

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

DAILY HANSARD

THIRD MEETING – EIGHTH SESSION

THURSDAY 15TH FEBRUARY 2007

The Deputy Speaker, Sir Allan Kemakeza took the Chair at 9.40 a.m.

Prayers.

ATTENDANCE

At prayers, all were present with the exception of the Ministers for Department of Education & Human Resources and the Members for West Guadalcanal, North West Choiseul, South Vella La Vella, East Makira and Ulawa/Ugi.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question No.24 deferred

BILLS

Bills - Committee of Supply

The 2007 Appropriation Bill 2007

Head 276: Ministry of Health and Medical Services

Hon Rini: Mr Chairman, code 1010 – civil service salaries on page 134. According to the budget this is reduced by \$662,878. But when I looked at the establishment there was an increase. Can the Minister explain why there was a reduction in the budget on the actual amount and an increase in the establishment?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, you will see a decrease in the allocation for civil service salaries due to existing vacancies not

included. There are vacancies existed in the past which is reflected in the large allocation in the past year.

Mr Rini: Mr Chairman, on the same page 134 - code 2071 – tours and travel, there is also a reduction here. Will the Ministry reduce its tours to provinces?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the decrease in allocation for tours and travel is because most visits and tours do now come under projects.

Mr Tozaka: Mr Chairman, the same page, code 2070 and 2071, which deals with traveling and transport. Should they not come together?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the difference between these two is that travel includes the annual leave of our staff at the headquarters.

Mr Hilly: Last item AusAID Swap Funding. What is that on code 6422, the last one?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the Swap Funding is a new mechanism that will be used by the Ministry, the AusAid and the World Bank to put funding through. SWAP simply stands for Sector Wide Approach. Currently we are still using the HSTA. That reflects support we are receiving from AusAID.

Mr Hilly: Mr Chairman, can the Minister tell us as the reasons for the SWAP. What is this particular funding and why did you come up with this idea?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, currently the budget support we are receiving from AusAID is under a special fund, which is HSTA. That is going to cease and after it ceases SWAP will be the new name.

Mr Fono: Can the Minister explain properly what this fund is used for? I think that is the question of my colleague from Ranogga/Simbo. Is it for subsidizing the operating cost of the hospital like patient food or is it to pay for infrastructure or equipments? Explain it properly so that Members of Parliament will know.

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the assistance we receive from AusAID through this funding helps the Ministry in its operations and other development initiatives. It is the same as the SIG fund that we use for the operation of the Ministry. This fund consolidates the activities of the Ministry of Health. It is used for the operations of the Ministry and other development initiatives according to our operation plan.

Mr Riumana: On the same item. Can this fund be used for the improvement of existing clinics and hospitals? How is this fund administered?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the Member is right that this fund is to assist the Ministry in its efforts to improve medical infrastructures and also to assist the operations of our provincial hospitals. It is a fund that is used to assist and top up the contribution from SIG.

Mr Huniehu: Mr Chairman, this fund is for funding of projects but why does it appear in the recurrent budget. It should be in the development budget.

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the Ministry has been receiving this fund and is still receiving it. It is just a continuous support to the recurrent expenditures of the Ministry and that is why it is in the recurrent. Most of the work has started and so that is the reason why it comes under recurrent.

Mr Lonamei: Mr Chairman, subhead 3100 -house rents of \$5 million. Is this house rent only for those in Honiara or is it also for house rents in the provinces?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, that allocation for rent is not only for Honiara but also for provinces. Up to now it is still administered by the headquarters.

Mr Riumana: Mr Chairman, my question is on page 135, accounting code 4004 – training local in-service. What kind of training is this? Is it training for staff or students? If so, then is that \$20,000 enough?

Hon Soalaoi: This allocation is basically to assist the divisional upskilling of our staff. It is not for students but it is for our staff at the headquarters. The allocation of \$20,000 is for the training of our divisional staff.

Mr Tozaka: Mr Chairman, what are the main diseases under the non communicable diseases that are of great concern to us?

Hon Soalaoi: Is the Member asking about the program for the non communicable diseases? The Honiara City Council receives an out service grant from the Ministry and it is the one that comes up with programs on non communicable disease. This service grant is used for those programs.

Mr Tozaka: Mr Chairman, this is a very important head. On 2018 - publicity and promotion, I gather diabetes, heart disease also come under non communicable disease. I notice here that there is no provision for publicity and promotion.

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, that comes under public health division, which also receives support from SWAP assistance.

Mr Hilly: Page 137 - Honiara City Council. I want the Minister to explain to Parliament how is health service carried out in Honiara.

This page is about the Honiara City Council Health Budget. If we look down to item 4100 it talks about Health Service Grant. Can the Minister explain to Parliament how is health service being organized in Honiara? Is it under the Honiara City Council and that is why this grant is given or is it some kind of a joint operation with the Ministry because the Ministry on page 137 has a budget for the Honiara City Council.

Hon Soalaoi: Health services in Honiara come under the Honiara City Council. The health service grant given to the Council is to assist the Council in its operational plans. As we know there are clinics around the city and that is the purpose why the Honiara City Council is receiving grants from the Ministry.

Most of the divisions of the Honiara City Council are administered together under the Environmental Health Program of the Ministry headquarters. Most of the funds given to the Honiara City Council are basically to help it run its clinics around the city as well as other programs in its operational plans.

Mr Riumana: Same code 4100 – Health Service Grant to Honiara City Council. Does the Ministry have a system in place to monitor the use of this fund so that it is used properly on health services in Honiara?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, there is a system in place to monitor the spending by various divisions of the Ministry of Health. In regards to the Honiara City Council there is a system in place to monitor the spending of the Honiara City Council. Every fund coming out from the Ministry is monitored on how the money is being spent. That determines their next allocation in the next budget.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, I am still on this City Council business, on the same subhead. With this amount of money, my understanding is that the City Council is under a lot of pressure to run health services in town because more people are coming to

town and the money given to clinics is no adequate. I happen to end up in one of these clinics and I can see that they need a lot of assistance. The allocation here is still not enough. Is there any thinking to increase this amount because most of our people in the rural areas end up in town?

Hon Soalaoi: I have already looked at the allocation for this year and there is an increase in the allocation to the Honiara City Council. There is no harm in assisting them when they requested.

Mr Lonamei: Mr Chairman, subhead 1011 - Housing Allowance. Housing allowance seems to appear in every other page under this head. What about the huge rent that we have gone through earlier on today? Is that \$5 million not enough to cover housing allowance for these people?

Hon Soalaoi: The Member is quite right. There are certain officers that are not covered based on their levels. As we know officers are only entitled for the government to rent a house for them on a certain level. Those who do not qualified are subsidized with housing allowances.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, page 139. I seem to notice that all the expenditures at the top of the page, the subheads on the top have budgeted figures for last year but no actuals and so some provisions appear again in the Budget this year. Is there any hope that these will happen?

I am not certain whether I understand what appears in here rightly but what I am getting is that there are no actual figures for these last year.

Hon Sogavare: The way these allocations are made is based on baselines or the performance of ministries last year. If they perform at the same level then they are allocated the same amount again this year.

Mr Hilly: On National HIV/STD Division, there seems to be no provision for salaries for people working under this division but

there are other common heads in there. Can the Minister explain whether people are working specifically on this area of health or are they being looked after by other divisions of the health authority?

Hon Soalaoi: The staff working in this division comes under the Nursing Division and that is why you do not see any salary provision but a zero provision. The salaries of staff working in the HIV Program are under the Nursing Division.

Mr Kwanairara: Accounting code 0385-1010 - civil service salaries has an increase of about \$200,000. Can the Minister explain the reason for this increase?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, that increase is simply to fill up some of the vacancies in the Department, which is reflected in this increase in this year's allocation.

Mr Rini: Mr Chairman, page 143 – accounting code 1014 has a fairly big increase on special duty allowance, which is more than the civil salaries. Can the Minister explain this?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the increase in the amount allocated for Special Duty Allowance is specifically due to people involved in programs, most of them come from our paramedic staff. Some of the incentives given to our paramedic staff are in terms of special duty allowance.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, page 146. If you look at the budget of the Ministry of Health, it is all expenditure, about 99.9% is expenditure, except for these two items here on page 146 as abut income. It is neglected. It is very small money and it does not look proper for the budget. It is mainly from paying of cards in the hospital and so it is a very small amount. It is really embarrassing on very sick who go to the hospital and they are asked to pay for the cards. Seeing that this is a very small amount, is it possible to get this income somewhere other than putting it here, after all the whole budget of

this ministry is all expenses. Can we get rid of this card business and giving it free of charge?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, we share the same feelings. This is operated under fee schedule and this is one of the areas we are working on. We are simply working on how to assist our people on this. Most of our people cannot afford to pay fees. This is just something the Ministry is doing to comply with the fee schedules.

