

SIXTH DAY

Wednesday 18 August 2021

DRAFT HANSARD

Subjects:

Page No:

EXTENDED BROADCAST OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS – STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER.....	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS (UPNG Political Science Students and Lecturers) – STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER.....	2
ADHERING TO STANDING ORDERS IN THE CHAMBER – STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER.....	3
QUESTIONS	3
Better Administrative System for Customary Land Owners	3
Boost Madang Economy	6
Strict Bank Regulations	9
Supplementary Question – Delayed Clearance of DSIP Cheques	12
SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – EXTENDED TIME FOR QUESTIONS	13
ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF VISITORS (Madang Provincial Assembly Members) – STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER.....	17
MOTION BY LEAVE.....	17
SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – REARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS.....	18
MEDICAL REGISTRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2021	18
First Reading.....	18
Second Reading	18
Third Reading	21
PUBLIC SERVICES (MANAGEMENT) (AMENDMENT) BILL 2021	27
First Reading.....	27
Second Reading	27
Third Reading.....	33
ADJOURNMENT	34

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

CORRECTIONS TO DAILY DRAFT HANSARD

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Corrections maybe marked on a photocopy of the Daily Draft Hansard and lodged at the Office of the Principal Parliamentary Reporter, A1-23 (next to the Security Control Room).

Corrections should be authorized by signature and contain the name, office and telephone number of the person transmitting/making corrections.

Amendments cannot be accepted over the phone.

Corrections should relate only to inaccuracies. New matters may not be introduced.



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HARRY MOMOS

Principal Parliamentary Reporter

SIXTH DAY

Wednesday 18 August 2021

The Deputy Speaker (**Mr Koni Iguan**) took the Chair at 10 a.m.

There being no quorum present, Mr Deputy Speaker stated that he would resume the Chair after the ringing of the Bells.

Sitting suspended.

The Deputy Speaker (**Mr Koni Iguan**) again took the Chair at 10.30 a.m., and invited the Member for Okapa and Minister for Energy, **Honourable Saki Soloma**, to say Prayers:

‘Papa God, we thank you, this morning for bringing all of us together once again. We are all here to represent our people in this House. Papa God mi also laik tok tenkyu olsem Yu salim Jisas Christ, wanpela pikinini bilong Yu tasol emi kam dai. Taim emi dai, emi no dai long moni, silver or gold, emi dai long mipela ol man. Kainkain kala bilong ol Yu wokim na putim long dispela graun na pikinini bilong Yu i kam dai long mipela. Mipela tok tenkyu Papa God long givim mipela dispela kantri tu. I gat planti kantri i stap long dispela graun tu. Papua New Guinea emi wanpela kantri yu givim mipela. Papa God, taim mipela mekim toktok long ronim kantri bilong mipela, yu givim dispela wisdom long Prime Minister, Ministers na Governors. Na tu givim gutpela tintin na wisdom long Opposition Leader na ol members long challengim na mekim gutpela toktok long karim kantri bilong yumi igo forward. Mipela stap, wok man bilong yu Papa God, long sevim ol pipol bilong mipela. Ba yu oltaim long stiaim mipela na helpim mipela long mekim gutpela decision na dispela kantri bai istap nau na ba stap igo inap yu kam bek. Amen.’

EXTENDED BROADCAST OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS – STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I have to inform the Parliament that the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceeding, met

yesterday and endorsed that the NBC TV and radio extended coverage of the Parliament session beyond the Question Time and Grievances Debate.

The extended coverage will see both the morning and afternoon session of Parliament being televised on *NBC TV* and broadcast on *NBC Radio*.

In a letter dated, 13 August 2021, that PNG NBC Management requested Parliament for its TV and radio to conduct coverage of the current Parliament session beyond the usual Question Time session and the Grievance debate on Fridays.

The reason for its extended coverage is because, *NBC* is committed to providing the telecast and broadcast as part of its community service obligation to the citizen and stakeholders.

Honourable Members, in its deliberation, the committee agreed that it is important for *NBC TV* and *Radio* to extend its coverage beyond Question Time and Grievances Debate in Parliament.

This means that all programs that the Parliament deals with will be televised and broadcasted. These are programs such as Tabling of Registration, Ministerial Statement, Committee Reports and related Parliamentary Papers.

The committee further agreed that it is important for the extended coverage of the Parliamentary Program because this will allow our people to have full knowledge of what occurs during Parliament Session time.

02/06

This will promote the work of Parliament in keeping our communities informed. The opportunity provided by NBC TV and Radio is now open to other television and radio station to conduct extended coverage if they wish to.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS (UPNG Political Science Students and
Lecturers) –**

STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I have to inform the Parliament that the students and lecturers of the Political Science Department of the University of Papua New Guinea are present in the Public Gallery. On behalf of the National Parliament, I extend to them a very warm welcome to the National Parliament.

**ADHERING TO STANDING ORDERS IN THE CHAMBER –
STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER**

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Honourable Members, before I invite the Members to ask their questions, I have to inform the Parliament that under *Standing Orders*, no Members should walk in front when another Member is talking on the Floor of Parliament.

QUESTIONS

Better Administrative System for Customary Land Owners

Mr CHRIS HAIVETA – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I want to direct my questions to the Minister for Lands and Physical Planning. I tried to ask a Supplementary Question but time did not allow me yesterday.

The Minister, in response to the questions relating to land issues said it's widely accepted that of the country's land mass. It would seem that from the time the Department of Lands and Physical Planning was established up until today, only one division has been dealing with customary land issues. About 94 to 96 percent are owned by our people and the Department of Lands and Physical Planning is tasked to administrate and manage just three to four percent.

Therein lies my view, the greatest challenges that face this country as we move forward especially when we trying to take the country back and encourage Papua New Guineans through SMEs to empower the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, under various laws when you register an ILG its specifically for that purpose and not for any other purpose, an example would be ILG registration recognising under *Oil and Gas Act* and the *Mining Act*.

My questions are:

(1) When are you going to give due recognition to customary landowners in this country to ensure that we have a one-stop-shop to assist them from dispute, resolution and settlement? These include walking the boundaries, issues that lay with the Department of Justice and Attorney General in land mediation, district courts which acts as lands courts and of course in the administration and registration of ILGs whether for general business purposes or mining, petroleum or specific natural resource projects?

03/06

When will the Minister put in place better system so that our resource owners and landowners are assisted throughout the country?

Mr JOHN ROSSO – I thank the Governor of Gulf for his questions. It is good because we can clarify the doubts. As he rightfully pointed out, there is four percent of alienated land in Papua New Guinea. Within that alienated land, there is also the free-hold land which was acquired during the colonial days. Freehold means that owners at that time hold ownership to that in land perpetuity. The alienated land is land that is acquired by government through former colonial days until present. It is owned by the State.

The customary land is the balance of it and which all Papua New Guineans own through our heritage. This is land close to our hearts therefore very sensitive. At the same time, we have issues of harnessing this land to ensure that it becomes good for business to help our people to progress and make it available for development. However, it comes with a lot of stiff resistance from our indigenous landowners. This is because some are led to believe that once the government acquires the land then you would lose it forever.

