



**Special Parliamentary Committee on  
2022 General Elections**

**INQUIRY INTO THE CONDUCT OF THE 2022 NATIONAL ELECTIONS**

**HIGHLANDS REGION CONSULTATIONS**

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April & Friday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

**Highlander Hotel, Mt Hagen, Western Highlands Province**

**Committee Members (Present)**

Honourable Allan Bird (East Sepik) – Chairman)

Sir Puka Temu (Abau) – Deputy Chairman

Honourable Robert Naguri (Bogia) – Committee Member

Honourable Keith Iduhu (Hiri-Koiari) – Committee Member

Honourable Jacob Maki (Mul-Baiyer) Committee Member

Honourable Steven Steven Pim (Dei)– Committee Member

**Committee Members (Absent)**

Honourable Elias Kapavore (Pomio)– Committee Member

Honourable Saki Soloma – Committee Member

Honourable Charlie Benjamin (Manus) – Committee Member

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DAY ONE.....	1
Opening Remarks.....	2
ENGA PROVINCE .....	4
Election Manager Enga.....	4
Rural Commander Enga.....	14
Legal Officer - Enga Province .....	19
WESTERN HIGHLANDS PROVINCE .....	30
Election Manager –Western Highlands Province .....	30
Assistant Provincial Returning Officer .....	37
Acting Provincial Police Commander Western Highlands.....	46
Highlands Divisional Command -Eastern End .....	47
Provincial Planner-WHP .....	58
JIWAKA PROVINCE .....	62
Election Manager-Jiwaka.....	62
Highlands Divisional Command- Eastern End .....	78
CHIMBU PROVINCE.....	85
Election Manager-Chimbu.....	85
Staff Officer-PPC Chimbu.....	94
Women’s Council Representative.....	95
Closing Remarks .....	103
DAY TWO .....	105
Opening Remarks.....	106
SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS PROVINCE.....	107
Provincial Police Commander-Southern Highlands .....	107
EASTERN HIGHLANDS PROVINCE .....	130
Provincial Police Commander -EHP .....	130
Data Coordinator-EHP .....	134
Returning Officer-Goroka.....	137
Provincial Administrator - EHP .....	141
Closing Remarks .....	155

## **DAY ONE**

**27<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

### **Transcript**

Time: 1pm

Venue: Highlander Hotel

#### **In Attendance**

##### **Committee Members**

Honourable Allan Bird – Chairman  
Sir Puka Temu – Deputy Chairman  
Honourable Robert Naguri  
Honourable Kieth Iduhu  
Honourable Steven Pim  
Honourable Jacob Maki

##### **Witnesses**

Mr Anthon Iamau -Election Manager - Enga  
Snr Inspector. Richard Koki - Rural Commander - Enga  
Ms Serah Sipani -Provincial Legal Officer - Enga  
Mr Philip Telape - Election Manager - Western Highlands  
Mr Tom Kiap -Assistant Provincial Returning Officer -Western Highlands  
Acting Provincial Police Commander Western Highlands  
Mr Rigga Negi – Highlands Divisional Commander-Eastern End  
Mr Pius Mon-Provincial Planner –Western Highlands  
Ms Rosie Pandihau - Election Manager –Jiwaka  
Mr Tom Sine - Election Manager-Chimbu  
Mr John Joseph Staff Officer-PPC Chimbu  
Ms Sabeth Yengis - Women’s Council Representative –Enga

## **Opening Remarks**

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Good afternoon everyone and welcome to another hearing of the Special Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into the 2022 General Elections and other elections in general, going back to 1964.

As you know, this is the first time in history that we have a properly constituted Parliamentary Committee to look into the conduct of the elections. I want to welcome all of you and thank you all for your time and your patience. I know we have started late, some of our crew got offloaded yesterday, and we had to wait for them to come so that they can set up our technical stuff.

Let me also acknowledge Sir Peter Ipatas who is here with the team from Enga, he wants to observe part of the proceedings and he will leave. But let me just say that Sir Peter Ipatas is the longest-serving governor in the history of our country and we accord him the due respect, thank you, Sir Peter.

To the participants, this is a properly constituted parliamentary committee hearing which means that you are protected by all the privileges of Parliament and I want you to understand that. This means that everything that you say here is protected so you can speak your mind and if anyone tries to penalise you for what you say at this hearing this committee has the power to summon them and to have them charged.

Now, it has been a long time since parliamentary committees of this nature have practiced or exercised the powers of parliament so many people are still getting used to it. We could become blunt with some of our questioning but the reason for that is that we want to get to the bottom and understand the issue; not just listen to you but we want to understand so that we can identify some of the flaws or the shortcomings in the electoral process then our job is to recommend the fixtures. And just so you are all aware, this committee will sit right up until 2027.

Our findings will go before Parliament hopefully in the next sitting. We have already got 90 per cent of what we need and a lot of it has come from independent observers. We want to ensure that this process is transparent as much as possible because the most important part of this is that we need to give confidence back to our people.

I want to make that clear to you all because many of you are public servants, perhaps all of you are public servants and we work in a democratic system. The main fundamental thing that

underpins our democracy is the elections so without that every institution that we have built since Independence loses the trust and the confidence of our people and, we can see this throughout our country, recently in West New Britain. That is just a symptom of what is played in our country.

Now, we cannot fix all the problems but this Committee, your Parliament is intent on fixing one aspect of it. And in my personal view, I think this is the most important aspect of it. We must preserve our democracy at all costs and that means fixing the system. I know that many people have grievances, particularly in the Highlands because the most troublesome elections we have had was in the Highlands Region, we all know that.

So, we are here to get to the bottom of it to understand them and I want to make it clear that we are not a court of law so if there are disputes from elections that are arising we have no powers to adjudicate or make decisions, “em ino wok blo mipla”.

Wok bilngo mipela long harim, wokim wok na painim aut we asua em i stap den sapos mipela nid long senisim sampla law bai mipela senisim. Em wok bilong mipela ol memba bai mipela senisim law. Sapos mipela nid long stretim wanpela dipatmen or stretim wanpela structure em wok bilong mipela but long setolim dispute namel long ol man or meri husait i gat sampela grevience long taim bilong eleksen, sori em ino wok bilong mipela. Kot em i stap long wokim dispela. The courts are the only people in our system of government that have the power to decide on disputes, not us so I want to make this clear.

People have different opinions and there are different ways that people see things but at the end of the day mipela ino inap decide whether yu rait or yu rong em nogat em i no wok bilong mipela. So I just want to clarify that and as a preamble, people are listening and watching around Papua New Guinea so I just want to make that clear. But if you want to make your say, especially our people in the Highlands we are still here and tomorrow afternoon we have a segment where we will be listening to people who may have grievances. Yu ken kam na toktok as long as you are respectful. Dispela em wok bilong komiti em mipela kam na meikim nau. So thank you all very much.

Before us today we have Commander Negi who is in charge of the Eastern End Divisional Command and we'll bring him in a little bit later. We've got the Western Highlands province election team and we've got the Enga province election team. The process now which I want to do, as you know we are starting a bit late so I'll try and see if we can get a lot done between now

and 5pm and if we have to go until six then that's what we'll do. Many of you have families and you live here, mipela em orait, so I am just conscious about that.

Let me start by asking Enga since yupela kam longwei mi bai askim yupela long start pass na bihain mipela kam long Western Highlands. Can one of you take the lead and give us a summary. I know you probably got something written and if you do we would welcome that submission but give us your executive summary in terms of the conducts of the elections in Enga and the issues that you came across. Who should I ask? Mr Iamau, Election manager Enga province? Okay, please press the green button in front of you and speak clearly into the microphone and for the record please introduce yourself again and your substantive position.

## **ENGA PROVINCE**

### **Election Manager Enga**

**Mr ANTHON IAMAU** (Election Manager - Enga) – Good afternoon and thank you ladies and gentlemen. Firstly, I wish to express my gratitude to the Special Parliamentary Committee on the conduct of this 2022 National Elections. I would also want to welcome my leaders, my PEC, my honourable governor who is present, all members of my PEC, the media, colleagues from the Highlands and former leaders, mi welkamim yupela olgeta long dispela bung. Lastly and not the least I would like to welcome and thank my two PEC members; Sarah, who is representing the Provincial Administration, our PA is not present, at the same time she is the deputy chairman of PEC. On my left is Richard Koki, senior inspector who represents the PPC who is also not present.