I think you might have noted in the Audit Report that this is one of the areas we have indicated that we are looking into.

Mr Rini: I am just concern about page 53 of the Establishment. On page 53 of the Establishment, there is a heading there which says Resident Medical Officers. And in this year's budget seven people are earmarked for that post. My question is, what is the grade and level of these resident medical officers, it was not shown in the establishment register. What is the level of one Resident medical officer (1) and six resident medical officers (2)? What grade and level do these come under?

Hon Soalaoi: I believe the Member is referring to our new graduate doctors whose entry point is Level 9 and 10.

Mr Hilly: Page 146 - National Referral Hospital. This is the only one very important hospital in the country that we have. My question is, is this hospital adequately staffed or short of staff? We must make sure it is adequately staffed because it is a referral hospital.

I raise this question because sometimes I go to the hospital and I can see many patients coming but there does not seem to be any nurses or doctors attending those people. Is this hospital adequately staffed?

Mr Chairman: Is it a general question Member for Ranogga/Simbo?

Mr Hilly: Yes, we are trying to allocate funds for the Central Hospital and if these allocations are not enough why not increase them so that the hospital is adequately staffed.

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the National Referral Hospital at the moment in average it is close to adequately staffed. The problem we have is the specialist areas, which I think we are all aware of.

The demand from provincial health divisions to post nurses and doctors to the provinces is one of the challenges in the National Referral Hospital. Trying to keep most of our specialists at the National Referral Hospital is a challenge at the moment, due to demand from provincial health services.

In terms of assistance towards the National Referral Hospital, we also receive assistance from other donors. The hospital also receives assistance from the Republic of China, Taiwan. Although the allocation may not be adequate or sufficient to support the running of the National Referral Hospital, but we are receiving assistance from Taiwan and AusAid is also funding some of our programs that come under the National Referral Hospital.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, page 145. I noticed there were no provisions for the medical store last year. I understand that this is the medical store at Ranandi. Why was there nothing last year but this year there are provisions? Does this show some external funds have been removed or have you decided to put up something else? Why was there no provision last year and this year all these costs come in?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, I think we all know these allocations. There was no allocation last year because the orders received last year were mainly support from AUSAID under HSTA special fund, which I mentioned earlier on.

Mr Kwanairara: Page 147 on rations. Does this amount cover only the National

Referral Hospital here or does it also cater for hospitals in the provinces?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, ration provided at the National Referral Hospital is jointly funded by HSTA and the SIG, which is now reflected in this year's allocation.

Mr Tozaka: Mr Chairman, page 148 - 1010 – civil service salaries. Why is there no allocation there?

Hon Soalaoi: There is no allocation on civil salaries because as I already mentioned most of our public health divisions come under the nursing division and some of them under the headquarters.

Mr Tozaka: Sorry, I think I have an ear problem, but according to the establishment there are 27 posts altogether under dental. I would have thought that that should be catered for under this particular subhead. In the establishment register, I counted that there are 27 posts under this division but they are not shown in here. Where are they going to be paid?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the dental staff salaries are paid under the National Referral Hospital.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, this is a general question but I noticed that the whole expense head of the Ministry of Health is one of the ministries that touch our very people in the rural areas. It is the heart of this nation in breeding healthy people. But I seem to notice that there is no budget support. This entire section has no budget support. I am just wondering whether no one wants to support this ministry or we did not ask for it or we have made some deliberate decisions not to include any sort of support.

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, it does not necessarily mean that there is no support towards the Ministry. Because of the importance of the Ministry, like I mentioned already, most programs of the Ministry are

supported by our donors. Most of it, like I said, will be reflected in projects we have under the development programs for this year.

Mr Tozaka: Mr Chairman, page 150. Just a clarification from the Minister. Can he explain what is 'Imaging Services' and what kind of services is it providing?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, medical imaging services refers to ultra sound services and the x-ray department. That is what is referred to as medical imaging services on this page.

Mr Tozaka: Mr Chairman, salaries again on 1010. Does the same thing happen to this particular division that salaries are also catered for under the Referral Hospital? It appears here as \$15,045 for salaries but there are 14 posts altogether in the establishment register.

Hon Soalaoi: Yes, the Member is right. This is one of the departments of the National Referral Hospital and is catered for under civil service salaries under the National Referral Hospital.

Mr Tozaka: Mr Chairman, according to the Ministry of Health's Report, this particular division complains too much about housing and shortage of staffing and so it is unable to reach out to the provinces. Is this concern catered for in this budget?

Hon Soalaoi: Yes, Mr Chairman, this department deals with national programs allocated in the National Referral Hospital and so its housing is catered for under the housing scheme.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, page 154. Accounting code 1010 has an apparent reduction in civic service salaries. I am just wondering what is causing this reduction.

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, this is similar to what I referred to earlier that allocation for vacancies are not included earlier on. I

understand there is an allocation we can use to fill up the vacancies.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, page 156, on the expenditures at the top. In 2005 there was provision for special duty, overtime and other allowances but nothing was expended last year, and they came up again this year. Is the trend from last year not carried forward? Is there something coming up this year?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, this is due to some of our paramedic staff not entitled to special duty allowance.

Mr Tozaka: Mr Chairman, page 158 – accounting code 2153 – maintenance of patrol boats. Can you explain this?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, most of our environmental health programs are carried out in the rural areas where there is no available form of transport and so they use outboard motor canoes. And that is what it is referring to.

Mr Rini: Mr Chairman, on page 158 accounting code 2010 – motor vehicles with an allocation of \$220,000. If we look at previous departments or even other ministries that we have dealt with yesterday and even the Ministry of Health and Medical Services itself, there was no allocation on this item in other departments or ministries. Why is this particular department allocated with \$220,000 for vehicles? Why not everyone? If you look at previous heads they were deleted or have zero provisions. Why does this particular Department have a big budget of \$220,000 for motor vehicles?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, there is no reflection of motor vehicles in other Departments basically because they already have vehicles. This allocation for motor vehicles under this department is because this year this department will be embarking on promotional programs especially in Guadalcanal and Honiara and it will definitely need an additional new vehicle.

Mr Rini: Mr Chairman, I think the purchase of vehicles should be under the Ministry of Infrastructure. Or has government policy changed so that each Ministry is entitled to purchase its own vehicle?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, this is an item that is closely attached to a program and so that is the reason why we want to buy a vehicle for this department. It is a program related item.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, page 160. The expenditures on this page are for the National Health Training and Research. If you look at the expenses of this subhead, the provision for actual training and seminars is only \$100,000 and all the expenses are on something else. I would have thought that these expenditures are supposed to be for training, but the actual cost for training and seminars is only \$100,000. Can the Minister explain whether this makes any sense?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, since he is referring to research and training, this is a program that has been taken up with assistance from the Japanese Government.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, I accept the Minister's answer but this page is indicative of what we have been doing. It is talking about training here but actually we are talking about paying ourselves, and this is one of the classic examples of what we have been doing all these years. This is talking about training and yet the government is not committing money to training. It is committing everything to salaries, wages, allowances and other allowances. Only a small part of the money goes to training and seminar. That is just a comment and may be important to take note of.

Hon Soalaoi: I just want to make a general response. I think without coordinators and facilitators there would not be any training. These allocations for allowances and

salaries are for the coordinators and facilitators of the training.

Mr Chairman: Just a reminder to all Members of Parliament that you switch off your mobile phones when you come into the chamber.

Mr Riumana: Mr Chairman, my question is on page 159 – accounting code 3220 on materials and equipments. I understand that in the budget there is allocation for vehicles, protective clothing, and so forth. My question is what kind of materials and equipments are still to be provided? There is an allocation of \$500,000 last year for these and this year it is \$200,000. What kind of equipment and materials are not yet provided? That is my first question.

My second question is; what are the control measures the Ministry is taking so that the equipments and materials paid under this head are properly accounted for in the hospital?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, in terms of materials there is a lot of printing done especially for posters for our promotional programs in the environmental health department. There is also printing of special materials like the colored materials that we see around, which are not cheap to produce.

Mr Fono: Mr Chairman, in the establishment there seems to be some inconsistencies in the director posts. Some are at level 10/11, some are at level 12/13, and some are at level 13 and SS1. What are the reasons for these inconsistencies on the levels?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the inconsistencies seen on the levels of our various directors is because they are given the different levels when they come into a particular division. For example, for the paramedics, you will notice that most of the posts are a bit lower than the other divisions. I guess it is to do with the workload. They are working according to the differences that exist between the levels. The levels

accorded to these officers are basically done according to the amount of work that is required and the demand on the services they provide.

Mr Tozaka: Mr Chairman, page 162 accounting code 3010. I think this was already raised but there is also inconsistency on motor vehicles. From the report of the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, this particular division has problem in moving around, not only here in Honiara but also in the provinces in terms of motor vehicles and outboard motors – transport but in here there is zero provision. Can the Minister explain why?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, there is no provision there because it already has a good vehicle at the moment.