Mr Speaker, the Department of Lands in the last couple of years, brought a submission to NEC who approved a development forum for land reforms throughout Papua New Guinea. This has been held in the Southern Region, the Momase Region, the Islands and the Highlands Region. This is to help the Lands Department seek the people's view on how best to approach customary land ownership and development in Papua New Guinea. These are very sensitive issues. If you can remember, about 20 years ago there were huge fights throughout PNG with that issue. I was a young kiap in Chimbu and was heavily involved in addressing these issues.

Once we have all the land reforms assessments done which was approved by NEC then we will bring it back to Parliament to see how best we can address these reforms moving forward so that our people and the country can benefit from the use of these lands.

Mr Speaker, the ILGs is a good concept, however it has been abused. Many ILGs that were made in especially urban areas have been misused by the educated ones. They have been taking advantage of these ILGs and not really harnessing it properly. They have manipulated villagers and uneducated ones. The educated ones who are managing these ILGs have abused the trust bestowed on them. There are cases like these in Port Moresby, Lae and Madang. The ILG system that they are using has been grossly abused. There are many cases of duplication of ILGs and the Department of Lands is caught up in all of these. There are major clans who

have ILGs and then you have sub-clans who also have ILGs concerning the same land. This becomes very frustrating for my department and me as the minister responsible to unravel such cases.

Therefore, with the land reforms in place, it will help us find a pathway forward to ensure that we fix the ILG issues.

04/06

In the case of Roku, the landowners have surrendered 550 hectares of land to their development partners under a trust company through the Lands Department and we have, in the process, converted those 550 hectares into a State lease. That means that the landowners and the development partners own that 550 hectares and it is protected for the landowners. No squatters can go and sit on that land, no one can steal that land from them and after 99 years they can develop that land in any way want as they have done so by creating the Tuhava Township.

The Tuhava Township will be launched by our Prime Minister in the next couple of months so, sub-division, allotments, proper development and landowners realising the real benefits from their land. They did not just sell it for K5 000, K10 000 but they have it for the length of their life time as well as for their children and their grandchildren's benefit. That is the approach that Lands is now taking.

I also encourage other landowner groups throughout Papua New Guinea that instead of selling your customary land for K5 000, K10 000 or K15 000, come see us at Lands Department. Talk to your local Member of Parliament. Let us consult and we assist you to convert your customary lands in to the same concept as the Tuhava Concept. This is to allow you to hold it in perpetuity, you can develop it, harness it and benefit from your land.

That is the same concept that we will be using for the new Nadzab Township. The government does not have K3 million to K4 million to acquire land. We will go to Nadzab and use the same concept to develop the Nadzab Township. We'll be ensuring that all the landowners around the Nadzab area, about three or four ILGs surrender their land and we create a new township for the people. We may also be able to create townships for the mining people such as Wafi-Golpu and others working in mines elsewhere. They can be able to afford a good reasonable plot of land and also have a house built on it. That's what we are trying to do with land reforms.

I hope that answers your questions.

Boost Madang Economy

Mr ROBERT NAGURI – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker my question is directed to the Minister for Treasury. This is in regard to businesses being affected by Covid-19.

As we all know, Covid-19 is a global pandemic that affected world economies and businesses, including small economies like ours in Papua New Guinea.

Most businesses have shut down and the SMEs are affected as a direct result of Covid-19 and not government policy but it would be good to help them if the government has a clear way forward.

I am speaking on behalf to all the businesses in Madang and the Madang Chamber of Commerce because the economy in Madang is very bad. Business houses have packed up and left and the latest one to do so is the only big agriculture retailer; NGIP Agmark.

Does the government and the Treasurer have a plan to grow back these economies, including the Madang economy?

Mr IAN LING-STUCKEY – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I want to thank the Member for Bogia for his very crucial question regarding businesses and the economy, especially during this time of the Covid-19 Pandemic when many businesses have been stifled or even destroyed.

I am very pleased to advise our country and Members of this House that we, on this side of the House, the Marape-Basil Government have an honest and realistic plan to grow the economy. But it hasn't been easy with disruptive and constant power-hungry votes of no confidence and court challenges to our legitimate and well-designed national budget.

05/06

Mr Speaker, we are committed to inclusive broad-based economic growth in the non-resource sector of at least five per cent.

We intend to achieve this through a three-pronged approach which we have released in a number of statements in our discussions with the private sector to one growth-oriented budget, a better business environment and stronger institutions.

Firstly, with businesses our government has ensured that its budget is focused on investments and we have done this by introducing the expenditure rule which increases the share on capital expenditure.

Our five-year expenditure plan has increased the government's capital budget from K3 billion in 2019, when we entered Parliament, a further K900 million in last year's budget and another K900 million for this year. So, that totals up to K8.8 billion in capital investment in a very short period of two and a half years.

But I think the most important thing here is that the level for growth will continue to increase in our Medium-Term or Five-Year Development Plan. For example, our capital budget is K8.8 billion than the two and a half years before we took office, so that is K10 billion spent by the previous government and K18 billion by our government.

Our expenditure is focused on our signature policy; the PNG Connect Program, where we are trying to lift growth by linking farmers to business and markets around PNG and abroad. There are not just roads to nowhere but roads to markets supported by electrification and communication infrastructure. As I mentioned in my statement on Friday, I am referring to activities like the Tabubil to Telefomin Highway, that will connect Western to West Sepik Provinces, the Bogia to Awar Highway in the West Sepik Provinces, the Highlands Highway, from Mendi to Tari, Epo to Kerema Highway and of course the Finschhafen to Lae in the Morobe Provinces.

Mr Speaker, we are just building roads that will create economic activity in our country. Secondly, in relations to businesses, we believe that better and stronger businesses, small and big businesses will be the engine for growth as we all have heard over so many years.

Many businesses have already been stated that the greatest barrier for doing business in our country at this time is a lack of foreign exchange.

Our better economic management has resulted in our government attracting significant funding which has lifted our foreign receipts and has allowed a major clearance of outstanding foreign exchange orders in the June quarter. To understand and appreciate the work that is happening our International Reserves have lifted from US\$2 billion in 2019, at the end of May, when we came into government, and projected to reach US\$2.7 billion by the end of this year.

06/06

Sir Puka Temu – Point of Order! He is making a Ministerial Statement. Can he answer the question and make a statement at a later time.

We are running out of time.

Mr KONI IGUAN – Thank you, your Point of Order is in order.

Minister for Treasury, this question is a very important one but we also have other members awaiting to ask questions. So, please get to the point and then I can allow you to make a statement, if I have to.

Mr IAN LING-STUCKEY – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. When we were asked about our plans to grow the economy, I made it very clear that we have a K3.5 million plan.