Elections in Enga and whole of Papua New Guinea is conducted every five years to select our leaders to go into Parliament to represent the community. Unlike in the past, elections these days are very difficult to run, especially in the Highlands. The 2022 National Election, especially in Enga was much worse than the 2017 National Elections. Four electorates were all involved in tribal warfare during the elections and still continuing to this date and even escalated into the township of Wabag. The root cause of all these problems escalating into Wabag and even other parts of Papua New Guinea is mainly caused by the leaders and their supporters; not all the leaders but particular leaders. They usually say it is the fault of the Electoral Commission, but Electoral Commission is always embarking on a fair, free and safe elections.

However, it is the leaders themselves that go around trying to get themselves elected through bribery, corruption and through intimidation of voters and that is a problem that arises in the Enga

Province, but generally Engans are peace-loving people. Especially during the election periods they go wild and even to the extreme of dying for their candidates. What they say is; ‘if it means to die they will die for it’. This is how serious the elections are in Enga.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can you elaborate on that? Sorry to interrupt but I think there’s a new concept. Mi bilong nambis na it’s very rare to hear that supporters will die for a candidate. So, you are saying that in Enga that is part of the election landscape so maybe explain that a little bit more, let’s try to dig into that before you proceed.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Okay, back to 2017, I was the election manager and was present in one of the counting centers. There were some disturbances and when the security personnel came to stop it, the supporters were there chewing up the ballot papers and saying, ‘if you want to kill me, kill me” They want to die for their candidate.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** –Which electorate was that?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – That was Kandep.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, continue.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – At the same time there was another incident in Wabag where two Defence personnel were shot. The person who did that put his hands up and said, ‘kill me’. That is what happens.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Yu tok pisin na explain, em tok olsem wanem?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Dispela man husait i holim gun na sutim ol man ya, nau em putim han bilong em go antap na tok yu sutim mi, taim em kilim two pela soldier pinis. And that’s how serious elections are in Enga.

So, these leaders should be held responsible for all the elections problems in Enga, it’s not the Electoral Commission. Blame save kam long Electoral Commission olgeta time but it’s not the

Electoral Commission. That's a fact; Electoral Commission always embarks on fair, free and safe elections. That's what happens.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can I probe this a little bit further? The returning officers in your province olsem mi askim tasol, nogut sampela candidate bai tok returning officer em wansait long dispela man or wantok bilong dispela man or tribesman bilong en or dispela kain olsem na em mekim sampela kain foul play na mipela i belhat na mekim. So, in your opinion, your returning officers that are selected to do this –

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Sorry, I got different returning officers, I was the election manager.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That's fair enough, I meant like the returning officer regardless of – I am speaking broadly here whether em stap long Kandep or em stap long Wabag or em stap long Laiagap-Porgera doesn't matter but generally, yu feel olsem wanem long credibility na integrity bilong ol? Ol gut pela lain yupela save putim ol long dispela wok? Mi just askim tasol.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Okay, returning officers mipela save recommedim igo long Electoral Commission and all of them are long-serving public servants who have the experience. Mipela save recommendim go long Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission em save wokim decision blong em long selectim returning officers. How ol selectim, husait ol selectim, it's with the Electoral Commission.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Do you get complaints about the appointment of certain officers?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Yes, I do get complaints and that people have petitioned the Enga Provincial Electoral Office.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How frequent is that? I mean yu describim long olgeta seat. Yupela gat hamas pela seat long Enga?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Two pela seat long ol dispela complaints.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Which two seats?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Kompiam and Wabag in the last election but we had to do some swaps.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And after the swaps everyone was happy?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – But for Kompiam the issues are still there and the problem is escalating to this day. So, I don't do the selection, transfer and appointment. The Electoral Commission does that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, let's dig into that, regarding the applications process for ROs, do you put out an advertisement or the Electoral Commissioner does that?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** - It's the Electoral Commission that give us. We advertise and receive the applications and shortlist according to suitable candidates and the final list is sent to Port Moresby.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you send the shortlist to Port Moresby and the selection is done in Port Moresby. Okay, you may continue.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – During the preparation of Enga we did a lot of awareness in the electorate and at the same time the Electoral Boundaries Commission visited the province and after much consultation with the committee and with all the PEC members here we did manage to split the Lagaip-Pogera Open electorate into Lagaip Open and Paila-Pogera Open electorates.

From thereon, the 2022 Elections had some major problems, which I want to highlight here generally and my two colleagues will elaborate on this. The major problem we faced was the roll update. The roll update has different phases. The first phase is the roll displays which is collected from Moresby PHQ and comes here and distributed to the villages. They check through the rolls,

do their objections and then they fill Form 11 when it is requested and is sent to Moresby. The second phase they give us the working rolls and the requested number of Form 11s again and distribute them to the LLGs for people to enroll. After they complete enrolling, they give back to us to enter the data at the provincial level and then it's sent to Moresby and from there they do the preliminary rolls and sent them back here for confirmation. Once that is done then it is distributed back to LLGs to go through for the objections period. After all the amendments we send them back for the final roll, but this process never eventuated in the 2022 National Elections. Why? Because we had limited time and I don't know why we faced this problem of funding, after all the funding comes from the National Government.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Sir, I appreciate that. I think we accept that as a given because everyone we interviewed prior to you have confirmed the same issue so we have already established that. So, I would like you to move beyond the electoral roll. We've accepted that there are serious flaws there and we will be endeavoring to fix that so you move beyond that and perhaps just focus on the issues that you had in Enga apart from electoral roll.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Okay, apart from that, we had some issues like candidates and scrutineers who were always disrupting the election process, the counting or some other process, that is one of the issues we had.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Why were they disrupting the counting and the election process? What were the reasons that you came across?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – If he is not happy with the returning officer or if he wants to dispute a ballot box or if it's not disputed then he would just come and disturb the process.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Explain that for the benefit of the committee and perhaps for the country the issue about disputing ballot boxes and asking for them to be set aside. Well first of all, we know it is allowed. Is that legal and who makes the decision on that; is it the returning officer or you as the election manager or the electoral commissioner? Who makes the decision as to whether a ballot box should be allowed or set aside?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – It is always the returning officer of that particular electorate and if he/she is not present then the assistant returning officer takes over.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Does the returning officer seek legal advice from anyone before such a decision is made?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – After his decision okay, the commissioner is informed of what is happening but the commissioner makes the overall ruling on any box. That means if there are some disputed boxes and when the commissioner says count, then we continue count.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So what would be some of the valid reasons that the returning officer would accept to set a box aside?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – If there is sufficient evidence. That is, if the box has been tampered with or highjacked and taken to a particular place or house, then there is sufficient evidence.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What would be your standard of sufficient evidence?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Well, if you got enough evidence and witnesses who are testifying that this is what happened, then the returning officers (RO) have the discretion to whether put it aside or to take it into the counting.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough, proceed.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – The other challenge is that we so many candidates are not qualified enough to to contest the elections so the eligibility and qualification of candidates was not properly screened. As in the last election, we observed that some candidates were not properly screened. We got them but when we send them down to Port Moresby, this is what is happening

and when in Port Moresby, they gave us a week to let them go through. So they have to be properly screened.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Not qualified in what sense? Can you be specific on what you mean by them not been qualified? Is it educationally unqualified or mentally unsound?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Some of them were convicted of imprisonment or have criminal records and some are underaged. Being an election manager, when someone comes and nominates and if you reject them, then definitely you are in trouble.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Sorry, can you clarify that?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – If you are a returning officer and when you reject somebody who comes for a nomination, then you will face a lot of problems. They will say, no! I must nominate. Practically, this is what happens. Even someone of an unsound mind comes you can get him nominated, so the qualification of a candidate should be well screened. Let's say, a candidate must be of 30 years and above with certain level of qualifications like grade 10. Like in Enga province, you get an electorate having 30-40 candidates and most of them don't even score in the counting centre. It's only two or three people contesting there but they pay nomination fees for Tom, Dick and Harry so that they can secure the votes in that particular wards. It's not them contesting.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, what you are saying is; let me see if I understand you correctly. One candidate is nominating another whole bunch of candidates in the same seat in order to collect the first preferences?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Yes, that's right. That's what I am saying.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, continue.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – That should not happen. They should have certain qualifications long sanap long kamap candidate.