Mr Kwanairara: Mr Chairman, page 164 – expenditure - civil service salaries. In 2005 and 2006 there were no people at post. Is this a new office or a new set up? Can the Minister confirm?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, yes in previous years there were no allocations but in 2007 estimates there are allocations. This is for only for one coordinator who was appointed to look after the Eye Division of the National Referral Hospital. All the other staff come under the National Referral Hospital.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, pages 165 & 166 and the next few pages are about malaria. But all the other provinces have no allocations, only Guadalcanal has allocations. Has malaria been eradicated from all the other provinces? I understand that only my province of Rennell and Bellona has no malaria. Why are there no allocations for malaria in other provinces except Guadalcanal?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, only Guadalcanal Province has an allocation for malaria, and this is part of a support towards a Japanese project that is currently going on.

Support to malaria programs is given to all provinces in their service grants. This is reflected in an increase on all provincial service grants. Malaria labs are established in all the provinces, and so assistance towards malaria is given to all provinces in their health service grants.

Mr Tozaka: Just a general question. Since when did we transfer malaria to go down to the provinces to be paid under their services grants? Was it this year or last year?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, it started last year.

Mr Kwanairara: Mr Chairman, accounting code 4139 - Malu'u Nurse Aide Training School (NATS). There was going to be a training undertaking this year. Can you just confirm how many nurse aides will be trained this year for this amount of money?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the Malu'u Nurse Aide Training School recruits an average of 20 students per year. This school is just about ready to start classes for this year. It is not a big school and so it recruits an average of 20 nurse aides in one year.

Mr Lonamei: Mr Chairman, page 175 accounting code 2070 – staff travel and transport (local). This is very important for the travel of those in the provinces. Can the Minister explain why this particular item has a zero provision for all the provinces?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, travel and transport for staff in the provinces is catered for under the provincial health service grants.

Mr Fono: Mr Chairman, the last two accounting codes – church grants – Atoifi and Atoifi SON. Is there any explanation for these two different accounting heads? I understand the church grants for Atoifi but what is this Atoifi SON? What does the initial 'SON stands for?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the church grant - Atoifi refers to assistance given to that hospital and Atoifi SON refers to the School of Nursing attached to that hospital.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, I notice the Minister saying that a lot of responsibilities have been passed on to the provinces. I am wondering why the Ministry has decided to pass on these responsibilities to the provinces. As far as I understand, the health officers of my province are having some difficulties in taking things out from the province. In the past it has been much easier for them to come and get it straight from the headquarters. What is the reason why the headquarters has passed these responsibilities on to the provinces, knowing very well that arguments normally ensue before something is done?

Hon Soalaoi: I think the reason why some of these responsibilities have been given to the provinces is to make them take on these responsibilities. If all these things are done in the headquarters it will not be easier. This is just to make things easier. This is the Ministry's effort to ensure the efficient running of the system. That is the reason why some of the responsibilities are being given to the provinces. The headquarters is taking up most of the divisions that are in Honiara.

Mr Kwanairara: I come back again to training. I would like the Honorable Minister to explain the difference between the Atoifi Nursing School and the Malu'u Nursing School. And why is the allocation to one of the schools much bigger than the other one?

Hon Soalaoi: The difference between the two schools is that the Malu'u NATS is training nurse aides, and the School of Nursing at Atoifi is training registered nurses.

Mr Gukuna: I just want to ask my colleagues Ministers that these figures belong to all of us, and we are going to pass

them. We are not criticizing but we just want explanation, and so you should also ask questions.

I am sure some of these figures must include some of the tithes as appeared in the budget. The Minister has said that the easiest way of doing it is to give the monies to the provinces. Are you going to give the tithes as part of the health straight to the church or is it going to be controlled at the headquarters.

Hon Darcy: Mr Chairman, tithes will be paid to churches. We will pay tithes to the church.

Mr Tozaka: Page 175 on health services grant. Under the Provincial Government Act 1981, Provincial Executives can provide services under this health services grant.

My question is on accountability. Some provinces when receiving this service grant, it becomes the responsibility of the provincial executive to disburse the funds, which is directly affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of providing services to provinces for medical services.

In this regard, is the Director of Medical Services still in control and accountable to this fund at the provincial level?

Hon Waipora: That question is on the control of funds in the provinces and so I would like to make explanations. The Provincial Executive is the overall head but administrative arrangement is such that grants are paid direct to the accounts or passbook, so to speak, of the provincial health services. Therefore, the Director of Medical Services in the provinces is responsible for disbursing the funds for activities such as paying for rations of patients, referring patients to Honiara and so on.

This arrangement is still in place in that grants are paid to the provinces and it goes direct to the accounts of provincial hospitals. That is what I can contribute to the question directed to my colleague, the Minister for Health.

Mr Kengava: On the basis that grants are paid, I just want to know whether grants are paid in lump sum or on quarterly basis.

Hon Soalaoi: Health services grants to provincial hospitals are paid on a monthly basis.

Mr Kwanairara: I would like to know the criteria used in distributing the health service grants to provinces. Is it based on population or what is it based on?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, health service grants are calculated based on the population of each province. I think it is clear with the allocation that big provinces are receiving a much larger allocation than the smaller provinces. The Member is right that it is paid according to the population of provinces.

Mr Rini: Accounting code 4128 on grants to church clinics. The allocation here for this year is \$922,160, and this is for Western Province. How many church clinics are going to receive this grant?

Hon Soalaoi: All church run clinics and hospitals receive assistance through grant.

Mr Huniehu: Page 177 - accounting code 4100. Can the Minister explain who is eligible to benefit from this allocation?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, this health services grant on page 177 is an allocation for the Makira/Ulawa Province. All provinces are qualified to receive health services grant.

Hon Darcy: Mr Chairman, what the Minister is saying is that every sick people in Makira/Ulawa Province will benefit from this allocation.

Mr Boyers: Page 179, accounting code 4191 - Helena Goldie SON. Can the Minister explain what Helena Goldie SON is?

Hon Soalaoi: This SON stands for School of Nursing.

Mr Boyers: Mr Chairman, can the Minister explain why there is no grant for the Helena Goldie Hospital? When I look back at the other pages there are grants for other church hospitals but no grant for the Helena Goldie Hospital.

Hon Soalaoi: In fact this is a direct assistance to the Helena Goldie hospital where the school is attached to.

Mr Huniehu: Can the Minister explain whether Atoifi Hospital is given assistance under these sub heads and what amount?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the Atoifi hospital also receives services grant and it is under Malaita Province.

Mr Fono: The first question. I notice that there is allocation to church clinics in the Western Province, but there is no allocation to church clinics for other provinces. I understand that Malaita Province has a church clinic like Nafinua, but why is there no allocation for church clinics in Malaita. That is the first question.

I also noticed that three important posts under the Western Province were abolished, and these are the Consultant O&G, Consultant Anesthetics and Consultant Pediatrician. Western Province is one of the biggest Provinces, and so does it not need those posts. I can see new vacant posts created for Malaita for these posts but why are these posts abolished in the Western Province. That is my second question.

Hon Soalaoi: Other church run clinics like Nafinua come under provincial health services grants. For the second question, Mr Chairman, the general patients practitioners carry out general visits to the Western Province almost regularly and so are based at the National Referral Hospital.

Mr Kengava: Under assistance to church hospitals like Atoifi and Helena Goldie and others, I notice that they came under the provinces. My question is, who is going to give out the money, is it the Ministry or the Provinces? I feel it is more better to come under the Ministry so that it gives grant directly to the hospitals otherwise it might hold up in the provinces.

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the difference between clinics that receive direct assistances from the Ministry is that some of the clinics are built by churches and the nurses are provided for by the province, and that is the reason why they come under the province.

Mr Boyers: Mr Chairman, I am still not satisfied with the answer by the Minister for Health on grants to the church.

The Western Province has two hospitals, which are the Helena Goldie and Gizo hospital. The hospital at Helena Goldie is run by the church just like the Atoifi. The Atoifi Hospital receives grant from the government but the Helena Goldie Hospital has no grant from the government.

Why are these two hospitals run by the churches but one receives grant and the other one is not. I would like to know whether there is any support from the government for Helena Goldie run by the church. I would like to see a bit of tithing to be given to Helena similar to what Atoifi is getting. Where is it?

Hon Soalaoi: In fact, church run hospitals and clinics in Western Province have an allocation of almost a million dollars, which is \$922,000. The \$63,000 in the budget is specifically for the School of Nursing.

Mr Lonamei: Page 181 belongs to Isabel Province. My question is on accounting codes 1015 to 1155, which all have zero provisions. Are these posts abolished?

Hon Soalaoi: If the MP is referring to 1155 then all those items are catered for under the first accounting codes.