Mr Deputy Speaker, when we talk about the economy, it requires a very detailed response. It's not just like any other social sector economy where we can just talk about topics. It is complicated and we need to give the facts and because it is really important and there is really no shortcut to provide a good economic plan.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in regards to business one of the strong initiatives this Government is pushing forward has been labour-mobility. We, on this side of the House, believe that labour-mobility is a very important initiative to grow the economy. The World Bank's report from 2018 identified very clearly that on average pacific islander's take-home pay after rent, food and tax, on average is about AU \$10 000.00 or about K26 000.00.

We have a clear plan to grow the economy by adopting labour-mobility plan. We have a target for example, of 8 000 workers by 2025. So, if all goes well that should equate to K200 million in foreign receipts coming back, not to our country but going straight to our village economies. It is all about coming up with realistic plans as I mentioned earlier. We also have a clear plan to providing loans at a lower interest cost and better access to financing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, for example, the PNG banking system has over K36 billion in assets and only K13 billion is lent to the private sector and the difference goes back to Government.

So, clearly, we want to ensure this is available to our PNG business people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in relation to our third point on institution, currently the government is working on a review on the Bank of Papua New Guinea. We announced this well during our time in Her Majesty's Opposition and we also announced this in the 2020 Budget statement. We have given clear notices with relation to this initiative and with the review we hope to improve the role of the Bank of Papua New Guinea with its monetary policy and regulations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we believe it can provide the vital framework for encouraging goods and safe investments. We also believe a strong SOE reform program working with our international partners to improve power and water supplies around the country which is one of the major issues facing businesses. That is another key element for growing the economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, finally, it is important for us to ensure we continue to support important regulatory institutions in addition to the Bank of Papua New Guinea. Institutions such as the Insurance Commission and the Securities Commission, and others that we are working on.

07/06

Strict Bank Regulations

Mr ALLAN BIRD – Mr Deputy Speaker, I direct my questions to the Minister for Treasury and I ask that he be specific and not go into lengthy explanation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, around the country, our small people are being harshly dealt with by the banking system. They are not allowed to deposit K1000 in cash.

Mr Deputy Speaker, eighty per cent of our people are not in the formal sector; they operate in what we term the informal sector which is largely cash-based. I have issues in my province where small business people struggle to go and deposit cash in the bank. I will give you an example, in the vanilla industry, we have probably 60 000 farmers and each of them are earning approximately K5000 to K10 000 a month but they are unable to deposit that money in the banking system.

I understand that there are some issues with money laundering. None of those small people are involve in money laundering schemes. That is the exclusive area of the big fish who get away scot-free most times.

My questions are:

(1) For example, in the United States, they allow cash deposits of up to US\$9 999 which is equivalent to about K40 000. Why is it that in our country, an ordinary Papua New Guinean is not allowed to deposit the equivalent of US\$250? Why can't the limit be raised and what are the issues?

(2) Why are the banks penalising our small people who are really trying their best particularly in the last two years of Covid-19 where they are really struggling to put food on the table? Why are the banks doing this?

(3) Who made this decision? Was that decision made on the Floor of Parliament? Did Cabinet make that decision, did the Treasurer make that decision or was it the Minister for Finance who made that decision? Who made that decision? Is it the Central Bank? I want to know who makes these rules for Papua New Guineans; especially the ordinary Papua New Guineans. Can the Treasurer tell us?

(4) My final question and I think the people of Papua New Guinea deserve an answer and action as to what the Government can do to undo this major injustice to our small people all across the country.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr IAN LING-STUCKEY – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I want to also thank the Governor of East Sepik for his very important questions which touche on the number one issue facing government and the private sector today. The issue of cashing cheques with commercial banks is frustrating and frankly has angered both businesses and those that deal with the government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, just by way of background, since coming into government, we had a number of meetings with the key stakeholders to try and resolve this problem. I am talking about the regulator of the financial sector which is the Bank of Papua New Guinea, CEOs of all commercial banks, Departments of Finance and Treasury and even the Financial Analysis and Supervision Unit.

08/06

Mr Speaker, in short, we have given clear instructions that all government cheques that are given to the banks must require a letter of clearance from the department of finance.

Mr Sam Akoitai -Point of Order! The question asked is very clear, he was referring to people from the rural areas; it was not related to government cheques.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Treasurer, I hope you take note of the Point of Order.

Mr IAN LING-STUCKEY -Thank you Mr Speaker, so after the meetings with all of the key stakeholders, we put to them a very clear procedure. As I said before, I was rudely interrupted, for National Government cheques require is a letter of clearance from the Secretary of the Department of Finance. For DSIP cheques in the districts, either cashed in the districts or here in Port Moresby, it must be accompanied by a *Form 11*.

We gave them a very clear process to follow and since those meetings; and I am going to be candid with our Parliament and the people of this country. There has not been much appetite, from the regulator-the Bank of Papua New Guinea and our commercial banks to try

and resolve this problem. It has been very disappointing. The last meeting, we had was almost a month ago at the APEC building, where we asked everyone to come in for a third time.

We have continued to repeat ourselves and the solution to this problem is that we need the BPNG, to accept that this is the number one problem. And then using its powers, it can then make the appropriate directives. It is really important to not that when you speak to the commercial banks, they will respond but, in some instances, they will respond that the procedures, especially the questions that they ask Members of Parliament and the people-

Mr Allan Bird -Point of Order! I understand that we are having many problems with government cheques. I want to know what we are doing about the problem that is affecting maybe 8 million of our ordinary people. Are we going to sack the central bank governor? And are we going to cancel banking licenses for our commercial banks? What are we going to do about what is it that is affecting our people?

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Governor, you have already asked your question and the Minister is in the process of answering, please give him the opportunity to do so. Maybe he will get to the point and answer your question.

Mr IAN LING -STUCKEY – Yes, I am on the way to answering those questions. When we had these meetings with the key stakeholders; the response from the commercial banks was that; the rules that they come up with when they ask a simple depositor when they are trying to deposit their cheques are all driven by legislation, such as the Anti-Money Laundering and the *Counter-Terrorism Financing Act* and because of those laws they are now forced to ask a whole lot of questions, which most of us in this House and country find to be ridiculous.

09/06

The Banks then say to Government that if they did not put in place some of these regulations, they could be subject to heavy penalties and even lose their licenses.

This is just a little bit of background on this particular problem. In relation to the question on who makes the decisions for the junior bank tellers in the banks throughout the country for the regulations they impose from my understanding based on these three meetings each of these institutions are making their own regulations and this is one of the problems. When I asked Bank of Papua New Guinea about the legislation that enforces those requirements there was no

clear answer. It was the same for other commercial banks and even with the Department of Finance. So, who is making up these regulations?

It is apparent that the Bank of Papua New Guinea, the commercial banks and Department of Finance are making up their own regulations. Since the enactment of this law in 2015 there hasn't been much oversight on what each of these three groups are doing. As a result, we had this huge growth in regulations where today we find it to be a nightmare to cash a simple cheque.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, how do we make it easier for our people to bank their cheques? I need full cooperation of the Bank of Papua New Guinea and commercial banks to continue holding meetings with them. My patience is running short if they don't make decisions in the near future to ensure that our guideline set to them are followed, we in government may be forced to make the decision for them.

Thank you, for the question.