Okay, narapela em dispatching of election materials. At the Electoral Commission, we always have problems of delaying the dispatchment of polling materials and at the same time awareness so there should be ample time given so that we could be prepared back in the province.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough. We've received the same complaint from others as well, so you proceed.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Okay, another issue is security engagements in the election process. Sometimes one or two security personnel come and interfere into the election process and that's one of the problems we had. Most of the ROs and AROs were beaten up by the security personnels when they should be there to provide security and not giving commands to do this and that for a box to be put aside. No! They should be providing security to them.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** - Okay, it's good that you are mentioning that so which security forces; Police, Defence Force or CIS?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – I would say it's not just security personnel but Defence Force and Police too. I was also nearly beat up and it's usually from outside forces and not within the province. Probably my PPC can elaborate more on that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** - Okay. Are you able to identify those individuals?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** - We can but there's so many that we cannot remember their faces. They come and go. So I don't really remember them.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** - Orait, mi stopim yu liklik pastem. Mipela understand that there are serious issues with elections in the highlands. We all accept that so one of the areas that we are looking at as a committee is the penalty for those who breach some of the election laws. Mipela bai tafenim up. But it's not going to help if man i kam na mekim bikhet pasin and nobody can identify that person.

We are a parliamentary committee, and as far as I'm concerned, if we're going to take a recommendation to Parliament, sapos wanpela candidate emi redim ol tribe bilong em or husait long fight na bagarapim elections na ol arapela candidate, and if we decide to ban you for life and we change the law, we will ban you for life. Dispela kantri i no bilong wanpela man, or bilong wanpela tribe or bilong wanpela clan, em kantri bilong mipela olgeta. So mi laik mekim klia long dispela. So when you speak to us, speak to us in a way that you want us to help you improve.

Noken tromoi antap na yumi just bilasim na go arere arere. Mi Sepik yah, mipela no save raunim raunim, mipela save go stret. Yupela ol highlands mi save yupela sa laik story raunim raunim go avinun bai yupela kam kamap. Mipela Sepik em mipla save tok nogat taim, mipela laik hariap na go stret. Nau yupela klia? Na mi save tupela barata sidaon sait sait too, ol too laik hariap hariap bicos ol lusim family na kam. Mi tok pilai, but you get what I mean? So yu noken poret long go stret na tokaut.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** - Ating mi klostu pinis nau. Another thing was the funding was insufficient. Funding mas go stret long ol provinces. It should not go to the Electoral Commission but must go direct long ol provinces to avoid delays.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** - Fair enough, that's a consistent request from all the provinces. Can you be specific, Electoral Commission givim yupla hamas na Enga Provincial Government putim hamas?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – I did the budget for K8.5 million, but the Electoral Commission gave me K3.54 million as written here.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Na Enga Provincial Government givim you hamas

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Enga Provncial ol no givim go lo Electoral Commission, no, they assisted me a lot.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And do you have a figure as to what was the total contribution from the Enga Provincial Government?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – K500, 000.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Just K500,000?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Just K500, 000 that was used

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What about the districts? Did the DDA's contribute something?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Nothing! With the K500, 000 there was more committed because Enga is a very volatile area, so we had to get more security personnel apart from the ones there.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And who paid for that?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** - It was the Enga Provincial Administration.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So the contribution from the Enga Provincial Government was more than half a million?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – More than K2 million or K3 million.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, maybe at some point later we can get an accurate figure. Secretariat, please take note, I'd like to get the exact number of what the Enga Provincial Government contributed to the elections. Instead lo yumi tromoi antap antap. So maybe just avoid that and continue, but we we will be asking the Enga Provincial Government to provide the proper accounting of how much money Enga Provincial Government i spendim. Please continue.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – I'm done.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – You're done. PPC, you want to add something? Mi givim taim long yu.

## **Rural Commander Enga**

**Snr Inspector. RICHARD KOKI** (Rural Commander - Enga) – I'll go straight to the security aspects of the elections. I have run three elections from my, so I'm speaking from experience. In the national elections we have three phases of the security operations. The first one is the pre-NATEL operations, the second one is the polling period and the final one is the counting period.

In the pre-NATEL part of the elections we normally do awareness and educate people on the offences and crimes of the elections. We also look at stabilising the province or the area in terms of when there is outstanding conflicts or issues; for instance in Enga Province we have issues of tribal conflicts.

In my capacity as the Rural Commander, I can tell this committee that in Enga Province we have done really well in that area. During the last elections, Enga Province was stabilised. There was no trouble before we went into the elections.

The two areas of concern were Kompam-Ambum and Tsak Valley in the Wapenamanda area. The issues from these areas started from politically- motivated tribal conflicts. I was not surprised when I heard that there was conflict there during the course of the polling because I was out on a roll out program with my troops prior to that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can I ask you to clarify that a little bit further? So in your security operations prior to the elections, the security forces were already aware of the potential for armed conflict in the Tsak Valley and in Kompam-Ambum?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – That is correct.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Were you aware of tribesmen building up arms in preparation for the elections?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – Not during the actual conflict, but it was known by everyone that arms were already building up in the Highlands region.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That is fair enough. I know you have a difficult job like all our security personnel. I am asking with that understanding, yu tok pinis olsem yumi save olsem olgeta hap em ol firearm istap. Do we have any intention of removing the firearms from the people who have them before the elections? Would that be a feasible undertaking? What do you think?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – That is a great challenge that we the law enforcers faced.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Papua New Guinea harim yu stap ya so tokim mipela stret. Inap long mipela rausim o nogat?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – Yes, mipela iken rausim but em bai igo bek long rienfosmen na menpawa, the logistics capability bilong ol polis as a whole. I have been living in Enga Province for almost 23 years now and from my experience Enga is a good province. They respect the rule of law and the authorities. When we go out and talk to them, they hide their firearms but when there is no presence of security personnel, they capitalise on that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Given your 23 years of experience in Enga Province, how would you advise the government? Obviously, wanem kain asua yupela igat long Enga long sait bilong ol wepens, is probably the same throughout the Highlands region. As an officer with 23 years of experience, what would you say to the government and your National Parliament about how we can deal with that going forward? Yumi laikim fri na seif eleksen lo ol man na meri wantem.

Narapela kesten em, how prolific, or in your professional opinion, hamaspela wepen istap antap long hap?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – Em planti stret ya.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Olgeta ples igat?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – Olgeta ples igat.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Sapos olgeta ples igat, on average how many weapons would one village have? Yu just guess tasol na tokim mipela. Papua New Guinea em harim stap.

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – Long wanpela ples ba kain olsem tenpela hai pawad istap na ol narapela em ol homeid.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What sort of factory-made weapons would they have? Give us the types. Are they semi-automatics or automatics? What kind of calibre?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – They are semi-automatic and some of them a more than what the security forces have.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, spell it out, we came here to put everything out in the open; that is our responsibility. Tell us openly, what kind of machines are you referring to?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – M16s, carbines, SLRs; all these weapons, H&K, MP5

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – 5.56? 7.62?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – 7.62 and 5.56, with the recent media coverage these are ammunitions like 7.62 are only for soldiers or military. The police don't use it.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And that is present in Enga?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – Yes.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– PPC, can I just ask a short question? These firearms that you have just explained; who usually uses these firearms? Where do they come from?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – Bai mi tok pisin so that the other PEC members from Enga and rest of the country can also hear this becos planti bilong ol save tokpisin. Long Enga, ol

guns yumi kisim kam em bilong security purpose, especially long Enga, igat tribal conflicts or pasin bilong birua taim save stap olsem na planti ol wepons save kam insait bilong dispela rot tasol. Ol i putim long haus dua bilong ol, ol save haitim na kisim aut taim trouble em i start. But otherwise long taim bilong peace na dispela kain gutpela sindaun, awareness mipla bai toktok em ol save respect.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Dispela ol firearms, ol save baim long TST or wanem hap, stua nating or?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – Yumi harem stori bilong break and enter long Taurama Barracks, sampela kam long hap. Sampela, yumi harem soon after the Bougainville crisis, ol i kam aut long dispela taim.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Are they normally used by the Police Force or used by Defence?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – Ol police na army save usim.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – You may continue, sir.

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – During the pre-NATEL operations, Enga was okay when we went into the elections. Trouble started to come in during the second phase of polling. The troubles were mainly from during the time of polling when people started to go in to vote in their leaders. From my experience with elections, since 2002 to the last recent elections, all elections in Enga are not free and fair.

With my security personnel here on the ground we try to use common sense too. One day polling is not sufficient, which normally results in people doing a block vote. At the same time, our manpower as police in each polling location is about one or two, which is just not enough.

You will see people turn up at the polling places with bush knives and when there is a small problem, it quickly escalates.

