welcomes members of the committee, officials from the committee secretariat, and the witnesses and made his opening remarks. Chairman reminded the witnesses that this Inquiry is a follow up to find out on the immediate steps the responsible authorities have taken on the impacts of short Bus Routes raised by the public in the past hearings.

The Chair then invites the witnesses to make their presentations.

**3. Hearing into Issues raised in the Short Bus routes Inquiry.**

The witnesses make their presentations before the Committee.

The Committee questioned the witnesses, made comments and seek clarifications from witnesses on the immediate steps they have taken to address the short bus Routes issue in Honiara.

Evidence concluded and the chairman made his closing remarks and thanked the witnesses for their attendance and presentation.

**4. Close**

The meeting closes at 12:52 pm.

## Appendix 4 Schedule 5 – Honiara City Council Act 1999

### SCHEDULE 5

(Section 21)

#### **PART I**

### FUNCTIONS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

#### Trade and Industry

1. (i) To licence trades, businesses, professions and other occupations.
- (ii) To regulate trading hours of retail and wholesale shops.

#### Culture and Environment

2. To regulate, control and promote conservation of the environment -
  - (i) To provide reference and lending.
  - (ii) Conservation of the environment.
  - (iii) To promote sports and other cultural and recreative activities.
  - (iv) To provide and preserve public monuments and identify and preserve antique artefacts and sites of historical and cultural interest.
  - (v) To promote arts and local crafts.

#### Finance

3. Raising revenue by -
  - (i) Head Tax - Basic Rate
  - (ii) Property Tax - Land Rate
  - (iii) Business Tax
  - (iv) Gaming/Casino Tax
  - (v) Vehicle Tax
  - (vi) Liquor Tax
  - (vii) Fees for services performed or licences issued by or on behalf of the City Council.
  - (viii) Such other matters as may be approved for the purposes of this paragraph by the Minister by order.

#### Local Matters

4. To provide -
  - (i) Refuse collection and street cleaning.
  - (ii) Refuse Disposal.
  - (iii) Public Conveniences.
  - (iv) Parks and Open Spaces.
  - (v) Halls and Public Buildings.
  - (vi) Swimming Pools.
  - (vii) Markets.
  - (viii) Street Names and House Numbers.
  - (ix) Animal Control.
  - (x) Parking.
  - (xi) Public Roads Maintenance and Constructions as assigned to the City Council under section 4 of the [Roads Act](#) and Lighting.
  - (xii) Drainage and open drains for the public roads as assigned to the City Council under section 4 of the Roads Act.
  - (xiii) Building Regulations/Codes.

- (xiv) Regulating and controlling public collections in public places and public entertainment.
- (xv) Promote and assist the development of Youths/Women.
- (xvi) Measures to control and deal with Public Nuisances.

#### Health

- 5. (i) To control Environment Health.
- (ii) To provide and promote Health Education.

#### Transport

- 6. To provide transport for school children.

#### Education

- 7. To provide education services, boards, committees, kindergarten, primary schools, secondary schools and community education in accordance with the [Education Act](#).

#### Housing

- 8. (i) To plan, construct and maintain houses for Council staff.
- (ii) Housing schemes to provide dwellings for persons of small means.
- (iii) To regulate rents.

#### Rivers

- 9. Control and use of rivers and waters.

#### Local Government

- 10. The constitution, area and general powers and duties of the Area/Ward Committees and similar bodies and revenue and expenditure.

#### Corporate or Statutory Bodies

- 11. To establish corporate or statutory bodies for the providing of City Functions including economic activity in respect of items 4, 6, 8 and 9.

#### Employment

- 12. To provide guidance and placement services.

#### Medical Services

- 13. To provide medical services.

The performance of the functions specified in paragraphs 12 and 13 shall only be carried out if there is an agency agreement in force.

## Appendix 5 Schedule 4 – Honiara City Council Act 1999

### SCHEDULE 4

(section 21(2))

#### FUNCTIONS THAT MAY BE TRANSFERRED

##### Land

1. The Land and Titles Act (Cap. 133) -

- (i) Control and management over all land in Honiara now held by the Commissioner of Lands.
- (ii) Land rents received by the Commissioner of Lands to be received by the City Council.
- (iii) The functions given to the Minister under Division 2 of Part V of the Act (compulsory acquisition of land) in relation to land required for the purposes of the City Council's functions.

##### Cultural matters

2. The Cinematograph Act (Cap. 137) -

- (i) The functions given to the Licensing Authority.
- (ii) The functions given to the Minister under section 14 (making rules).

##### Gaming and Lotteries

3. The Gaming and Lotteries Act (Cap. 139) -

- (i) The functions given to the Gaming and Lotteries Board under section 20.
- (ii) The functions given to the Minister under section 4 (making regulations).

##### Roads

4. The Roads Act (Cap. 129) -

- (i) The functions given to the Minister under sections 3, 5, 27 and 29(b) to (f) and (so far as relating to the aforesaid paragraphs) the imposition of a fine not exceeding \$1000.00 or 3 months imprisonment.

##### Traffic

5. The Traffic Act (Cap. 131) -

- (i) The functions given to the Minister and Principal Licensing Officer under sections 3 and 4 (Vehicle registration and driving licences).
- (ii) All functions given to the Highway Authority other than under section 66.

##### Public Holidays

6. The Public Holidays Act (Cap. 151) -

The functions given to the Minister under section 6 of that Act (appointment of special public holidays) in so far as Honiara is concerned.

##### Liquor

7. The Liquor Act (Cap. 144) -

- (i) The functions given to the Minister under section 82 (closure of bars).
- (ii) The functions given to the Minister under sections 3 and 94 (power to alter fees and forms and amend any of the Schedules.)

##### Protected Industries

8. The Protected Industries Act (Cap. 177) -

The functions given to the Minister under section 3.

##### River Waters

9. The River Waters Act (Cap. 135) -

The functions given to the Minister under that Act.

##### Planning

10. The Town and Country Planning Act (Cap. 154) -

The functions given to the Minister under that Act.

## Appendix 6 Schedule 2 - Foreign Investment Regulations

### *Foreign Investment Regulations 2006*

#### SCHEDULE 2

#### RESERVED LIST

(Section 9, regulation 15)

1. Cultivating plant crops exclusively for sale on the domestic market.
2. Timber milling operations producing not more than 2,500 m<sup>3</sup> sawn timber per year.
3. Retail trading of household goods and services on premises with an area of less than 200 m<sup>2</sup>.
4. Producing handcrafts and cultural artifacts.
5. Operating buses, taxis and hire car services.
6. Farming of livestock for sale exclusively for domestic market.
7. Gathering of wild forest products for sale exclusively for domestic market.
8. Laundry services not part of hotels.
9. Restaurants, cafes and other eating and drinking business other than specialty Business, and operating within an area of less than 25m<sup>2</sup>.
10. Market vending and roadside stalls.
11. Domestic help services.
12. Static guarding services for offices and domestic dwellings with an employment of less than 20 employees.
13. Office and lawn cleaning services not associated with hotels.
14. Customs clearing agent.