Supplementary Question **Delayed Clearance of DSIP Cheques**

Mr DOUGLAS TOMURIESA – Mr Deputy Speaker, my question is the Minister is, sometime last year during a government caucus meeting, BSP was asked about clearance of DSIP cheques from the districts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you are well aware some of us come from very remote districts, we don't operate around Port Moresby or Alotau for that matter. We travel 19 to 22 hours out in the remote islands by dinghy and it takes us 24 hours to get over to Alotau just to bring the cheques.

So, when we bring our cheques over to the bank. The bank would require three requirements that BSP had mentioned to us at the caucus meeting.

- (1) When you bring your cheque, you must bring it with Form 11;
- (2) You must come with the DDA resolutions; and
- (3) You must come with the NPC resolutions

Those requirements are always attached to our cheques, however, for some unknown reason, the bank continues to dishonour our cheques. I have an example to give that happened recently. The bank asked our suppliers to provide letters from our villages in order to clear that one cheque. So, we provided the letters that came from the villages. Unfortunately, the people

wrote in their language to us and so we forwarded those letters to the bank. The cheque was dishonoured because they could not understand the content.

What else can we provide in order for these cheques to be cleared?

We have contract agreements with our contractors and suppliers, when cheques are dishonoured, who will be responsible if we are sued for breaching contractual agreements?

10/06

When a cheque is dishonoured by the banks; for me in a remote setting, it would take me another three weeks or even a month to re-print that particular cheque.

So, Mr Treasurer in your meetings with the banks,

(2) can you please get these people to understand that when you dishonour cheques, the contract is delayed by three weeks or even months?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr IAN LING-STUCKEY – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I note the frustrations faced by the good leader and I will continue to liaise with him and raise this issue in my next meeting with the key stake-holders.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – EXTENDED TIME FOR QUESTIONS

Motion (by **Mr Elias Kapovore**) put –

That so much of the *Standing Orders* be suspended as would prevent the time for Questions without Notice this day being extended by 20 minutes.

There being no absolute majority, motion not carried.

Mr ELIAS KAPAVORE – Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. My question without notice is to the Minister for Justice & Attorney General and the Minister for Health to take note.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Parliament has passed many laws but I have seen that we have issues with the regulations of the laws the we pass in Parliament. The regulations that should or must give effect to the laws the we have passed are not in place in most cases.

For example, for the Health sector; we have the *Provincial Health Authority (PHA) Act of 2007* that requires the two sets of regulations under *section 34* and *section 56*. This will establish the whole or channel administration or operations of the PHA that is not in place.

The *Tobacco Control Act of 2016*, the regulation required under *section 59* is not in place. This will actually monitor the licencing and monitoring of tobacco products in the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the *Radiation Safety Control Act* passed in 2019 is not in place. The regulation is not in place as required under *section 85*.

Mr Deputy Speaker;

(1) Can the Minister confirm if the regulations are important in law or not?

(2) Who is responsible for the time frame for regulations to be implemented after they are passed in Parliament?

(3) What is the process and what is the time frame for regulations to be in place?

(4) Can the Minister also confirm, if the *Pandemic Act* that was passed in Parliament last year is being implemented without the regulation as required under *section 62*?

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr BRYAN KRAMER – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I would also like to acknowledge the question by the Member for Pomio.

Mr Deputy Speaker, by Law, Parliament passes Acts. Those Acts may make provisions for regulations. Regulations provide a more detailed administrative process that are required to follow.

The NEC is the approving authority when most Acts are to be regulated. So, some Acts the NEC may establish regulations.

While I note the questions raised by the Member for Pomio, without a benefit of actually looking at those specific regulations; if those regulations states ‘shall’ or ‘may’, it is an option of discretionary provision in law.

On the question on who is responsible, obviously laws are passed specifically to specific agencies of State and in this case, the question relates to health.

Therefore, the Health Department will typically take the lead in enforcing or complying with the regulations. So, the questions asked are in relation to health and it is a matter for the Health Department. I would like the Member for Pomio, to write to the Minister for Health or to the department to raise concerns of some regulations that are not being enforced.

If there is no response by the respective Minister then I will be happy if he can write to my department.

11/06

Mr ROBERT AGAROBÉ – Thankyou Mr Deputy Speaker, firstly I would like to take this opportunity to welcome my fellow brother and Member for Moresby North-West, Honourable Lohia Boe Samuel to this Parliament which is built on our land.

When talking about land in this Parliament, this land houses the capital city of Port Moresby which also brings its fair share of problems.

I want to direct my questions to the Minister for Police, as you know I have been very vocal about driving my economy like any other leader in Central Province.

Therefore, I have encouraged all my people to go back to their villagers to toil their land to boost our economy. With that I am driving my economic pillar of agriculture, tourism complemented with sports. To do this I have been faced with two big challenges; firstly, the infrastructure that we are now working on, secondly, the biggest challenge is law and order.

As I speak, Mr Deputy Speaker, National Capital District is faced with a lot of law and order issues; and majority of the victims are from Central Province, they are not murdered but harassed?

Just recently, a 12-year old girl was raped in broad day light by PMV operators in the city and to date nothing has been said and protested about this incident from the authorities concerned. Yet the gender-based violence committee is very vocal about the issue of gender-based violence.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am building border post around my province and that is to manage and mitigate the problems that will happen with Connect-PNG and link-PNG. I am encouraging my people to go back to their villages to toil their land and boost the economy to improve their living standards.

But with Connect-PNG a lot of people will pass through my province before they reach NCD to reside.

My questions are:

(1) What are your plans to manage the ever-escalating law and order problems in the city?

(2) Can you inform this Parliament that with the plans to link-PNG have you seriously considered my concern of having a separate Central Police Command?

We cannot continue being under the umbrella of NCD Police Command because it has a lot of issues at stake in maintaining law and order in the city. It seems that the police personnel from Central Province are being overlooked and priority is always given to the police personnel from NCD.

If most of the roads are being connected then I encourage the Minister to seriously consider having Central Province own Police Command so that we can manage issues at our end.

Mr WILLIAM ONGLO – Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Governor of Central Province for his questions. You are quite right in saying that the capital city is built on your land.

12/06

I also would like to thank the people of Central Province that you are a peace-loving group of people. It's because of you that we exist but I think it has been far too long that we have disrespected you people. I think the Governor has got some very important points mentioned here.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me make it clear to all of us who have migrated here that we should all stand together and respect the people of Central Province. At the same time policing is not only the responsibility of the Police Force. It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to work together and curb down on law and order issues.

I agree with the Governor and the reports from the media and police that we seem to have abused and have not realised the privileges of living in a city that exists on the land of a peace-loving people. On behalf of my people I apologise to the Governor and of his people.

With regard to the escalating law and order issues, I agree and want to inform Parliament, through the Speaker, that we have a shortfall of police personnel as compared to the population. We used to have about 8 000 to 9 000 police personnel but today we have about only 6 000 personnel to serve the entire 8.9 million plus people. We are struggling to build the numbers.