Mr Riumana: Page 181 accounting code 4100 - Health Services Grant. Can the Minister explain the purpose of this Health Services Grant? Does it include improvements to clinics and hospitals as well?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the health service grants are to assist hospitals in its operations. As we know hospitals also pay for their direct employees and nurse aides working in nurse aides posts in the provinces.

Mr Lonamei: Mr Chairman, the health services grant for last year was \$1.5million and this year it is \$1.6 million, an increase of about \$47,000. Mr Chairman, in the Minister's answer earlier on today he said that malaria responsibilities are now transferred to the provinces and catered for under their health services grant. If that is true, why is there an increase of only about \$47,000? In the past allocation to malaria was about \$173,000. Is this a reduction of the services grant? Can the Minister explain this?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, I think we should just appreciate that there is an increase. Malaria programs are also supported by the Global Fund and AusAID. The increase you see on the allocation there is a contribution from the National Government.

Mr Riumana: Just another general question. If other divisions are transferred to headquarters, can the Minister please explain why malaria goes back to the provinces?

Hon Soalaoi: I can simply say it is because malaria is not only in Honiara and that is why assistance towards malaria is going to the provinces and is included in the health services grant. It is a national program and support is still forthcoming from the headquarters.

Mr Lonamei: The establishment of the Isabel Health Division should have about 63 established posts, of which 13 are still vacant. Can the Minister confirm to this House whether these vacant posts are going to be filled?

Hon Soalaoi: The answer is yes.

Mr Koli: Mr Chairman, under the Ministry of Health and Medical Services - Malaria Guadalcanal. I can see that it is jointly administered by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the Malaria Division on Guadalcanal. Also in here is the Ministry of Health and Medical Services - Guadalcanal Province. From a layman's point of view, Guadalcanal has no hospital. The hospital in Honiara is not a Guadalcanal Province hospital but it is the National Referral Hospital.

I have a general question, which I would like the Minister to clarify for me. Seeing that the Guadalcanal Province does not have a hospital of its own, we do not know where the Province's doctor is posted. I know that if a doctor is posted to a province, he/she would also do some administrative work like other provinces that have hospitals of their own do. For the Guadalcanal Province, we need to know where our doctor is posted and what sort of administrative work is he/she going to do. That is the point I would like the honourable Minister to explain to me.

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, a very unfortunate situation is expressed by the Member, which is quite right. Since the National Referral Hospital is located in Honiara, three Doctors are specifically for G-Province, and I believe you always see them when they visit clinics around Guadalcanal. As soon as we know where the provincial headquarters will be that is where the Guadalcanal Province hospital will be located.

Mr Kengava: On accounting code 1010 - Civil Service Salaries for Choiseul Province, which is more than \$1 million, I just want to

know if that includes the salary of the doctor for the Province and whether the doctor is posted there right now?

Hon Soalaoi: The allocation to Civil Service Salaries includes the salary of the Provincial Health Director.

Mr Kengava: I want to know whether it includes the salary of a doctor and whether a doctor is posted there right now.

Hon Soalaoi: The Ministry is still to send somebody there. There is an established post for a doctor in the Province and the Provincial Health Director is basically the doctor for Choiseul Province. Very soon a provincial health director will be dispatched to the province.

Mr Kengava: Accounting code 4128 - Grants to Church Clinics. I just want to know whether this includes support for the Sasamunga mini-hospital.

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, that grant is for Sasamunga.

Mr Kengava: Is it for Sasamunga clinic only or Sasamunga mini-hospital and other church clinics as well?

Hon Soalaoi: The grant to Church clinics is for Sasamunga. I do not know whether it is a clinic or mini-hospital but it is for the Sasamunga Church run clinic.

Mr Kengava: Mr Chairman, I think I am partly satisfied. If it is for Sasamunga it should be written there as Sasamunga Grant so that it is clear that it is assistance to Sasamunga clinic so that the Province does not confuse it with the Health Services Grant which is for the whole Province.

Mr Fono: Mr Chairman, the Minister assured the House that a doctor would be posted to Choiseul, however I fail to see that in the Establishment under Health specifically outlining the postings of doctors or other staff to go down to the Choiseul

Province. For the other provinces, it is outlined except for Choiseul. Can the Minister explain?

Hon Soalaoi: In the postings of this year one doctor will be posted for Choiseul Province. All provinces will be posted with doctors. I think it is mistake to go without a doctor for Choiseul Province. If it is not there, it would be included. But we are taking care of that in the Ministry of Health's postings for this year.

Mr Tozaka: Mr Chairman, we cannot properly hear the answer to that question. A doctor to be posted to Choiseul Province is not in the establishment. You mentioned that you are posting a doctor, so where would that be shown in the establishment?

Hon Darcy: Mr Chairman, the post is on page 71. The post for a doctor for Choiseul Province is on page 71 in the Establishment.

Mr Gukuna: May be it is just a misunderstanding on the purposes. I notice that you have shifted every benefit to some of the accounting codes on the top. My interpretation of this is that what is on top is for public servants and what is at the bottom is for the provinces. Is every one in the province now public servants or are they still in the payroll of the province?

Hon Soalaoi: Only the allowances are for civil servants. The others are catered for under the health services grant.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, page 189 is Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation. There is a current reduction on staffing. There is a big reduction on salaries, which I take it as reduction of staffing on this section of the hospital. I just wonder whether this reduction in staffing means this division is becoming not important or the accident rates in town has been improved.

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, I think I need to clarify that across the estimates this decrease is simply due to existing vacancies.

Mr Koli: Still on physiotherapy and rehabilitation. I know that you have trained several community based rehabilitation officers who have been posted to the provinces to rehabilitate our disabled people. How effective is this training in terms of implementing what they have been trained for our disabled people in the rural areas?

Hon Soalaoi: Training for these officers started last year, which is very effective and is going to continue this year as soon as there are enough trained officers and they will start going out to areas where they are needed.

Mr Kengava: Sub-head 4040 – Subscriptions to Organization. I just want to ask what kind of organization do you subscribe to and whether that amount is sufficient.

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, the subscriptions to organization is subscription to international organizations that support this program. If we do not contribute to the organizations then we simply subscribe and we receive support from these organizations.

Mr Boyers: Mr Chairman, page 191 – accounting code 4009 – Training SICHE fees. I notice that the budgeted expenditure this year as compared to other years has no allocation. Can the Minister explain this?

Hon Soalaoi: This training - SICHE fees is for the undergraduate program at SICHE. It has been taken out from training general like last year.

Mr Gukuna: Accounting code 1020 – caters for new employees. What sort of employee is this that is very lowly paid?

Hon Soalaoi: It looks small but there is an officer who has been appointed to look after people living with the HIV. It looks small because it is for only one person. This is an allowance given to only one officer looking after the HIV patients.

Mr Gukuna: My concern is that this is below the legal minimum wage that is allowed under law.

Mr Haomae: Can I take you back to page 191 – Item Code 4009 – Training – SICHE fees. This is a new item and so can the Minister explain it? And also how many nurses will be trained under this item?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, it caters for an average of 30 students per year for year one. The program is for three years and so it is looking at 90 students per year.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, this department appears to be getting very important this time. A lot of our young people are getting into marijuana and are mentally affected. However, I noticed that last year there was no allocation to train people to look after them, the same as this year. Why is there no training for anyone to look after the mental people who sometimes have become dangerous?

Hon Soalaoi: Mr Chairman, in fact training has been conducted for officers to look after mentally affected people, and some of these officers are based at Kilu'ufi and some at the National Referral Hospital. Training for these people will continue as we see the number of mentally affected people increase.

Mr Fono: Can the Minister confirm that this is for the Mental Unit at the Kilu'ufi hospital. There is no allocation for a vehicle. They might need a vehicle too. Can the Minister explain?

Hon Soalaoi: This is also supported by the HSTA. The Psychiatric Department at the Kilu'ufi Hospital is part of the National Referral Hospital. Most of the support comes from the headquarters.

Mr Fono: Another part of my question is still not answered. Do they not need a

vehicle? Do they have an existing vehicle at this time?

Hon Soalaoi: There is a vehicle in Honiara but not in Kilu'ufi Hospital.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, page 195 – there was no actuals in 2005 and all of a sudden there was allocation last year, and this year there are no allocations for probationary nurses. Are there no new nursing intakes this year?

Hon Soalaoi: These probationers come under the headquarters. After they are confirmed they are posted to different clinics.

Head 276 - \$136,895,983 agreed to

Head 277 – Ministry of Infrastructure Development

Mr Rini: On pages 202 - telephone and faxes, there is a big increase in expenditure. What is that increase for? In 2006 it was \$302,099 but the allocation for this year is \$1million.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Chairman, I think the Minister of Finance has explained this yesterday. You will see these two items throughout the government ministries having big allocations. This is to clear backlogs we owe on telephones and faxes and so we are clearing these debts this time. That is why you will see substantial increases throughout the ministries. Hopefully this should not happen next year. We will clear these debts this year and next year we should see the expenditure level go back to normal.