Point mi laik mekim em olsem taim bilong polling ol hevi sa kamap olgeta taim. Olsem na nogat wanpla free and fair election long Enga mi witnessim long em. Bicos long taim na tu long sait bilong polis mipela understandim tu mipela playim common sense na ol scrutineers bilong

candidates ol ikam representim ol wan wan candidates at least ol ikam long sampla kain agreement or consensus bifo dispela samtin sa kamap. So dispela sa kamap olsem long planti elections. Long counting, namba three phase blo counting em there's no problem with the security operations but because normally the foreign troops come in from outside into the province and are briefed in advance on the roles and responsibilities as securing personeel by the PPC who is the commander on the ground. This is clearly spelt out during the briefing of police. But unfortunately, sampela incident save kamap olsem RA expense in the last election, em ba yumi noken giaman long dispela, I think em sa kamap.

I think with the recommendations on the way forward and solutions in terms of security, I strongly recommend that there must be a biometrics. Biometrics mas kamap long next elections with the good initiatives by the Government long dispela NID project roll out. Mipela laikim bai it must be mandatory long olgeta provincial gavman na district development authorities long partner wantaim dispela NID program bifo long 2027 Elections so ol mas mekim olgeta population bilong ol registered. Bicos dispela hevi blong common roll na long polling save olgeta taim kamap so the only way forward or solution em i biometrics na registration. There must be compulsory registration long olgeta population.

As a citizen of Enga, I would like to commend the provincial government. Mipela long Enga provincial gavman i teikim lead pinis, especially Wabag district tu long partner wantaim NID program so mipela laikim ol narapela district na DDL long Enga tu mas partner. Ating it must be mandatory na dispela recommendation komiti mas bringim so that bai pasim that grey area where sampela ol memba of parliament might capitalise on na ol inap partner wantem NID program bicos ol laik usim dispela system long common roll bai ol igo insait long mekim dispela na ba hevi bai istap yet. So, em wanpela recommendation in terms of security mipela bai laikim mas go na em bai rausim sampela burden kamap long dispela.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Sorry PPC, can I just jump in before mipela surukim toktok igo long narapela ol agenda but long biometrics, yu story, inap yu kamautim sampela toktok wer yu explainim gut? Biometric em wanem samting? Long purpose bilong ol ples lain husait i wok long lukluk long dispela program, yu tok long introducim dispela biometrics, em how ba yumi introducim long tingting bilong yu?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – Em long computer system, kain olsem NID na registration ol wok long mekim na dispel kain process. Kain olsem wanpela masin bai kisim fingerprint na suim card olsem NID card –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, mi intervene bikos taim to na mi laik larim ol Western Highlands kam in. Ms Sipani ino toktok yet.

Okay, from your perspective long sait bilong security, let's just say the committee brings in an electronic system wer emi i bai luksave na givim wanwan vote long wanwan man na meri. Long yupela long Enga yu ting em bai solvim ol problem bilong yupela or yu ting olsem sampela kenidat bai still be disgruntled? Sapos yumi lokim system long wanpela ID long vote em iken pingaprint or pes ID or dispela kain. These technologies exist so if we are to bring that in, which the committee is leaning towards, em bai halivim yupela long Enga or nogat?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – Yes, em i bai halivim mipela long Enga because Enga gat wanpela tokples. Em bai mipela ken wokim awareness long olgeta ples na ol Enga bai undastanim na wanbel. Bikos long planti conflicts mipela wok long go long ol. Mipela wok long usim dispela wanpela tokples long advantage bilong mipela.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Sir. Okay, I will come to Ms Sipani, is there anything you would like to add on behalf of the Provincial Government?

#### **Legal Officer - Enga Province**

**Ms SERAH SIPANI** (Provincial Legal Officer -Enga)– Thank you, Honourable Allan Bird and members.

I will not say much because most things have been said by the Election Manager and the PSE – Rural Command, Mr Richard Koki. I would like to stress on the provincial governments contribution to ensuring that the elections were carried out and delivered in a safe and secure environment.

But, I will start off by saying that going through the election process is a democratic right and it is the basis of where all government assistance exists to serve the interest of our people. On that basis, it is also the primary concern of every government and also at the provincial government

level to ensure that it happens within that framework. Based on that premise, the election in Enga from the provincial election steering committee's perspective, we have been able to deliver this election based on the memorandum of agreement we have with the Electoral Commission.

The primary reason for the MOU is that we conclude every year before the election; personally, I have been in Enga for two elections; 2017 and 2022.

In 2017 I participated as a citizen because of my family and work in Enga, and my husband is a medical officer on the ground, in the heat of everything. In 2022 I happened to be in the Election Steering Committee as the provincial legal officer and also a senior member of the election committee.

The agreement we have with the Electoral Commission is primarily around mobilizing resources to ensure that the elections are delivered in a secure environment.

As the election manager pointed out EPG provided financial support which was included in the budget appropriated for election up to K500, 000. The Election Steering Committee had an allocation of K200 000 basically to support the administration of the secretariat to ensure that the stakeholders are all doing what they are supposed to be doing.

The Election Committee is chaired by our administrator but in our instance, it was the Deputy Administrator who is currently Mr Sansisasca, and previously by the late Dr Samson Anian. So, we basically had a main objective which was to deliver the election in Enga in a secure environment and ensure that everyone is provided the opportunity to cast their votes and to elect their members.

Apart from highlighting the resources that we have highlighted the provincial government went an extra step to secure the elections; for example, the election manager said that we went beyond just providing that K500, 000, bringin in an additional 60 armed security forces from Moem barracks to secure the location.

That's out of the Provincial Government's own initiative and program to secure the province for the elections. In the course of delivering the elections PPC, PSE has highlighted some of the issues. One thing that was so evident is that although the awareness on electoral offences was carried out by the police and also the security officers. The intelligence gathered on the number of weapons that could be in different households and all that, when it come to the crux of delivering the elections on the polling date and actually getting people out to the polling stations, simple electoral offences were not able to be prosecuted.

Police officers, although right in front of everyone that the scrutineer holim paper na brukim, husait bai holim em na kisim em go long sel na lokim em? Ol bai meikim na who's going to prosecute? Who had the time to do that? What resources were available to these enforcement officers to actually prosecute the electoral offence committed right on that event?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That is a good point you raise and I'd like to again clarify, you are an officer of the court, you're well vest on the processes of justice in our country, better than me and perhaps Member for Bogia, colleague long hapsait em lawyer tu. In your opinion nau tasol yu tok olsem igat ol election offences i kamap right on the day na nogat arrest i kamap. Give us a suggestion or what do you propose we should do about issues like that?

**Ms SERAH SIPANI** – During the election period in Enga we brought in a lot of police and security officers from outside. So even if there is an offence that requires you to pick up that person and lock them and all that, these are outside officers. Identifying the offender and picking them up, em ol bai pasim han na wait liklik na tok husait save long em or hau bai mipela meikim.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Orait, mi bringim bek PSE, yu stap pastaim. What is your response to that, hau bai yupela handelim taim ol eleksen offences i kamap?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – Having the manpower on that day of the polling and considering the behavior of the general population is a common sense thing to do. By having available manpower around, we can effect the arrest on the spot.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So yupela i choose long noken arrestim ol man for a strategic reason or yupela les long kamapim hevi or?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – Nogut mipela kamapim disturbance wer polling ino inap kontinu.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, sapos wanpela man i kam na i meikim sampela asua long taim bilong eleksen, yupela bai ino inap holim bikos yupela les long kirapim moa trabol?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – No, bai mipela still holim. We normally attempt to situations like that but at times we act based on common sense to deal with these things after the polling.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So long dispela las eleksen yah, amaspela ol lain yupela i bin arrestim ol long eleksen offences? Do you have a number?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – I don't have the numbers but that is the point mi laik concludim long steering committee bipo Serah i toktok long en. Long sait bilong Laigam last eleksen we polis mipela i save long ol offenders, especially long Laiagap area na long election ol sampela offenders i stap. It's a question of today go bek long command bilong mipela gen. These offenders mipela save long ol, ol i stap yet mipela ino arrestim ol na they are still around.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Bilong wanem? What is your reason for not arresting them?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – That's the question.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, I know it's a difficult one so you don't need to answer that, I think it answers itself. Now moving on to 2017 Elections, were there any elections offences then in Enga. Yes or no.