Whilst I still have the Floor, I also want to thank the Australian and Papua New Guinea Partnership Program that saw a couple of projects off the ground. For example, the Bomana Police Barracks has been up-graded and very soon we are going to have the new recruits reside there. In the next seven to eight months we would like to build our numbers with another 500 police personnel. We have quite a lot who have retired. Last year, we retired about 320 police men and women and this year will be another 68 personnel. If you do the math, you will realise our numbers will drop to about 6 200 serving men and women.

I want to assure the Governor that I will put some time into it. I will talk to my Commissioner and we will see what we can do for the Central Province. I understand that you

are building borders therefore I can assure you that I will talk to the Commissioner to establish a separate command for you.

However, I request that you come to our office and we have discussions. There is a new policing plan that we have in our Corporate Plan 2021- 2030. In the plan we want to have partnerships with our provinces and our districts. We want to build reserves and accumulate our resources together. If we are going to increase our personnel capacity then we must also look at the capacity of our infrastructure and other related matters. I urge all leaders who want to seriously address law and order issues to come see us at the department and have discussions with us.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF VISITORS (Madang Provincial Assembly Members) –
STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER**

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I wish to inform you that we have with us in the Public Gallery, members of the Madang Provincial Assembly.

On behalf of the Parliament, I extend a warm welcome to you.

Mr RAINBO PAITA – Mr Deputy Speaker, before I ask leave of Parliament, I would also like to acknowledge the presence of political science students from UPNG. I wish you all the best and hope that you can be some of our finest advisors in government in the future.

MOTION BY LEAVE

Mr RAINBO PAITA (Finschhafen – Minister for National Planning and Monitoring) - I ask leave of Parliament to move a motion without notice.

Leave granted.

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS –
REARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS**

Motion (by **Mr Rainbo Paita**) agreed to –

(a) That so much of the *Standing Orders* be suspended as would prevent (a) Notice No. 245 being called on forthwith, and (b) the Minister for Public Service presenting the Public Service (Management) (Amendment) Bill 2021 forthwith.

13/06

MEDICAL REGISTRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2021

First Reading

Bill presented by **Mr Jelta Wong** and read a first time.

Second Reading

Leave granted to move the second reading forthwith.

Mr JELTA WONG (Gazelle = Minister for Health and HIV/AIDS) – I move –
That the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, the *Medical Registration Act* was enacted in the Parliament in 1980. This is the law used to regulate and register all the different cadres of Health professionals in Papua New Guinea. This law sets out the requirements of health professional registration and the standard under which they are to practice. This law on the other hand gives confidence and reassurance to the public of the health professionals' expertise in delivery of Safe and Quality Health Services.

Why now amending the medical registration act 1980?

Mr Speaker, when *The Medical Registration Act* was enacted in 1980 and it restricted the registration of medical doctors to only graduates of UPNG and foreign trained doctors. This means the above law did not take into consideration graduates from other universities who may graduate in the future in Papua New Guinea to be registered and become medical doctors.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the National Department of Health responded to address the legislative gaps by amending the *Medical Registration Act (1980)* to legislatively allow the Divine Word University Graduates to be issued 'Provisional License' for training and practice under the Act.

What does the new *medical registration amendment bill* do?

Mr Deputy Speaker, the new law addresses limitation by the current the *Medical Registration Act 1980* which was purposed only for registering and issuing practicing licenses only to medical officers graduating from the University of Papua New Guinea.

Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, there have been three important sections of the former *Medical Registration Act* considered and amended in order to register the new medical officers graduating from the Divine Word University; and this amendment include:

Amendment One (1) Constitution of the Board Section 4 of the Medical Registration Act (1980) referred to as the '*Principal Act*' is amended to include a registered medical officer from the Faculty of Medicine of Divine Word University who will represent its graduates.

Amendment Two (2) Minimum Qualifications for provisional Registration Medical Practitioner Section 21 of the Medical Registration Act (1980) is amended to incorporate medical officers graduating from Divine Word University or any other universities graduating medical officers in the future.

Amendment Three (3) (C) Minimum Qualifications for Provisional Registration Dental Practitioner Section 33 of the Medical Registration Act (1980) is amended to incorporate dental medical officers graduating from Divine Word University or any other universities graduating medical officers in the future.

14/06

Why introduce a *medical registration amendment bill 2021*?

Mr Speaker, the first 19 trained doctors have graduated in March 2021 and are still waiting to be allocated to do their medical residency training program in the respective Provincial Health Authority Provinces. Without the passage of this amendment, the Medical Board will not be able to register the medical students who graduate from Divine Word University. This would stop them practicing medicine in PNG.

How *Medical Registration Amendment Bill 2021* Benefits Papua New Guinea and Health Sector.

Achieve Government of PNG Vision to increase workforce by 2050.

Their engagement will address the medical doctor's workforce gaps faced by the Government of Papua New Guinea.

From the National Department of Health Human Resource Information data dated 21 January 2019:

There is a total of 11,823 health workforce in the country out of 16,247 total health workforces required.

Medical Officers workforce in the country is only 526 of the 855 Medical Officers required.

The 19 newly trained doctors will add to the required total by the Government Papua New Guinea thus enhancing the total number of medical doctors' workforce and enhancing the health service delivery.

Their engagement after residential training will be upon formal application process based on position vacancy at the Provincial and District Level.

Other Legislative Reforms of *Medical Registration Act 1980*.

Mr Speaker, follow suit from the amendment of *The Medical Registration Act (1980)*, the National Department of Health will continue to Work on *Health Practitioners Bill 2021* which will amend *The Medical Registration Act (1980)*. *The Health Practitioners Bill 2021*, will regulates all the different health professional cadres and intends to establish an autonomous registration board that is required to create its own revenue and effectively address many legislative gaps in the current *Medical Registration Act (1980)*. I commend this Bill to the House.

Mr JAMES MARAPE (Tari-Pori – Prime Minister) – Mr Speaker, I rise to give my support to the Minister's Bill to be passed into Law. It is and appropriate statistics that he has quoted 526 doctors present in our country in the face of about 800 plus required or if not more compels us to ensure that we registered all doctors train in our country, and these Bill is in the right face. our country needs more doctors and more medical workers in the face of Covid-19, in the face of potential diseases and pandemic into the future, we need to train more doctors, I would like to thank Divine Word University for stepping in and filling in this gap, I would like to also thank previous Health Ministers and the system to do a process. Divine Word University to these States to complement the need in training, more medical workers in our country and all medical schools operators in our country, for instants these Bill makes amendments to exiting *Medical Registration Act* that allows for healthy us to recognise degrees to confer in this instants in the Divine Word University.

These Bill has been supported by both side of the House, because it allows for us to bring in those doctors already trained in waiting to be confer Provisional Licence for them to move into our work-force in our country, thank you.

Motion – That the question be now put – agreed to.

Motion – That the Bill be now read a second time – agreed to.

Bill read a second time

15/06

Third Reading

Leave granted to move the Third Reading forthwith.