Mr Boyers: In response to that question, in some of the departments their telephone, faxes and water bills are just the same but only two or three departments have five, six or seven hundred percent increase. In the light of the explanation made that this is because of arrears in bills, does this mean that at the next budget at the end of the year

are we going to see it coming back to normal or will this huge amount of bills continue.

Mr Darcy: Mr Chairman, we hope to settle all the arrears. With this particular ministry, as you know that previously this ministry also includes Meteorology, Aviation and the Spectrum departments. These are departments that heavily correspond with international organizations and during those periods their bills start to come out. But the fact that the bills were billed directly to the Department of Infrastructure and that is why it does not appear under respective heads but appears in the main Head of the Ministry of Infrastructure, and so this is a backlog. But we hope to settle all these areas at the end of the year. And as I said yesterday it will be really surprising to see these arrears still creeping up. We hope this would be the last time.

Mr Rini: I can understand the increase in telephones and faxes in other ministries. For example, we expect an increase in the Ministry of Finance, the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But if you go to the Ministry of Infrastructure there are only a few telephones there. If you look at the actuals in 2005 it is only \$141,000 but that actuals has suddenly blown up, and so I do not understand this big blown up in the allocation for this year.

Hon Darcy: I have just explained the reason for the difference. This Department used to also include the Civil Aviation, Meteorology, and Spectrum Departments, and all these are organizations that communicate on a daily basis with international organizations in the past. They were only separated last year, and some of their arrears dated back to some four years ago have now come in and so we have to settle them. These are the main accounts they have been charged to previously and that is why we see them included this year. But I think the main thing is to settle them so that they do not keep recurring. It is not

who should incur more bills and who should incur less. But the explanation is that these were previously departments that heavily involved with communication outside.

Mr Gukuna: I notice that there is no allocation this year for maintenance of wharves and jetties. Wharves are constantly being hit by ships every year. It is not like something that is built this year and forgotten about hoping to build a new wharf next time. A wharf is something that is subject to maintenance every year and I think there should be some allocations for the maintenance of wharves and jetties.

Secondly, is there any possibility to allocate some money directly to the Ports Authority here because this is where all the ships off load and load their cargoes? The wharves here are in really bad state. I understand the Authority needs some money for the repair of the wharves and jetties.

Hon Sofu: Mr Chairman, shipping is very important and so the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development is taking care of that concern under the National Transport Plan.

Mr Gukuna: I accept that answer but I think I have made a point during my speech to the budget that this is a fundamental industry, and that shipping is related to wharves. I do not think this industry should be made to wait on a plan. I was interviewed about this plan in October 2005. We do not want to waste another year waiting for this plan. The wharves need some direct government intervention now, and I think there should be direct action this time.

Hon Sofu: Mr Chairman, shipping is very important and so the Ministry of Infrastructure Development is taking care of that concern under the National Transport Plan.

Hon Sofu: Mr Chairman, just to clarify that concern. The Ministry is taking care of that and that is why the Ministry is making

recruitments this year 2007 so that proper assessment could be made on wharves and jetties that need to be repaired.

Mr Haomae: Mr Chairman, I cannot reconcile what the Minister has said because item code 2164 maintenance of roads and bridges has a provision. If the Minister is telling the truth this item should also go under the National Transport Project. The Minister said that maintenance of wharves and jetties is under the National Transport Project, but why is roads and bridges not under the same project? I cannot reconcile that answer. One is provided for and the other one is not. One is in the National Transport Project and another one is not. They are the same thing, they are infrastructures.

Hon Sofu: You can see in the 2007 budget that it is for main road maintenance identified by the division to be done in 2007. But in the case of jetties and wharves, touring would be made of all provinces to make assessments of all the wharves to be included in the working plan.

Mr Boyers: Page 204, accounting code 2164- maintenance of roads and bridges. Since 2005 my people have constructed their own roads with major funding coming from the RCDF and business houses. We have also rehabilitated the road the Kenelo road of my colleague of South New Georgia, Rendova, Tetepari's area. In the light of this allocation, in the light of the bottom up approach that we have taken of rebuilding national roads and also provincial infrastructures to service the people, can the Minister acknowledge that the funding allocated here could be accessed to recover the cost of rehabilitating and maintaining those roads.

Hon Sofu: I think it is very clear in the budget that the maintenance of roads I am talking about are roads declared as national roads and meet standard requirements.

Mr Rini: On page 98 of the establishment under Transport Policy and Planning Department, eight provinces have a chief civil engineer except for the Western Province. Why is there no chief civil engineer for the Western Province?

Hon Sofu: In the 2007 establishment there will be five civil engineers who will be doing engineering work throughout our provinces.

Mr Gukuna: Accounting code 212o on hire of shipping. The provision here is for hire of ship for only one and half days. Is that what you will need this year, for only one and half days hire of ship?

While I am standing up, the provision for Safety Equipment, accounting code 3225, there is no provision this year. Some of your staff will be involved in road maintenance and would need safety boots and overalls. Why is there no provision for that this year?

Hon Sofu: The provision here for hire of shipping is for movement of plants from one province to another if there is need.

Mr Fono: The last item – gravel rights – Has the government changed its policy to lease gravel pits now or which one does this apply to?

Hon Sofu: Gravel rights is not a compensation payment or payment of the gravel itself. The Ministry or the Government would like to show its appreciation to resource owners who allow their gravels to be used. The government shows its token of appreciation by this provision. It is not a payment of gravel or payment of resources.

Mr Kengava: Item code 6026 – Highway Authority Expenses. This is an unknown authority unlike the Ports Authority, SIWA and SIEA. Can the Minister just explain the role of this authority and how many people work in this authority?

Hon Sofu: Highway Authority Expenses is provided for under this budget because it is very important. The role of this authority is to have talks with other authorities or holds public awareness about the Ministry's program on whatever changes that are taking place within the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Mr Tozaka: I have problem with the answer from the Minister in response to the question by the MP for Marovo in regards to civil engineers in the establishment. Western Province is one of the biggest provinces. Is this an omission of what is it? There is a lot of work to done in regards to roads, wharves and bridges. Obviously with Malaita Province and Guadalcanal being provided for in the establishment, where is the Western Province Civil Engineer in this establishment?

Hon Sofu: If you look at the establishment under the Ministry of Infrastructure on page 98 you will find a civil engineer for Western and Choiseul Provinces.

Mr Tozaka: Sorry, I think I also had problem with my eyes, but page 98 of the establishment only has civil engineer for Choiseul and not the Western Province.

Hon Sofu: I would like to explain on the floor of Parliament that there is one engineer for Choiseul and Western Province.

Mr Haomae: Is the Highway Authority the same as the Road Authority? The Road Authority should collect toll fees from the highways to repair the roads because it is a bit unfair for people in the rural areas who do not come to Honiara to pay for taxes to repair the roads. Is the Highway Authority the same as the Road Authority as specified in the Act of Parliament or is this a different one?

Hon Sofu: I made it clear in my answer earlier on today that the Highway Authority expenses include talks that the Ministry of Infrastructure sees fit to conduct about whatever changes or regulations the

Ministry will take. This budget is not big but it is only \$27,000.

Mr Haomae: I understand the Minister's answer but the point I was trying to make is that if this Road Authority, which is under an Act of his Ministry is not yet reactivated, the Minister must reactivate it so that it looks at the roads to introduce the user-pay principle. That is what I am trying to get at. So that only those who travel on the road pay for its maintenance and not unnecessarily penalize people in the rural areas that do not use those roads.

Hon Sofu: It is a requirement under the Roads Act as provided for the Ministry of Infrastructure & Development to pursue.

Mr Rini: Accounting Code 3062 on page 206 – Consultancy Fees. Can the Minister explain what these fees are for? What sort of consultancy services would this come under?

Hon Sofu: This is provision to cater for engagement of any private consultant engineers when the Division fully engaged or overloaded with work.

Mr Riumana: Page 208 – all the items under income – are these rates updated or not?

Hon Sofu: Right now officers in my Department are working on this.

Mr Gukuna: On page 209 there is a provision for hire of shipping. I just want the Minister to clarify whether this is the subsidy of the Ministry of Infrastructure, and if this is the subsidy program of the Ministry of Infrastructure, my understanding is that some ships that are not qualified to get this money last year or the previous years have drawn this money. Some ships that were servicing uneconomical routes and so were qualified were refused to be helped. Can the Minister confirm to the House whether this is the same funds, and if it is,

can the Minister do something about this because there is need to look into this.

Hon Sofu: The answer to the first part of your question is 'yes'. The ships that are qualified to get this subsidy fund are:

- (a) The outlying islands of Temotu
- (b) Renbel, and
- (c) Malaita Outer Islands.