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – In every election there are always offences.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Orait, ol lain long 2017, yupela mekim sampela arrest tu or nogat. Mi no laik bagarapim yu or ol gutpela hard working policemen.

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – Yes, mipela wokim sampela arrest.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But in terms of the number of offences and the offenders amaspela yupela i arrestim. Say they were 100 offenders, how many out of the hundred did you manage to arrest?

**Snr Insp RICHARD KOKI** – I cannot give the accurate statistic long committee now.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, say amaspela lain yupela i arrestim 20, 30, 50, 100.

**Snr Insp RICHARD KOKI** – Less than that 10 na kam daun.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, plenti offences but 10 pela tasol yupela arrestim.

**Snr Insp RICHARD KOKI** – So, mi explainim pinis long side bilong there's no free and fair elections so that posed the challenge on the police.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough, I mean you understand the concept of a serial offender. So, man em i bagarapim election long 2017, state i no holim em. Long 2022 em kam bek wokim wok bilong em gen na 2027 em i redi stap long wokim gen. I guess that's what I am trying to get at, so thank you for that Sir.

Ms Sipani, if you want to conclude.

**Ms SERAH SIPANI** – I'll conclude with one of the other key issues and the challenges that we had for Enga itself. The election manager has touched a bit on the appointment of returning officers, ARO's and presiding officers. At the Election Steering Committee level for us it was just like a rubber stamp; notice went out, Electoral Commission did the applications, selections, and all the way down from headquarter. And then they issued a notice saying that this would be the appointed or gazetted officers to deliver the elections. But then do they really know who these people are in Enga and their track record? How well have they being able to deliver elections in previous 2017 Elections and now putting them back on the 2022 job to be presiding officers for their districts?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, you are saying there is no vetting process?

**Ms SERAH SIPANI** – Exactly. So, at the Provincial Steering Committee level, if that function is a delegated function to the Provincial Election Steering Committee, of course we would have vetted the applicant and make recommendations.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, who comes up with the final list that goes to the Electoral Commission? What's the mechanism or who is the individual or who is the group that provides that list to EC?

**Ms SERAH SIPANI** – At the Provincial Election Steering Committee level we were just shown the list, we don't make the appointment.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – You were shown the list by whom? Husait stret showim dispela list long yupela?

**Ms SERAH SIPANI** – The Electoral Commission.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – The Electoral Commission did the shortlist and send it back to you guys.

**Ms SERAH SIPANI** – At the Provincial Appointment.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Press the green button, Mr Iamau.

**Mr ANTHON IAMAU** – At the Provincial Electoral Office all the applicants come, we get them all together. At the provincial level; I have been there for some years so I know who is eligible, who can run elections and who's got the experience.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Mr Iamau, you were going to make a very good point. When you receive the applications; you just receive and send, right?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – No, I get about 10 or 15 shortlisted ones and inform the PEC members that this is the list and send it down to Port Moresby. The selection is done from Port Moresby and is gazetted.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But you produce the shortlist.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – I produce the shortlist.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – You one or is there a team?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – I, one.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – You one. Let's just say I am from Kompam na mi no save gut long yu tasol mi save yupla olgeta gat wanpela tokples but mi tromoi tok tasol na yu mekim decision na yu salim wanpla list i gat fivpela neim long ol lain long Kompam-Ambum i go daun long Mosbi long ol bai wokim seleksion. Wanem reason mi bai gat long trustim yu? Why should I trust you if I'm from Kompam Ambum or Lagaip Porgera or wherever, why should I trust yu wanpela man long mekim disla due diligence process, why should I trust you?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Okay, the applicants ol kam, ol putim go long Electoral Commission –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Osem mi no laik bagarapim yu. I'm trying to understand the thinking of Engans as to why they are trying to disrupt this process that we are just hearing about now.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – What happens is, the applications come – I've been there for some fifteen years and I know who is who and who has been running the elections. So I try to get the best who can run the elections. These are public servants; not anybody from outside because Enga is a very tough place to run the elections. So I gave the best applicants four or five of them and I showed it to the Provincial Elections Steering Committee, the shortlisted applicants, before

sending it down to Moresby. In Moresby the commissioner makes the final decision and selects whoever is there.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is it a high-risk job being a returning officer in Enga?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** - It's a very high-risk job.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And do people get excited to apply for that role?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** - People do apply, especially public servants.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – So there are public servants in Enga who are really excited about taking on a very high-risk job of a returning officer in Enga. Have there been returning officers who have been assaulted?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** - Yes. There have been returning officers who have been assaulted but they still want to apply and they still want to be there in that position. Even after being shot at or held up, these are the sort of things that happen. So I don't know why they are always interested, it's very hard to believe. Some of us would have fear. But Enga as I've said, people die for at least doing this job.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you. Any final words, Ms Sipani, before we move to Western Highlands?

**Ms SERAH SIPANI** – I guess some of the functions of the Electoral Commission and what it really tries to do with those on the ground. Probably as part of this Committee's work, we will look at some powers and functions of the Electoral Commission when it's working with the provincial committees to deliver elections. Some that should be delegated and mandatory, especially around resourcing and mobilizing their delivery of the elections at a provincial level

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Let me give you a short answer, in the by-elections that are coming, because of the performance of some of the provincial governments in the last election, there is an intention now in Government to let provincial government's run the future elections. I think East Sepik will be the one trialing it in Wewak, AROB in North Bougainville and perhaps Enga in Lagaip. These are going to be the three pilots lo yumi testim provincial government bai runnim election. If it works well this will be part of the power sharing going forward between the National and provincial governments into the future. So mi just givim yu dispela answer nau.

**Ms SERAH SIPANI** – Thank you Chairman, I guess to conclude we are well aware that Enga Province is one of the provinces that's leading the decentralization of powers and functions. And I guess Enga itself is trialing a lot of things in education and other sectors. What I'm saying is election process could be one of them as well. There's something peculiar about Enga and Enga may not be the same as our coastal provinces and the rest of the Highlands provinces. If there's something unique and peculiar about Enga then Enga has a different way of delivering elections in Enga itself. If I could say that to conclude. Thank you

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, I have a few questions for Mr Anthon Iamau. Can you inform the Committee how many elections you have run in Enga?

**Mr ANTHON IAMAU** - Since 1982 I've been running the elections. At times I was the assisting presiding and returning officer and then presiding and returning officer until 2016. I was appointed the election manager and in 2016 and 2017, I managed the elections.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** - Thank you. You mentioned in your opening remarks few problems you saw as the election manager of Enga province. You stated that the last election was the worst ever in your experience in Enga province. Now, there are certain issues that caused that. You mentioned that leaders were the cause of all this lawlessness during elections. When you say leaders, we have so many leaders so can you specify? Were you referring to candidates, sitting members or former members of Parliament? Can you inform the committee please?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** - When I say leaders, I refer especially to those intending candidates and even some sitting MPs. I don't want to name them.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – That's good, you don't have to. Now, inform the committee and the public the level of interference by sitting members of Parliament in Enga province through your office for the appointment of election officers and security personnel. Just tell and inform the committee the level of interference from the sitting members of Parliament.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – From the sitting members of Parliament, I don't think I had any interference, especially on the appointment of ROs and AROs.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – So you had no outside influence?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Yes!

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – You were free to make your decisions?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Yes, that's right. I was free to make my decision. My shortlisted name-list is taken down to HQ in Port Moresby and the decisions come from there.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you very much.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – I don't really appoint AROs and ROs here.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – So there's no interference from sitting members of Parliament in Enga province during elections?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – No!

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Now, Mr Iamau, if the government does not change the election process come 2027, how do you see elections in Enga been conducted if we don't change the system and the same system remains? How do you see the future of Enga elections in 2027?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Well, if we foresee about it, probably we will be needing more securities and we're talking about the biometric system. I think that would be better. If we don't have any changes there, then probably Enga will be worse than other provinces so we have recommended for the biometric system. That biometric system would probably solve most of the problems and that system should be decentralised in the provinces and the final roll would be printed down in Port Moresby. We do the update here, if we get the system which can record every information.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Sir, I think you've answered the question that the member asks so ol narapela toktok, noken wari. Olsem me tok, you are not the first people we're interviewing so what you are saying is consistent with everyone so there's no need to repeat that. Thank you.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you, Chairman. Mr Richard Koki, provincial police commander, you have 23 years of experience and you've been through four elections or so in Enga. From previous elections up until 2022, how do you see the conduct of your superiors? With all the money that the government gives to your superiors in Port Moresby, we understand not so much resource is reaching you and we understand also that there were no pre-election operations by the police because there was no time, lack of resources and all that. In your 23 years of experience, how do you see Enga province if the government does not change the current system of elections?