Motion (by **Mr Jelta Wong**) proposed –

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Sir PUKA TEMU (Abau) – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I stand in support of the amendment proposed by the Honourable Minister for Health, which is well overdue and I congratulate him on this important initiative. I would like to highlight two areas that need to be re-looked properly; one is the amendment on the constitution of the Board.

I personally don't believe that the medical practitioner from the Divine Word University should be specifically mentioned in a law. This should have a broad representation, and I think it is wrong in principal.

I would request the House to make an amendment on this one because I don't think we should specifically indicate who should be on this important Board. We don't want to do that because the proposed medical practitioners bill, which the Minister alluded that work has been going on since 2015 to 2017, will look at the overhauling of the entire registration of nurses, doctors, technicians, and et cetera. That is a very comprehensive one and has to come very quickly because of the way the globe is moving. For example, we are inviting bilateral partners through bilateral arrangements to bring their doctors in from China and Australia such as in the case of the Covid-19 pandemic. It impacts on the Medical Registration Board on how to

manage it. Therefore, the current *Medical Registration Act* is outdated because it doesn't include the 21st Century direction the world is moving into. So, we will have to re-look at the entire *Medical Registration Act* and I look forward to the Minister bringing the practitioners bill in 2021. Thank you, Mr Minister, for making that announcement and we look forward to supporting the bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in the olden days when we knew how many students were graduating from the medical school, the Department of Personnel Management established those positions so no medical students graduating is waiting for positions to be created. That provision was removed, so I strongly suggest to Minister for Health and Public Service, as you both understand the system, to create positions the year before they graduate so they don't have to wait. We are short of doctors and you and I know that.

They just come into those positions and they don't have to wait. That is why I suggest to both ministers to look into this matter seriously because we will have to double the numbers. As the Minister said in the new health plan, we need to graduate a hundred doctors every year to meet with the three per cent growth rate in our country.

Thank you.

Mr GARY JUFFA (Northern) – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I rise to support this bill.

I just want to make a few comments about our situation in regards to the Health Sector. Some very sobering statistics we just heard in response from the Police Minister speak about the atrocious statistics in regards to policemen.

The situation in the Health Sector is even worse. Apparently according to the World Health Organization, we have 5.3 nurses per 10,000 and 0.5 doctors per 10,000, this is terrible. These are statistics we must be very mindful about. I urge our Government - and they have been doing a magnificent job I must say in terms of addressing this issue.

I have visited the medical faculty as the Chairman of the Public Sector Reform Committee and was quite taken aback by the situation they face.

16/06

Taken at and the situation they face. That organization produces fifty doctors a year or less than that. Where as a country like Fiji which about the size of one of our larger provinces

produces more than 50 doctors a year. This is an area that we need to address. I am sure you are working on it.

I just wanted to mention those statistics and also suggest that we consider the idea of recruiting doctors from abroad. In the last term I brought the Cuban Ambassador from Australia. This is because Cuba has about 50, 000 doctors that are working in 67 countries. And we wanted to look at the possibility of bringing Cuban doctors so that every district and station can at least have a doctor.

Right now, there is no doctor in some or most of the districts, for instance Kokoda serves about 30,000 people but there is no doctor there. We can't get a doctor to be present there, it is very difficult. This is an area where I would like the Minister for Health to take note of. The possibility of bring doctors from other countries to serve here. We need as many doctors as possible. Why are they unable to come into this country?

Even the former Prime Minister visited Cuba and planned to make this happen but nothing came of it. They do not have to be from Cuba, they can be from other countries as long as we make an aggressive and progressive effort to addressing this issue that most of our rural population faces. Our population is increasing, we don't know our real statistics due to the failed NID project and Census, not giving us a clarity on our population. But I commend the Minister for his efforts and would like to urge him to bring to NEC, the PHA regulations which have been void for the last ten years.

Mr Speaker, the lack of these regulations is causing problems in our provinces. PHAs are not functioning. If you have a good chairman and a good CEO, that formula will make PHAs function, but for whatever reason this is not so. the reality is that the PHA will not function. And once we turn to PHA for example; in Oro. When we established PHA, we were convinced that this would be a better option for us than the previous option that we had.

What we found was the exact opposite, there is less funding coming into the provinces. And if there is funding that is coming in, it is bottle-necked at the PHA headquarters and not making it to the districts and stations. And at the districts and stations; the aid-posts and the district hospitals; the community health workers and the medical staff who are there are charging higher fees so that they can go and pay for new medical supplies.

This is an atrocious situation and we need to address that and I believe we should be building many medical training institutions around the country. Because, we can't be producing 50 doctors a year. For a country the size of Papua New Guinea with all the resources that we have. Beating our chests and telling the whole world that we are a nugget of gold floating in a sea of oil; but the reality on the ground is not there as far as our health care is concerned.

We need to build more medical training facilities. We need to consider the possibility of bringing in doctors from other countries. And we need to address these statistics.

Thank you Minister, Oro province will be supporting you in your efforts. And we will be reminding you from time to time about these statistics. Please attend to this, thank you.

Mr KOBBY BOMOREO – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Health for bringing up an important amendment. I would like to contribute to this debate.

17/06

I concur with Sir Puka this amendment is overdue and I would like to also contribute to it. I agree that there are not enough health workers in the country.

It is about time that we support this Government's initiative on the one district-one hospital plan. So, in the next five to ten years, there should be doctors available for these rural hospitals.

There is one important factor to consider when we are trying to amend this law, we must make sure that the terms and conditions of employment must be attractive in order to keep them in our public systems. When these things are not done, they seek employment in the private sectors and we lose our doctors who could be serving our rural people.

The other thing is on the regulation which is to standardise their examinations and invigilators whether from Port Moresby, UPNG or Divine Word University. Not necessarily the curriculum but creating pathway in their exams so that they are on the same wave-length. In that way, there is standard in place.

With my brief contribution, I support the Minister, the amendments are long overdue. Also, we must try to standardize our nursing schools and mid wifely programs to improve maternal mortality and infant mortality. Let us also encourage paediatric programs there.

So, we must try to improve the standards of doctors, the nursing programs and the community health worker program. So, we should have enough health workers to cater for those rural hospitals which the government is trying to initiate; one district-one rural hospital.

On that note, PHA or the Department of Health must liaise together to make sure that our rural hospitals are built in a standard manner. Many buildings today are like the classrooms. So, work closely with the standards unit of the Health Department and make sure the facilities must all be the same.

With that I would like to thank the Minister and I support him by saying, some areas need to be amended in order to set standards for the greater good. We must be equal no matter which university you are attending in order to avoid suppression or inferiority complex issues towards among colleagues.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr ELIAS KAPAVORE (Pomio) – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I would like to also join the other Members of Parliament in supporting what the Minister for Health has done, in regards to amendment of the *Medical Registration Act of 1980*.

It is a historic moment of our country and I believe it will give peace to many of our students who have actually graduated from Divine Word University this year.

I would like to make a special comment or acknowledgement to the Chairman of the Medical Board and the Dean of the School of Medicine and Health Sciences, Professor Nakapi Tefuarani and his team for going to Divine Word University in 2019. It actually led to the accreditation of the program and today we have seen a number of students graduating from Divine Word University.