The process to acquire this subsidy is through the Marine Division and the administration of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development.

Mr Rini: Accounting code 6052 – Search and Rescue. This division is a very important division that takes care of the lives of people traveling at sea. I just want to ask the Minister why there is a very big decrease in the allocation for this year, a decrease of \$282,000.

Hon Sofu: This decrease reflects the new technology that is now installed in the Marine Division connecting it with the Forum Fisheries for information on the position of ships that whenever there is any problem to the ships they can call the Division. That is the reason for this reduction as reflected in the budget estimates.

Mr Kengava: Accounting code 2013. I notice there is no allocation for telephones and faxes. Is there any reason as to why it is nil?

Hon Sofu: This is because the Marine Division is now taken care of by headquarters administration.

Mr Gukuna: Accounting code 5052 – Search and Rescue. May be I will help the Minister. There has been a shift that companies responsible for people that are rescued would pay the cost. We were involved in one operation and Marine told us to go and ask the companies involved to pay us. And so we went and they paid us.

Whilst this is a very important part of our Marine Division, given this move that

companies that are in trouble will pay, I think the Ministry could save some money here.

May be what the Marine is doing is not right and needs to be checked out but that is what is happening on the ground. I think the headquarters should check up this area.

Hon Sofu: Thank you for that very important concern. I take note of that.

Mr Koli: Page 213 - accounting code 7501 – National Transport fund. This is a new allocation. Can the Minister explain the use of this fund?

Hon Sofu: This allocation of \$4million is the commitment of the Government towards the National Transport Fund.

Head 277 - \$30,507,204.00 agreed to

*Sitting suspended for lunch break until
2.00pm*

Committee of Supply resumes

Head 279 - National Parliament

Mr Fono: Page 232 – Organizational administration, what is this head?

Hon Sogavare: This caters for the administration of the National Parliament Office.

Mr Fono: Page 234 – what the Office of the Opposition does not have is equipments such as photocopier machine and so on. It is unfortunate that the Office comes under the National Parliament and we have been asking for this for quite sometime for the efficiency of the Office, and I see no vote in there although our original submission is to try and get equipments for the office.

Hon Sogavare: I appreciate the concern of the Leader of the Opposition. His concern

can be addressed under accounting code 279-2191.

Mr Hilly: Page 234 – Leader of Opposition – there is no provision for civil service salaries. Are those people working there come under wages?

Hon Sogavare: If you look at page 231, the civil service salary is under that item code at this point in time until there is proper organization of the Office of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Hilly: Page 238 – accounting code 1035 – NPF Members – what is this? Are we going to start contributing to NPF?

Hon Sogavare: I understand that some Members opt to pay their NPF and so deductions continue.

Head 279 - \$20,485,130.00 agreed to

Head 281 - Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Mr Hilly: Where do we find the headquarter administration civil service salary? The reorganization seems to confuse some of us.

Hon Sogavare: It is on page 258.

Mr Fono: Under income – Film Showing Fee – there is a reduction. The actuals in 2005 was \$19,000, in 2006 it was \$5,037 and this year it is only projected at \$1,429. Can any explanation be done as to why there is a reduction?

Hon Sogavare: That same income also appears under Government Communications as well as it is the appropriate organization to collect the fees. I guess there is a film showing fees in the Prime Minister's Office and also in the Communication. We feel it is more appropriate to be collected under the Government Communications Unit.

Mr Rini: Page 258 – Civil Service Salaries, accounting code 5010 – there is a reduction. Can the Prime Minister explain why there is a reduction?

Hon Sogavare: The reduction is all throughout. There has been vacancies throughout the Public Service which is also affecting the Prime Minister's Office, and therefore the sum of \$10million of the Public Service Department will be used to fill up the vacancies. This is basically a reflection of the vacancies that were advertised.

Mr Rini: Accounting code 1120 – contract Staff – is this the salaries of Permanent Secretaries or the salaries of the 17 political appointees?

Hon Sogavare: At the moment, the Government is engaging four Special Duty Permanent Secretaries who are responsible for specific tasks. This is their salaries as PS Consultants.

Mr Hilly: Constitutional Reform - SG Task Force \$180,000. Is the task almost completed and so the amount is not high.

Hon Sogavare: The provisions for that appears everywhere. There is also a very big provision for this in the development budget as well. The work is on schedule as announced by the Minister of Provincial Government. It is in the process of finalizing the draft constitution, just the wording of the text. The work is winding down and we feel that we should be able to have some kind of decisions before Parliament by July or thereabout.

Mr Boyers: Page 268 – accounting code 2091 – Overseas Travel MPs – I notice no allocation there. Would there be no travel for MPs or backbenchers this year?

Hon Sogavare: This is for the Prime Minister's Private Office. There are no politicians in that Unit.

Head 281- \$23,799,131.00 agreed to

Head 280 - Ministry Of Forestry, Environment and Conservation

Mr Taneko: Accounting code 2013 – telephones and faxes – is this transferred to other accounts?

Hon Kemakeza: It has been transferred to pages 245, 246 respectively.

Mr Rini: Page 246 – Accounting code 1010 - civil service salaries \$354,000, almost a 100 percent increase on civil service salaries. Can the Minister explain the reason of this very big increase?

Hon Kemakeza: The significant increase relates to the current recruitment within the Departmental Ministry. There was an increase of 45 staff.

Mr Boyers: Page 248 accounting code 0229 - timber levy has a big reduction. Is this levy of timber from forestry land or customary land? Can the Minister explain why there is a big reduction?

Hon Kemakeza: This is income from the department, especially being accounted for and now it is accounted within the Ministry.

Mr Rini: Accounting code 2051 - freight surface. What is this freight surface?

Hon Kemakeza: This relates to freights that normally go through the nine provincial substations within the departmental ministry.

Mr Taneko: Accounting code 0230 - sale of seeds. Is the Ministry not selling seeds to encourage local people to plant more trees? This allocation is very small.

Hon Kemakeza: You would see in the development estimates an allocation of \$4million which should go towards reforestation.

Mr Boyers: Page 249, accounting code 6060 - Customary Forest Regeneration. The Minister mentioned that \$4million is the development budget for reforestation. In 2006 only \$15,000 is allocated to customary forest regeneration, and in 2007 the allocation is zero. Is it because customary forest regeneration was provided for in the development budget and so it was removed from the administrative budget? Does it come under a different department?

Hon Kemakeza: This allocation for customary reforestation does not apply to what I said in regards to the \$4million. This is directly from what is entitled from customary land.

Mr Kwanairara: Mr Chairman, timber management unit. There is a big amount of allocation there. What is this for? Is this for managing of timber or planting of trees?

Hon Kemakeza: Mr Chairman, if you look at the development estimates you would find a development project phase 2 which should relate to this allocation on this particular code.

Mr Fono: This is a policy question. I understand the last government stopped the export of wildlife. But this year the export permit is projected \$5,000. What is the present government's policy on export of wildlife? Is the ban still stands like the last government or has the ban been lifted?

Hon Kemakeza: Mr Chairman, the export of species is no longer exported except for administrative costs which the Department still has to collect, especially the required fees.

Head 280 - \$9,927,919 agreed to

Head 282 - Pensions and Gratuities

Mr Fono: Mr Chairman, this concern was also raised at the PAC. I think Parliament votes for the pensions but we do not know the pensioners, otherwise we are paying

some people who have already died. Can a list be provided so that we know our pensioners throughout the country, especially those from other provinces?

I am just seeking the government's indulgence if a list can be provided to all Members of Parliament so that we have information of who our pensioners are.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Chairman, we take note of that and we will provide the list.

Hon Rini: Mr Chairman, accounting code 5001 – provision for pensions. There is a million dollar provision for this year. What is this? Is there going to be an increase in pensions or are there new ones who would be entitled this year. Can the Prime Minister explain this provision?

Hon Sogavare: Mr Chairman, there is a bill coming through for pensions of former Governor Generals. We will try to get the bill through Parliament next week and this is to cater for the new terms and conditions of former Governor Generals.

Head 282- \$1,266,816 agreed to

Head 283 – Ministry of Police and National Security

Mr Rini: Mr Chairman, accounting code 2011 – electricity and gas. There is a big reduction there of a million dollars. Why is there a big reduction on electricity and gas for the Police?

Hon Tosika: Mr Chairman, the reduction is due to the Ministry now being separate from the Ministry of Justice. This separation of ministries has made a reduction on electricity and gas.

Mr Boyers: Mr Chairman, page 284 accounting code 3100 - house rent. I noticed that there is a big decrease of about \$700,000. Does this reflect that housing is available for Police and so less renting?

Hon Tosika: Mr Chairman, I think the same reason applies. The Ministry is not renting houses for lawyers and so forth. It is just for officers in the Ministry of Police only.