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** - I've said it all in my presentations, but the best way is to change the current process that we have.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – My question is if we don't, what is your prediction? What is your outlook? How do you see it?

**Snr Insp. RICHARD KOKI** – The same problem will be experienced.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – We are expecting the worst, you say. Tell the committee, we expect the worst. That is all we want to know.

**Snr Inspector RICHARD KOKI** – Yes, we expect the worst.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you very much, no further questions from me, Chairman. Thank you.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Enga. Yupela bai stap yet, nogut mipela nid long kam bek. Please remain and I know you’ve got some of your LLG members at the back.

Western Highlands, you have already seen how the process works from your compatriots from Enga. Maybe mi askim husat, husat laik go pas. Election Manager, Mr Telape, press the green button, and introduce yourself to the people of Papua New Guinea and then yu bihainim wankain format na u givim report bilong yu.

## **WESTERN HIGHLANDS PROVINCE**

### **Election Manager –Western Highlands Province**

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** (Election Manager – Western Highlands Province) – Avinun loNG yupela olgeta. Tenkiu Chairman, Honourable Allan Bird, committee members, Honourable Keith Iduhu, and Honourable Robert Naguri. Tenkiu long yupela and I welcome you to Western Highlands. This is the first of its kind, after so many elections, that we have such a committee going around the provinces.

I am Philip Telape, Election Manager for the last three elections since 2012 until 2022. I welcome you to Western Highlands. In Western Highlands our problems are being caused by the rolls. The rolls are not being fixed in every electorate, the second one has been the –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I think that has already been given, mipela acceptim pinis so mi laikim you go street long ol specific problems yupela encounterim apart from the roll, conduct bilong ol candidates, voting, counting na ol problems yupela i experiencim. And then you come down to

your budget and things like that. Long common roll, I think yumi olgeta lukim osem em problem pinis. Thank you Sir.

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Thank you Chairman. The problems that we had and I want to start by saying that 2022 Election process started very late

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We've recorded that.

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – All these things started very late beginning with the rolls, finance and the appointment of AROs and ROs.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can you describe those particular problems? Wanem problem yupela i gat long appointment bilong ol ROs and AROs.

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – It will be the same as Enga; people applied, the applications went to Port Moresby was shortlisted and sent back to us. After that we did shortlisting here too, it was done by the steering committee and myself. We narrowed the shortlisting to three people and then we were told to add another two. So the total shortlisted applicants sent to Moresby was five. And there were never any appointments done. There were outside applications that were selected also.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Could explain what you mean by outside applications? What you just said now.

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Not from our shortlist.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Em kam long we?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Em kam long headquarter.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is the headquarters allowed to do that in your process?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – It's not that, but they have the authority to do the appointment

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And in your opinion, were you happy with that?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – No, that's why we had a lot of problems in revoking and appointing and then we had so many complaints among the candidates and the people.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Orait, yu describim sampela ol complaints bilong ol candidates bilong yupela long Western Highlands.

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – If those applicants are not –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – No, I meant the complaints. The complaints e kam long ol candidate, yu tok nau tasol yah. Wanem kain ol complaints?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Ol complaints olsem 'yupela appointim rong man, yupela shud appointim niupla man gen'. Then from that list and their own list, they went to Port Moresby to the commissioner's office and appointed new people again.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, taim yupla i gat dispel, how should I say it, dispela confusion long appointments bilong ol ROs wantem ol AROs, dispela em affectim election blo yupela?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Yes, bikos ol narapela kendidet ino hamamas. Then we had the problem of fighting against each other.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Did they lodge any formal complaints to you in relation to their disagreements with the appointments?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – They did do that and they also go down to Port Moresby to do the changes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So sampela kendidet go daun ken long Port Moresby long wokim senis long ol yet? And did the Electoral Commission in Port Moresby accept some of those changes from the candidates?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Yes, they did.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is that a normal practice from all the election managers? Is it possible for me, osem mi kendidet mi ken fly go long Port Moresby na senisim wanpela ARO long East Sepik?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – What the people in Port Moresby should have done was to appoint the AROs from our recommendation because we know what will happen.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What you are saying is that there are people from electorates in Western Highlands Province, oli fly igo daun long Port Moresby na oli influensim appointment bilong ol returning officers? That is a very serious allegation and you are confident that that was what happened?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Yes, I am.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, but before you proceed, Enga yupela gat dispela seim hevi or nogat?

**Mr ANTHON IAMAU** – (inaudible)

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That is fair enough. I understand that and I'm trying to clarify that there was no interference from candidates in Enga Province affecting the appointment of the returning officers but dispela emi kamap long Western Highlands. Em mi laik establisim dispela.

Before you continue, yu save long wanem dispela ol kendidets oli wokim dispela pasin? Would you be able to name them? You do not have to do so now.

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – I wouldn't know.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But you are aware?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – But we have the new leases that comes in with the appointment.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How many times were your returning officers changed?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – For Hagen Open, the returning officers were changed three times within the period of a month to two months.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, in two months there were three different people appointed to be the returning officer for Hagen Open?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – That was after the issue of the writs.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I thought the process was that there can be no appointments after the writs are open. Am I wrong in thinking that? Ol dispela returning officers i sapos to be appointed before the issue of writs. Emi stret? But in the case of Hagen Open, there were three changes after the issue of writs. Is that what you were saying?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Not just Hagen Open but for Mul-Baiyer Open as well.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – There were how many changes for Mul-Baiyer?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – There were two changes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is that normal? Long 2017 ileksen long Western Highlands, dispela i bin kamap o nogat?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – No, it did not.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – This only happened in 2022?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – The same also happened for Dei Open when we were in the process of counting.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, while you were in the process of counting, they changed the returning officer?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Yes, they did.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I am shocked. Dispela I bin kamap bifo long Western Highlands o nau em fes taim? That is highly unusual. As a public servant and the election manager, yu gat sampela wei long putim belhevi bilong yu so that your disagreements will be heard?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – I can do that but the authority is with the commissioner.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That is fair enough. Mi askim yu bikos just like your counterpart there, yu tupela i bosim eleksen. As the chairman with my committee members, we want to find ways to help you do your job better. That is why we are here.

Electoral Commissioner na ol hevi bilong Port Moresby, we will deal with that separately. We have already got enough information to do that, but I need to understand your specific problems wankain olsem wanwok bilong yu and we will also listen to Jiwaka, Chimbu, Hela, Southern Highlands and everybody else.

So I want to understand from you because I am surprised as well as my colleagues about what happened in your case. I want to know if you have a process of appeal.

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – I do not think so, Mr Chairman. We can only centralise their appointments to their provinces

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So all the changes that we made in Port Moresby caused you problems here?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Alright, continue sir.

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – We requested for K8 million –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can you talk about the polling? I have seen footage and I have a disturbing report from a foreign observer team about some of the voting in Western Highlands where young men marked options 1 and 2 and gave their people to mark only option 3. Can you confirm this? And if so, is that a normal practice?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Voting in the rural areas is very hard to control. There are only two or three policemen in a polling booth, as we said.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So this kind of practice happened?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Has it happened before or just during this election?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – It happens in some areas where security personnels are not present or if there are only a few security personnels, and they could not do much.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough; now you mentioned the security forces; I remember seeing a video, and I think that is in Jiwaka, the security forces are marking the ballot papers and putting them into ballot boxes. They took the video themselves and they shared it widely. Did this also happen here in the Western Highlands?

**Assistant Provincial Returning Officer**

**Mr TOM KIAP** (Assistant Provincial Returning Officer – Western Highlands) – I’m standing in for my Provincial Administrator, who was the PRO for the last 2022 Election.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough, continue.

**Mr TOM KIAP** – I ran a couple of elections in Oro Province. In 2012, I was the RO for Mul Baiyer and in 2017, I was looking after logistics for Western Highlands. I was then the Asst. RO from 2022 in Western Highlands.

What you are asking my election manager is a norm.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So that is the normal practice in Western Highlands elections?

**Mr TOM KIAP** – Not normal but that is what is actually happening.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I mean it’s not normal in other places but you are saying that it happens here in the Western Highlan. So in your opinion, do the people have their say in the elections of their leaders, generally?