We acknowledge the support and the foresight of the former Divine Word University President Father Jan Czuba for making sure that the Divine Word University; was able to undertake such important programs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my second point is, I would like the government to continue to support the University of Papua New Guinea especially, the School of Medicine and Health Sciences to be a stand-alone entity. So that they can focus to make their own structures and be under the autonomy program which they can concentrate and focus on many of the things they wish to do as a university in the future.

18/06

In that regard they can also improve and increase the number of medical students and other health workers from the medical faculty.

In regard to PHA, Mr Deputy Speaker, many of the students from other health sectors will be part of the PHA arrangements in most provinces. I don't agree with the excuse that PHAs are not receiving enough funds and that brings us back to 2021 Budget. The 21 PHAs were allocated more than K900 million that's for PHAs alone for this year. This is huge amount of funding going straight to the 21 PHAs and if it's not the funds then what is the problem?

were allocated more than K900 million that's for PHAs alone for this year. This is huge amount of funding going straight to the 21 PHAs and if it's not the funds then what is the problem?

I have read this report circulated by the Auditor General this week regarding the Enga PHA. The Health Minister with his team should relook at the structure. For instances, on page number six-

Mr James Marape – Point of Order! With greatest respect to colleague Member of Parliament on the other side, can he just stick to the issue before us here regarding the Bill so that we can proceed on with the other business as well.

Mr ELIAS KAPAVORE – Mr Deputy Speaker, I just want to make mention that the Department of Health should have a look at the governance structure because it impacts the operations of the PHAs in the provinces.

I notice that the reporting mechanism is not correct because the structure indicates that the minister is at the top with the PHA Board reporting to him, while the governor of the province right below the board which doesn't meet the intent of the PHAs. I have seen the PHA structure of East New Britain Province and NDoH. There were three different structures at the governance level. NDoH must review these structures and standardize it so that everyone is operating on the same structure. This is important to see operational efficiency and effectiveness in the PHA work environment.

With these few points, I thank the Minister for Health for presenting his report and amendment today. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Motion – That the question be now put – agreed to.

Motion – That the Bill be now read a third time – agree to.

Bill read a third time.

PUBLIC SERVICES (MANAGEMENT) (AMENDMENT) BILL 2021

First Reading

Bill presented by **Mr Joseph Sungi** and read a first time.

19/06

Second Reading

Leave granted to move the Second Reading forthwith.

Mr JOSEPH SUNGI (Nuku – Minister for Public Service) – I move –

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, as this is my first business as the Minister for Public Service, I would like to take this time to thank the Prime Minister, for recognising the people of Nuku, in allocating me the ministry of Public Service. I also would like to acknowledge the good relationship we have with all the Members of Parliament who came in 2012.

Mr Speaker, when coming into Office in June 2019, the Marape-Basil Government pledged to do a review of legislations and implement reforms to better improve the governments mechanisms including reviewing laws that are out-dated and do not serve the interest of the people of Papua New Guinea.

Mr Deputy Speaker, one of the reforms in the administrative sector was to review the *Public Service Management Act 1975*, on the provisions relating to the resignation of public servants to contest the general elections. It was interesting to note where the interest of public servants lies in course of the service to the state, noting that as servants of the state, they were to commit themselves fully to serving the State.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in a major consultation on this matter, the government believes that we need to draw the line so that the public service can operate on its own without interference of those public servants who wish to contest the elections; noting from past experiences that some of those who contested the general elections and were unsuccessful returned to the public service, causing instability in the organisation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, because of this reason the National Executive Council has approved the amendment to the *Public Service Management Act* and they are as follows;

(1) An officer who wishes to contest the General Election will now resign 12 months prior to the issuing of writs, as compared to the current six months' notice. This will be implemented in the 2027 General Election and general elections thereafter,

(2) An officer who contests the General Election and is unsuccessful can be employed back into the public service after a period of five years from the general elections he or she contested in but through the normal selection and recruitment process. This amendment if passed will take effect in 2022 and the general elections thereafter.

Mr Speaker, I am confident these amendments will clearly identify and set the course of our public servants in the line of their duties, which is to serve the State with full commitment and to leave the service to become politicians, this also to serve the State, but in another setting.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Marape-Basil Government, I commend all members on both side of the House on the passing of the Public Service Management Act Bill 2021.

Thank you, Mr Speaker

20/06

Mr DAVIS STEVEN (Esa 'ala) – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker and I also thank my good friend, the Minister for Public Service for introducing this legislation.

Unfortunately, on this occasion, I rise to express an opposing view for two reasons. Firstly, I would like to put it on record that I do not support the view or an amendment or any law that would unfairly and unreasonably restrict the right of our people to stand for an elective office. I say this taking into account that our people's right to choose a leader maybe restricted in this kind of a legislation.

When our people go for voting, they want the best range of candidates and in many cases, these includes highly educated well-regarded public servants. The examples are many and those who sit in this Parliament today on both sides such as the honourable leader who just introduced this legislation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in my respectful opinion it is an unfair snipe at the public servants. The government is also aware that there are public servants who are not covered under the *Public Service Management Act*. For instance, constitutional office holders. The Minister for Justice will tell us if he knows that judges have in the past resigned to contest but then got re-appointed to the bench. Yesterday, we were debating on the importance of amendments that were introduced to govern our corporate sector and the need for us to tighten the legislative scheme and regime. This was to maintain those good people who lead our nation where our

corporations are concerned. We did not say anything about restricting them in the same way. Therefore, my question is, why are we targeting the public servants?

Mr Deputy Speaker, this is not the first time that this amendment has been made. In the past when it was made, we restricted it to 6 months in subsection 2(a). Now we want to increase it to 12 months. What is the justification?

Mr Deputy Speaker, these explanatory notes refer to consultation. I have been in the district in Milne Bay but I have not heard about the consultation. I would however, be interested in knowing whether the PEA has been involved in this consultation. This is because after we pass this legislation, we don't want it to be followed by another union action. This is well within our public servants right to say that the parliamentarians are protecting themselves with 2022 National General Elections around the corner. We on the other hand, will say the same thing about presidents. A few days ago, in Parliament, very strong views were expressed about the rights of presidents to participate in the national elections.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my argument to this legislation is that whilst the intention is good, the text of these amendments is impinging upon the rights of not only our public servants contesting elections but also the rights of our voters.

In relation to expectation that someone who resigns and contests should be expected to reapply after five years following the National Elections. That is draconian and unreasonable in my respectful view. It is oppressive. The assumption is that he is reapplying because he is still useful. He has been out for 5 years, are we going to give them a refresher training when they return? In a time when our nation is depleted in our work force especially capable citizens who can serve in Parliament or in the Public Service then this is the kind of legislation that is restrictive, unreasonable and constitutionally questionable. Thank you and I do not support this amendment.

Mr JAMES MARAPE (Tari-Pori – Prime Minister) – I rise to give support to this Bill on the basis that it does not prohibit public servants from contesting elections. Their right to contest elections are restricted.