Mr Haomae: Mr Chairman, page 288 item code 6770 – police capability plan. There is a substantial reduction of \$1,740,000. Can the Minister explain the reasons for the substantial reduction?

Hon Tosika: Mr Chairman, I think the capability plan started quite some time ago and therefore only a few things are still left to be done and therefore a reduction in allocation is expected.

Mr Rini: Mr Chairman, accounting code 1200 - page 287 – emolument. There is a new budget allocation of \$2.45 million for emoluments. Who are these emoluments for? Can the Minister explain?

Hon Tosika: Mr Chairman, this amount comes about because of a Cabinet Decision that was made on a paper I put to Cabinet to deliberate on for the payment of officers engaged at the border during the Bougainville Crisis who are yet to be paid. This amount is for the payment of officers who bravely stood against securing our borders during the Bougainville Crisis.

Mr Haomae: Mr Chairman, I did not hear the Minister's answer to my question because this item is very important for the purposes of the capability of the police so can the Minister for Police repeat his answer?

Mr Chairman: Can you go through your answer again, please Honourable Minister?

Hon Tosika: What I said is that the police capability plan is not a new plan. It started way back in 2004 – 2005, and there are some activities under this fund which have been carried out and completed. Therefore, a reduction is expected because some of the activities have been completed.

Mr Taneko: Mr Chairman, 3043 – Special Police Operation is reduced from \$400,000 to \$200,000, which is a big difference. This is a very important area. Can the Minister explain why there is a big reduction in there?

Hon Tosika: Mr Chairman, this time the Police is not mounting any special operations but comes directly under RAMSI and therefore most of the work is done by RAMSI. Our police do not carry out any special operations at the moment.

Mr Haomae: Mr Chairman, just a question on policy on the Fire Brigade, its role is completely different. To make it separate from the Police, a draft bill is with the Attorney General's Chamber. If the Minister can follow it up and separate it from the Police. The draft was made when I was then the Minister for Police. This is just for the information of the Minister.

The role of the Fire Brigade, I think, is quite different from the Police. I am saying this as a matter of policy and not a question.

Hon Sogavare: We will take note of that information.

Mr Kwanairara: Income appears there. Is fire truck a public truck so that it can be hired? Can the fire trucks or fire engines be hired by the public?

Hon Tosika: Fire trucks are not for hiring. It is for the Police to use when a house is on fire the fire officers arrive on time to extinguish the fire. It is not for hire but it is the property of the Ministry of Police to ensure our properties in town are safe.

Mr Kwanairara: I am asking because income is being estimated in here and therefore they must be collecting revenue for the use of the fire engines.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Chairman, I think the fire engines were used to be hired before to

carry water. That is no longer the case now. As the Minister said the fire engines are on standby for any outbreak of fire and no longer on hire anymore.

Mr Boyers: This page on national response unit but there is a big reduction in salaries of about \$1.2million on special duties and allowances. From accounting codes 2001 to 3001, there are no budgeted items. Does this mean the government is starting to reduce the capacity of the National Response Unit?

Hon Tosika: In fact this unit no longer exists. When RAMSI came in it abolished this unit, it no longer exists, and officers from this unit were deployed to other units of the Police Force.

Hon Darcy: Supplementary information to what the Minister has said. If you look at the establishment you will find that the National Response Unit has been reduced drastically from 68 officers to 35. That basically shows the reduction and the diminishing recognition of this unit under the present regime, but most of the salaries components under this unit have been amalgamated to the Police headquarters. In the event there is need to resurrect that unit, we can always call on the salaries from the headquarters vote to provide for the provision of emoluments of this particular unit.

Mr Boyers: My question is correct that there has been a reduction in the National Response Unit. The question is why a big reduction. May be this unit is amalgamated into the Police Protection Unit, I am not sure. But I think in light of what has happened in the past there is need for this National Response Unit. Whether RAMSI is still here or not, I see the importance of having this unit. I can see there is provision for protective and defensive equipment. Obviously this is a good sign of government confidence that there is need for the National Response Unit to protect the

society. So there has been a reduction as what the Minister has said.

Hon Sogavare: I am glad the MP is taking this up. We too have concern on this one. I think this goes to prove the extent to which the Solomon Islands Police Force has been drastically reorganized. We are keeping close consultations with the Commissioner of Police to strengthen the various units of the Police Force. Mr Chairman, with the arrival of RAMSI they take on those responsibilities and so we are keeping consultations with them to re-strengthen those units again.

Mr Taneko: Page 293 – accounting code 6034 - community policing and touring allowance. This is one of the areas that we need to promote more but the allocation is very small. Are we now dropping community policing?

Hon Tosika: We are not dropping community policing, it is still part of the government's policy. It is still in the Ministry's capability plan. Community policing is one of the things, in the short term, the Police will embark on. As I have said before, constables will be stationed in villages to carry out this work. Their names will be gazetted so that there is respect and dignity on them.

Community policing is part of the government's policy that will be embarked upon and we will ensure that it happens.

Sir Kemakeza: A general question on page 296. This is an important area for the future of the Police Force, but there is a major reduction here in the Police Academy. I would like to ask the Minister what areas need improvement in the Police Force and therefore this big reduction in academy allocation.

Hon Tosika: Mr Chairman, Police training is done under the law and justice program shouldered mostly by RAMSI and therefore this reduction. The Academy is still in place

and officers are still being trained at the Police Academy.

Mr Rini: Page 297, accounting code 1010 to 1015. There is a big reduction in civil salaries and other allowances in the Criminal Investigation Division. Is this division being reduced?

Hon Tosika: Mr Chairman, there are some reductions here. Some officers in the Criminal Investigation Division are deployed to other departments and now very few are there. What I know is that some RAMSI officers are also working in this division and so most of the activities are done by RAMSI personnel and our officers.

Sir Kemakeza: On accounting code 3231 - band equipment. Mr Chairman, I must thank the Minister and the Government for improvement of the Police Band at the moment. However, I seem to notice there is a reduction in the provision for band equipments this year. Is there any other provision in the budget for band equipments because it is important for the Royal Solomon Islands Force?

I think this is an area that more money should be put into to improve the equipments currently used by the Police Band.

Hon Tosika: The Police Band at the moment has new equipments bought only last year and that is why it is affecting their allocation. The Bank does not expect any new equipment this year.

Sir Kemakeza: There seems to be a big reduction for provincial police stations of Guadalcanal, Malaita, Western and probably other provinces still ahead of us.

These reductions indicate that the activities of the Police in the Provinces will slow down and law enforcement likewise will also not be carried out because of very limited funding that the government is giving them except for the substantial increase in salaries.

What is the future of these law enforcement agencies in the provinces?

Hon Sogavare: Mr Chairman, we appreciate that comment. The way the country is moving now is state government. We will carefully look into the important concern that was raised to see that the move to state government complements how the law enforcement agencies throughout the provinces are distributed - the new state governments. These are issues that will come out more clearly as this state government system is being developed so that we do not starve the new states of the services of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force.

That is a very valid concern and it is an issue that all of us, at some point in time, will have to seriously consider when this issue about the state government system is nurtured through this House.

Mr Taneko: Mr Chairman, allocation to each of the provinces is at zero level. Has RAMSI taken over logistic support now so that SIG is no longer supporting the provinces?

Hon Tosika: As we are aware a good part of police operations and upkeep now come under RAMSI programs even right down to things like boats and something like that, and that is why you see reductions there.

Mr Taneko: Mr Chairman, just a general comment. Our outstation police officers are suffering now with their buildings. But when there is no provision in the budget for provincial stations it means we are not taking care of our officers. I want the Minister to take note that there is no allocation for improvement of provincial police stations and police houses for police officers who have families and are living with their families.

Hon Tosika: Mr Chairman, if you look at the development budget most of the outstations will be renovated under the development budget. Tetera and Auki

police stations all come under the development budget, the upkeep of these stations and even building of a new police station in Kulitan Bay in the Shortlands.

Mr Riumana: Mr Chairman, my question is on accounting code 6034 community policing/touring allowance. I just want to ask a general question on this item. In the light of the bottom up approach of this government, community policing is one of the bottom up approaches. Why is the allocation for community policing very small?

Hon Tosika: Mr Chairman, this provision is for touring of places to educate people on community policing. If you look at the development budget community policing is catered for there with \$3 million.

Hon Haomae: Mr Chairman, on the same item code 6034 - community policing/touring allowance. I noticed that the amount for every province is the same with \$25,000. Even Temotu Province whose islands are highly scattered also has \$25,000 as well as the other provinces. Is there any reason for that? I think Temotu Province will require more than \$25,000. And for purposes of maintaining the integrity of the budget, which will be implemented by the treasury department, it is important that it is reflective in here. I want the Minister to explain why the amount is the same for every province. We know that some provinces are bigger than others and others are scattered.