**Mr TOM KIAP** – Yes, to some extent. The elections, if I can put it this way, has become a volatile thing where they force to take over the processes of the election, and mark ballot papers in some cases. Some, yes, they do express their own choices.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, so what is the motivation for that? I mean we heard from on manager Enga that in Enga the people will die for their candidates, they just don’t care. In Western Highlands, what’s the motivation? Why would people go to that extend of manipulating the voting process?

**Mr TOM KIAP** – Well, yes, we can say power hungry.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And is that widespread or is it just in specific areas?

**Mr TOM KIAP** – Well we've had instance in Dei Open electorate where somebody was killed for trying to stop people from doing what they were going to do.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What were they going to do?

**Mr TOM KIAP** – Well, like trying to take over the process of polling.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So in Dei? People were trying to do their own thing? This one person tried to stop it and he got killed?

**Mr TOM KIAP** – Yes. That's the situation we have so I think, what we can probably discuss now is a way forward at least to –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So what would you suggest? You said that from your experience you came from Oro and you've run a few elections there. You're in Western Highlands, you've run a few elections here. How do you compare the two? How can we improve it for our people in the Western Highlands? Yupela ol lain gat experience, you've been running elections for a long time on that side. Mipla em mipela stap lo dispela sait. So from your perspective, how can we improve it so that the people of Western Highlands, men and women, young people can participate freely in this elections and have their opinions counted? Given your experience, how can we improve this?

**Mr TOM KIAP** – Okay, back when I was a young officer in Oro, my observation was that, I mean yupela ol nambis so yupela kilia, taim bilong polling, people come and they vote and then they go and do their business. They do not hang around the polling area. That was back in the 1990s up to early 2000. I don't know the situation now but that used to be the scenario, ol kam vote and then ma mindim bisnis bilong ol na go nabaut olsem but here, taim voting day em olsem the whole community, em bikplea samtin kamap, everybody comes. Maybe I can put it this way, it's show time and everybody is interested, everybody is excited, olgeta kam bung, mekim olsem. The introduction of one-day polling in the highlands, I think came about in 1997 or 1992 around there.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is it working? Is it delivering the outcome?

**Mr TOM KIAP** – That’s what I’m trying to put to you now. From my observation, after conducting a couple of elections, I think this one-day polling mekim na yumi rush tumas. I ting ol security forces can speak on their side. Mi lukim olsem if we can probably go district by district, a day at a time, it would ease the pressure.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I’ve never seen one-day polling so forgive my ignorance. Ples bilong mi in my own village, let me describe this for you and our good people of the Western Highlands and Enga. Ples bilong mi em ol save vote long court circuit area na my court circuit area has seven villages.

So first day em box bai stap long first village na very last one ol bai vote, avinun ol bai karim kam, ol bai wokabout long leg kam long next village. Na mipela gat plastic box, ino metal one olsem yupela. Okay ol bai lusim, olgeta man bai, ol scrutiners olgeta bihainim go stap long hap. Polis man nogat gun. Em wokabout han nating.

Next village, next day ol kirap ol bai vot and then lo avinun ol move go long next village. It takes us seven days; em long ples bilong mi stret, kot circuit area bilong mi. And it is the same across East Sepik.

Now, since you brought up the issue of one-day voting, yupela long highlands, em olsem wanem? Olgeta ples same time?

**Mr TOM KIAP** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And you are saying that it is an issue. Okay, so what time do you start voting and what time do you conclude voting?

**Mr TOM KIAP** – When it comes to the highlands, in the last elections it was Hela and then Enga and –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Oh, so you go province by province?

**Mr TOM KIAP** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, so one day in Hela na pinis yupela go long next province? Na olgeta security forces too yupela move?

**Mr TOM KIAP** – Yes. They move from province to province, so we move around for the one-day polling in the five highlands provinces.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And the reason for that is what, to combat the violence?

**Mr TOM KIAP** – That, I think the Electoral Commissioner can answer, but when it happens like that we are seen to be rushing things, like the logistics, movement of ballot boxes and all these other things. Maybe, if we are given one week to conduct polling then we will be allowed time to organise properly. But from my perspective, one-day polling makes us to rush thing.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Sir, for your contribution. Mi kam bek long yu gen, Mr Telape, yu laik addim samplea sumtin?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Long moni, mi toktok pinis. Although we budgeted for K8 million, we were given K3 million. The provincial government gave us K1 million but that money just came and went back.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What do you mean by that?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – I mean that they came with their own programs and claims then they just put the money into the account and took it back. We only signed their cheques to get their money back. So they gave us –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can I ask what were those claims for, if you can recall?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – From that K1 million, we were only given K200 000 and K800 000 they had their own expenditures.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can you recall what those expenditures were? Give me an example, wanem hire car or hotel accommodation?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Contributions of the steering committee and the hire for the steering committee members, those expenditures are in the finance and treasury.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, they used the money on the steering committee members and not the Election?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Steering committee members and also those who are in authority to give us those monies.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What do you mean by that? So, man em i givim yu moni, i kisim bek gen?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – It was the provincial government budget. It was paid to our account but as soon as that money came into our account they came with their own claims which were to be processed under that funding. So, then we had to give those monies back and we had to expend on what was left.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Something that you said sounds really bad to my ears olsem na mi just laik confirm olsem mi harim yu stret or mi harim yu karangi.

Okay, fair enough.

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – So, this is what happened. We spent almost K4 million for what we budgeted for and we still have the outstandings of 2017, which we submitted to Port Moresby to be paid under the K200 million –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can I ask you, wanem kain outstanding? Mi harim olsem i save igat outstanding, outstanding, nau yu tok 2017 outstanding. Em outstanding bilong wanem, hire car, allowances?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Hire cars and container hire and some roll updating allowances not being paid.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Total em bai hamas olgeta?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – It is K2.75 million for both 2017 and 2022 elections. The papers are down in Port Moresby. We suppose to pay for those from the K200 million allocated by the government before the elections but it was never paid. That K200 million allocated by the government would have been used to pay the outstandings.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, mi tokim yu stop pastem. Mr Iamau, Enga, yupela i gat ol outstanings i stap long ol previous elections?

**Mr ANTHON IAMAU** – For 2017 I had no outstanding and in 2022, I probably have about K40, 000 because I did my budget. They gave me little but I did manage it. I didn't have to make commitments when I saw that I didn't have enough money. Why I have this K40, 000 outstanding is because it was never budgeted for and somehow I was moved to Jiwaka. The counting for three electorates was done in Jiwaka and whenever it was paid for was done in Wabag. That is why I got this K40, 000 outstanding, otherwise it should be okay.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you Sir, well-done, and I commend you for that. Alright so yupela igat K2.75 million outstanding and it is interesting that they only got K40, 000. Anyway continue.

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – I'm moving to police under election security. We had only two to three police officers in every polling place, which was not sufficient. It is difficult to arrest any offenders with the lack of police manpower. We have never charged any offenders for elections in

Western Highlands but there was one incident last year at the counting place, an ARO from Mul-Baiyer brought in 2000 marked ballot papers into the counting venue. He put the papers under his coat and went in to the counting venue but the police and security force caught him at the gate and he was taken to the police station on that same day and was not charged again.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Mi welkamim tupela member bilong Parliamentary Committee. Nau tasol balus i lusim tupela na ol i kam. Thank you. Please continue.

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – So this is what happened with the security –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Sorry, I missed that. This was 2022?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Wanperla ARO em i kam insait wantaim 2000 marked ballot papers was never arrested?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – He was arrested and taken to the police station but was never charged.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So he was set free and is roaming around.

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – From that time I wouldn't know. We went up to return the writs.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That was in 2022?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How would this person be able to obtain 2000 ballot papers? Were there generally a lot of ballot papers that went up to that particular electorate or ol i printim long sampela hap na karim i kam or how?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – It could have been those remaining ballot papers with the AROs.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, dipela were ol no completim long en na remainders em ol markim gen na karim i kam.

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Could have been.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, but you still don't know because he was never prosecuted.

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – For the police and security, I go back to those appointments again. The AROs and ROs will not listen to my instructions or Electoral Commission staff because our grade now is on grade 12 and 13 under the public service and those ROs and AROs are above grade 15, 18, and 20. So, if I'm trying to give instructions to them, they are defying those orders.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Hold on a minute, I understand that they might have a substantive appointment under the public service but when they are appointed as returning offices their substantive appointments become invalid. They report to you because you are the one that exercises the power of the Electoral Commissioner in this province. Am I wrong?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – During the elections the AROs and ROs become so powerful and they don't deal with us. They go direct to the Electoral Commissioner and he deals direct with them. So this is the sort of communication that we have in every election.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, mi like clarifym gen, Mr Iamau. Does this same thing happen in Enga? Do your AROs and ROs bypass you and go straight to the commissioner?