21/06

This bill in summary allows for public servants to resign 12 months prior to a National General Election before they can contest. This amendment will take effect in the 2027 National General Election going forward. We have now gone past 12 months period for 2022 National General Election.

On the issue of coming back to work in the public service, they are entitled to come back but we are allowing them to stay out for five years minimum including the 12 months before the writs are issued. For these Papua New Guineans who feel that they have right to contest the elections and have contested and they want to come back, they can join the public service four years down the line. It does not in any terms restrict them from coming back into the public service.

We are only trying to eliminate for professional candidates in the public service, who just go in and out at will. They come back and work and stay in the system and sometimes they get in the way of public service flowing with work because they have interest somewhere in politics.

So, we are trying to differentiate between genuine contestants who feel they have some space to contest and contribute in politics. They can resign 12 months early and eliminate them from the public service system. This 12-month period will come into effect in 2026 in preparation for 2027 National General Election.

Right now, this law also mean is that; those who comply with the existing law as it is if you resign today and are not successful in 2022 National General Elections, you can re-apply in 2026 to come back into public service. Effectively, distancing the five-year period so genuine candidates are out there contesting in the elections. We don't allow professional candidates to come in and using government networks and systems and stand in the way of the public service work flow.

So, Mr Speaker and members of the House, this does not in anyway prohibit Papua New Guineans from contesting the elections, but also give them the opportunity to experience politics and if it not their calling in life they can join public service after five years instead of coming back in 12 months only to resign after three years.

So, I commend this Bill which it tries to eliminate unnecessary politics in the public service. It creates stability and allows only the genuine candidates to come out and contest elections. It also allows a cleaner process because so far on many occasions we have candidates who contested the national general election, they lose and come back to the public services again. It is just a big mess. That's why this bill aims to clean that process up and allow for genuine candidate to contest and allow for those who feel that they had enough of politics to come back into public service in a window that eliminates as one term of the last election they have contested.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr ALLAN BIRD (East Sepik) – Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will disagree and agree with the honourable member of the opposition.

Mr Speaker, it's difficult enough for anyone to win an election whether you are a public servant, particularly so if you are a woman.

Mr Speaker, all of us members of Parliament actually have an interest in this bill, which means that we are bias in these decision-making processes. If we were sitting on a board in private organization, they would ask us to leave the room so the decision could be made without us

22/06

Mr Speaker, as members of the parliament we must be making laws that is in the interest of the public good but now our people are watching us because we just gave permission for this to be broadcasted; while I hear what the Prime Minister is saying, our people are still going to think that we are making this law to protect ourselves. Now, on that principal alone we can't be doing this.

Mr Speaker, I would like to suggestion to the minister, in fact I know he is a very hard working and on of the best performing minister I have to commend him.

In East Sepik, there is someone who contested the elections and he is back in the Public Service and he is doing a brilliant job for the people of East Sepik.

We all contest the elections for so many reasons but we must all want what is best for our country. We may not agree on how to do it but the question is the method on how we achieve that, we cannot put into law something that is hard and fast and can be seen as oppressive. It is an oppressive law and amendment.

Mr Speaker, I would have like to see an amendment to the Public Service Management Act go much further than just restricting citizens from contesting the elections.

Mr Speaker, we have so many issues in the Public Service particularly on performance and I would have like to see if there was going to be a management of the conduct because that is what we are trying to deal with in this amendment. We are trying to address the conduct of Public Servants so the bill could have gone much further. For example, we got the Public Services Commission which is a constitutional office that has been there since 1975 and all it does is protect bad behaving Public Servants. If a Public Servant doesn't want to work or following rules or he goes and steals money and all he will do is write to the Public Service Commission and it reinstates them and you are left with no choice but to take them on.

Mr Speaker, what is really what to see is an amendment to the constitution body governing Public Services Commission so decisions such as this one is taken away from the Parliament. We should not be making this decision. An independent commission like the Public Service should be given the task to assess when the Public Servants should leave work and go to contest the elections. We should also task the Public Service Commission to re-admit them.

Mr Speaker, I think it would be dishonourable of the House if we agree to this Bill because it demeans the de-quorum of this House. Because we have an interest and I want to stress that.

I therefore would urge the good minister to go back and take a look at the entire Public Service Management Act and to bring in significant reform and consider tasking the Public Service Commission on the basis of principle. I do not support the Bill.

Mr RAINBO PAITA (Finschhafen-Minister for National Planning and Monitoring) – Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise to also make my comments in support of this Bill.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Minister for Public Service, as when he was appointed to this ministry, he was given certain KPI on reforming the Public Sector. When the original intention of this bill was presented in Cabinet, the idea was not to protect anyone on this Floor and it was not targeted to the Public Servants as the Shadow Attorney-General expressed his view in terms of constitutional offices.

23/06

Mr Speaker, these constitutional offices do not have access to resources that some public servants enjoy. For example, the Secretary for National Planning and the Secretary for Finance and Works. These public servants have powerful positions who have enormous access to resources. It paints an unbalanced playing field for a coffee buyer who wishes to contest the elections. And we have on the other hand a public servant using and abusing public resources, while knowing very well that he will stand for public office.

What does this create for that person on the field who has decided to contest and is probably saving his money to contest, while a public servant is with his cheque book moving around in hire cars and living expensively while knowing that he will be contesting the elections. It is an abuse of resources. The intention of the bill is to say that if you want to contest the elections, you make your intentions known early so we limit or cut off abuse of government resources for your own personal gain.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we also have career public servants who resign to contest but when they lose and they come back into the public service again. They are pre-occupying a space for someone who is trying to build a career out of in that office. For example; if someone who is a first assistant secretary, goes off contests the elections, he returns to his old position when he is unsuccessful. Another person who is the assistant secretary is working so hard to get to that position. Where is the justice? So, the intention of this bill is simple, we are not trying to protect anyone in this Parliament.

I am sure all these gentlemen are prepared for the elections comes 2022. The intention or the idea that the good Minister is trying to present is to create an equal playing field for everyone who may wish to contest. We must all go out to our people on an equal playing field and not abuse public resources. That is the intention of this bill and I hope we all support this bill.

Motion – That the question be now put – agreed to.

Motion – That the Bill be now read a second time – agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Leave granted to move the Third Reading forthwith.

Motion (by **Mr Joseph Sungi**) proposed –

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Motion – That the question be now put – agreed to.

Motion – That the Bill be now read a third time – put.

The Bill requiring an absolute majority of 56 Members as required by the *Constitution*, Mr Speaker ordered that the Bells be rung.

24/06

(Voting in progress)

25/06

The Parliament voted (the Speaker, **Mr Job Pomat** in the Chair) –

AYES – 81

NOES – 7

The Bill passed with the concurrence of an absolute majority as required by the *Constitution*.

Bill read a third time.

Mr RAIBO PAITA – I thank both sides of the Parliament for sitting through to discuss couple of important Bills and at the same time showing your support in passing them.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion (by **Mr Rainbo Paita**) agreed to –

That the Parliament do now adjourn.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.35 p.m.