Hon Tosika: Mr Chairman, I think sometimes we must be realistic and factual too. Although the provision is small we can use it.

Talking about Temotu with its scattered islands, we can program our visits properly so that we live within the means of what is allocated for in the budget. Sometimes we must be mindful of how we expend monies too. The Ministry must discipline itself to ensure that it lives within its budget as indicated in here.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, my question is similar to what the Member for Small Malaita has asked. Accounting code 2051 is on freight. There are some provisions last year but this year there is no provision. Has someone taken over the freights?

Hon Tosika: Mr Chairman, this is for repatriation of officers back home. However, part of this is shifted to the Ministry of Public Service.

Head 283 - \$84,409,613 agreed to

Head 284 - Ministry of Provincial Government and Rural Development

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, page 325 - what has happened to all those items? Nothing appears there now. Are they posted elsewhere?

Hon Waipora: Mr Chairman, this page is a change of coding. If you look at page 325 which says 284-001-1010 has now moved to the next page and has changed to 284-0003. Everything on this page has moved over to page 327.

Mr Tozaka: Mr Chairman, I notice in the establishment register that there are a lot of vacant posts at Level 10/11 and other posts as well in almost all the provinces. What effort is the Ministry taking in filling these posts? This is just a general question.

Hon Waipora: Those vacant posts are now being filled. Interviews are now in progress at the moment to fill the Provincial Secretary post, Deputy Provincial Secretary post, Provincial Treasurer post and Deputy Provincial Treasurer's posts. After those posts are filled we will then go down to the lower levels. The process is going on very well at this time.

Mr Chairman, can I just explain one point here. All the pages with zero provision is because the Ministry of Provincial Government used to combine with the Ministry of Home Affairs but there

is a change in codes and that is why there are zeros in those pages. In case honorable Members do not know, this is the explanation.

Mr Gukuna: Shipping grant to Temotu Province seems to be very small. I know that Temotu is having a lot of difficulties on shipping. I think that amount is not enough.

Hon Waipora: With regards to provincial services grants, the provincial services grant for this year has slightly increased to \$1million. This \$1million will be shared amongst the nine provinces based on the population of a province. We will start it off that way.

We cannot go on further than that because if we increase it the Ministry of Finance which does the final assessment and decision on a budget used to cut it down. I just want to inform the House that provincial services grant this year is increased to \$1million, which will be shared amongst the none provinces. We are starting off, at least somewhere.

Mr Gukuna: I suggested to the Minister, and it is good to hear that you have some money for shipping services in the provinces. I suggest that you share it according to distance because that is where ships will travel. For example, Temotu Province should be getting more consideration than the Central Province, which is very close to Honiara. I think that amount should be shared according to distance or lack of shipping other than per capita.

Hon Waipora: It is a great concern and I take very serious note of it.

Mr Fono: Just a general question on policy. What mechanism does the Provincial Government has in place to make sure, for example, that road maintenance grant is used specifically for roads? My experience is that even grant for road maintenance, Malaita Province did not use it for maintenance of feeder roads. There should

be a mechanism in place whereby the Ministry of Provincial Government monitors that these grants are used for the purposes of their intention. Is there any mechanism in place whereby provincial road maintenance grants are used for roads and not used for running expenses or administration costs at the headquarters?

Hon Waipora: Right now officers in my office are just recruited and they are there to undertake the program of taking stock of structures within the provinces, which includes looking very closely at how grants to provinces are shared.

Three officers have been recruited early this year and they are working now to look at how grants are disbursed to provinces, so that they submit to me their report. I want to look at how the grants are disbursed and how much each province is getting. This is because the systems we have in place are those of the olden times.

I am taking very serious step to make sure that grants are equally shared. The services grants should be fairly shared. I disputed some of the allocations made by the last government on how it shared \$990,000 for six provinces and \$1million each for three provinces. I am looking into this and that is why three officers are working now on a mechanism the Leader of Opposition is asking about.

Mr Gukuna: Library Services Grant applies to all the provinces. Do all the provinces have libraries?

Hon Waipora: Mr Chairman, Provinces have provincial libraries and so the Ministry has a small grant to help libraries in the provinces. This is for libraries that provincial governments themselves set up. As a government we must assist them with their libraries. If Rennell/Bellona does not have one yet you can start one.

Mr Tozaka: Page 340, accounting codes 2122 and 2150 - hire of plant and maintenance of vehicles. I might not hear very well this morning but I gather that this

service is provided by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development. Can the Minister explain what these two items are for?

Hon Waipora: Mr Chairman, sometimes we hire volunteers to come and so we must help them. If these volunteers use a vehicle it is the responsibility of my Ministry to make sure the vehicle is working properly so that they can do their work. At least there is provision here to cater specifically for volunteers that are on hire.

Mr Gukuna: I remember my hardworking Minister when he was talking earlier on mentioned the bottom up approach budget for the provinces. However, it looks as though everything is done in the Ministry. This appears inconsistent to me.

Hon Waipora: That is a general comment. We have passed the question that is relevant to that, which I have answered. But if you look at the bottom up approach policy of the government, tours and travel for the Provincial Government headquarters has increased. Why? This is because I want to send staffs that are here to go out and encourage the provincial governments to work. Not only to look after the provincial administration but other officers in the fisheries, agriculture divisions to encourage them. Bring them together and hold consultation meetings with them and encourage them to work.

What is happening now is that we are neglecting them and that is why we blame them as not working. It is under my direction that the budget must be increased so that the staff hold meetings, not only in Auki they must go down to South Malaita or Manawai and places like that and encourage the people there to work.

Mr Boyers: Mr Chairman, in regards to the revenue sharing grant, the allocation is made, in the light of the comments by the Minister who is reviewing the process of sharing or disbursing the grants. During the process of putting together the budget, was

there any consultation made with provincial premiers so as to reflect the needs of provinces through the government's agency - the provincial governments? Have you had consultations with provincial premiers on the revenue sharing and grant sharing process?

Hon Waipora: Mr Chairman, when we drew up our Budget, I must admit that we did not have any consultations with provinces. We at least only consulted the provincial headquarters to make sure they submit to us their real needs for inclusion in the budget so that whatever we put down in the budget can be either accepted or not, but it is there. What is put down here is not full consultation with the provinces except there is consultation with Premiers and Provincial Secretaries.

What I am intending to do now is to look at the revenue or income a province produces and share the revenue according to what a province produces from its resources. This is to make the revenue sharing grant fair to provinces that have resources and gain revenue out of those resources. Those that produce much lower revenue will also be given grant according to what they produce. I can say that the 2008 budget will look much different.

Mr Taneko: Mr Chairman, I would like to ask a general question to my good Minister regarding provincial shipping. Some of us in the constituency are now running shipping services because the Province was not able to deliver such services. Is it possible for those of us that run such services have access to this fund through the province to help us?

Hon Waipora: Mr Chairman, it would depend on the provincial governments. The Ministry gives grants as provincial shipping grants and it is entirely up to the provinces to decide how they would use the grant. I am not going to decide it from here.

I have already detailed to the nine provincial governments that the provincial shipping grant is for them to look after. If it

is necessary for them to charter ships for teachers and school students to go home, they can use the grant. If the Premier says no, then that is bad luck.

Mr Tozaka: Mr Chairman, page 339 on revenue sharing grants from accounting codes 4101 to 4112. This is the traditional way of the government in sharing grants to the provinces. Listening to the Minister's comment on shipping, as the accounting Ministry for these grants, for him looking down on the performance of the provinces on these grants, is he happy with how the provincial governments are using these grants at the moment?

Hon Waipora: If I get you rightly these grants are paid to the provinces and then it is up to the provinces to come up with their own budgets as to how much will be used for whatever activities. But these are monthly grants paid to every province.

Mr Haomae: Page 340, Rural Development. I think the RDD stands for the Rural Development Division. I think this subhead should go under the Constituency Development subhead that has been moved to the Prime Minister's Office. Although the Minister says some of his officers will tour South Malaita, I do not think they will do it. I think this division should merge with the Constituency Development Office.

Hon Sogavare: We take note of all the comments. But every contingency is being allocated with \$1 million under the RCDF.

Mr Kengava: Mr Chairman, may be just a point on what the Minister said that provinces are given monthly grants. I think this is one area that is giving weakness on the financial power of the province. The amount is very small that it is taken up by salaries and wages of politicians. I think the grants should be given quarterly so that it is a big amount of money so that they can go ahead to fulfill their budgets. This is just a point I would like to make.

Hon Waipora: I take note of that point.

Head 284 - \$35,802,747 agreed to

Hon Darcy: I beg to move that further proceedings of the Committee of Supply be adjourned until Monday 19th February.

Parliament resumes

Hon Sogavare: I beg to move that this House do now adjourn.

The House adjourned at 3.30 pm