**Mr ANTHON IMAU** – In 2016 and 2017, I was the election manager but I've never experienced that. No AROs or ROs have bypassed me and gone to the electoral commissioner.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Sir. So, em lo Western Highlands tasol na Enga nogat. Yupela long Western Highlands ol ARO na RO ol i abrusim yu na go lo antap. Why would they bypass you and for what reason or purpose? Ol laik kisim wanem stret na ol i abrusim yu na go?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Okay, when they gazetted and the commissioner has the ultimate power of revoking an appointments and I'm not gazette, I'm an election worker in the province. So whatever that I see is good for the election and try to tell them, they will not listen to me. So, they say we are gazetted and appointed by the commissioner and not you. So this is how some decisions were made without the steering committees, the security forces advice and my office's advice in the province, while they are dealing directly with the commissioner.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, in your opinion, would some of these ROs and AROs in your jurisdiction, do you think they are subject to outside influence?

**Mr PHILIP TELAPE** – Yes, then we go back to their appointments.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Because they have funny appointments; that's interesting because me no harim same samtin long ol narapela province na me harim long Western Highlands that's why I'm digging into it.

**Hon JACOB MAKI** – Sorry, let me add onto this. Mr Telape, does that mean ROs and AROs are appointed by the politicians and you are appointed by the Electoral Commissioner? Is that correct? I'm asking because AROs and ROs, when they are appointed and reappointed they directly deal with the commissioner and are not listening to the man on the ground who represents the province, so doesn't mean that AROs and ROs are appointed by the Electrical Commissioner. It that what you mean? Oh what is it? Who really appoints this people? They take shortcuts and go direct and get appointed, we want to know.

**Mr PHILIP TELAPI** – Some are being appointed through their political influence and interference. And it is done through the commissioner's office not through the recommendations of the provincial office.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough, proceed.

**Mr PHILIP TELAPI** – With that, what I am saying is on paper there and I will give it to you with my recommendations. Some might be relevant, some might not be necessary to be included in there.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you Sir. Okay, let me move to the acting PPC. Could you give us a security report and before you do please state your full name designation for the record.

**Acting Provincial Police Commander Western Highlands**

**ACTING PPC**– Mr Chairman I am standing in on behalf of the provincial police commander Chief Superintendent John Sogom since he is away –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We understand there is a PPC Conference in Port Moresby –

**ACTING PPC** – I was appointed acting PPC to oversee his office. Most of this 2022 Elections problems Mr Sogom PPC would know. I was appointed as constitutional commander to the Western Highlands Province and I took all the policemen here to all parts of the Western Highlands to run the elections.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Were you directly involved in the elections here in the Western Highlands?

**ACTING PPC** – No.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay Sir, then I will have to excuse you. Before we come back to Western Highlands team, Commander RIGA NEGGI, you have provided a comprehensive report and you have seen the proceedings. Could I ask you to give us a summary on some of the experiences of the security forces under your command during the elections?

## **Highlands Divisional Command -Eastern End**

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** - Chairman and members of the committee Honourable Maki, Honourable Iduhu, Honourable Pim, and Honourable Naguri, my name is Rigga Negi and I am assistant Commissioner of Police by rank. I am the divisional commander for the Highlands region which is Western Highlands, Simbu and Jiwaka. In Highlands we have two divisional police command so the western end is Enga, Southern Highlands and Hela.

All the PPCs are in Port Moresby having a conference so they are not around here, especially for Western Highlands, Chimbu and Jiwaka.

I will be brief. The operational planning system, the officer from Enga Snr Inspector Koki has already presented what we do and the plan is always good but it is the implementation that really counts.

Generally, looking at the divisional command in overview, according to the 2011 census figures, Western Highlands province has a population of 362580 against a regular police force of 184 which gives us the ratio of one police officer to 1349 people.

Jiwaka province has a population of 341579 against a regular police strength of 82 and that gives us a ratio of one police officer to 4165 people.

Simbu province has a population of 376473 against the regular police strength of 149 and that gives us a ratio of one police officer to 2562 people.

So, if you look at it, the United Nation's approved ratio is one police officer to 445 but ours is a very big ratio gap so that's something we need to improve on.

As a background to the Highlands command itself, the Western Highlands province, especially, Hagen is the economic hub of the Highlands division, in both Eastern and Western.

We have the International airport here at Kagamuga and all the banking services and business transactions are mostly done here. The people from Enga, Southern Highlands, Western Highlands itself, Jiwaka and Simbu, they all come here. So, the Western Highlands province is the economic hub of the Highlands province and of course, the Highlands provinces have a lot of projects and business developments are going on.

I'll just briefly give you some of the highlights. Actually, we were depressed by some of the negatives but I'll give you some of the highlights of the success stories from the way I see. Actually, I am looking across at the overview of the Highlands Eastern Division, we had support

from the Transitory Task Force (TSTF) which is made up of the Police, Defence Force and the Correctional Services so that they provide security to the operations.

One of the things that I have seen working well in here was collaboration between the candidates and the returning officers and the AROs, and honourable Pim can attest to that. There was one time when I went down to Dae and met with him plus other candidates and we had a talk and that was in an understanding. And also they came across to where we were based, the common centre and we had this communication going on when we had a need.

So, Honourable Maki can attest to that. We had one conference with candidates from Mul-Baiyer at the common centre. So, these sorts of communications between candidates and the returning officers helped us to understand each other's jobs, duties and responsibilities so it helped with the running of the election operations here. Also, we had constant communications with the people in Simbu and the communication awareness was very effective from day one ahead of everyone of us here.

The QRF support and the RRF or Rapid Response Unit support was really accurate. Referring to one of the statements made by the election manager about a murder case at the polling booth in Dei, our polling team and officers who were providing security at the polling booth couldn't do much but we had the QRF coming in and support to extract the boxes. So, this is some of the support that was provided by the Quick Response Force and that really helped us. Also, there was a lot of support from some of the district and provincial administrations. It was not directly funding but in terms of logistics, that really helped us a lot.

With the provincial election steering committees, I was monitoring all the three provinces so I could say that there was a lot of collaboration and communication between us so we managed the election in a more manageable way. There is a lot of things that I have to say but I don't want to repeat what they have said. We also had other key stakeholders coming in to support. What Mr Talape was talking about, the appointment of three ROs in the Hagen Open, we had problems.

We had roadblocks all over the place and the airport was shutdown. These are impacts of decisions made in Port Moresby that affected us on the ground. So we had to attend to this.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can I intervene just to get clarity on that. So you agree with Mr Telape in terms of these unorthodox appointments continuously one after the other?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Yes. And that caused problems and repercussions on the ground for us.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** –Serious repercussions. And how did you manage that?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – We had to respond in a security operational way. We had the airport closed for three to four days and there was oil spill at the airport. So we had to provide extra manpower to look after the airport. So this is something that we have never planned for but it happened.

The roadblocks were set up all over the place and there was anxiety in town and businesses were putting pressure on us as well because they never expected such things to happen.

In 2017 we had casualties in the security force. We lost a couple of officers, but in the last elections we did not lose any officer. Despite some officers being stranded by air and not extradicated but they came out unhurt.

We did a lot of community awareness, even though timing was very short but we had to push. We did not reach a lot of the areas we wanted to go to but at least we covered some areas where we can be able to cover to conduct awareness.

As the Election Manager for Enga was saying, we also had to cater for some of the electorates in Enga. Counting took place down at Jiwaka, so we had to provide security down there too. So that's a success story on our side.

In the last command, we were the last to go into the polls and we managed to finish on time before the calling of the government. So that's another success story. Behind those success stories we faced a lot of challenges and I'll start with some of the things that the Electoral Commission did that affected our operations.

As I mentioned earlier, changes in AROs constantly has affected subsequent appointments. The RO comes to make changes to the AROs, presiding officers who also gave us confusion in there. Bypassing of the election steering committees and communicating directly with the returning officers by the Electoral Commissioner. And that really affected the morale of the people who were involved in the provincial steering committee especially in the Western Highlands, because we thought we were the body to manage the national elections in the province but the

Electoral Commission going down straight to the ROs and AROs and communicating with them defeated our purpose of being a Committee.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – In your opinion and I'm sure you have been involved in elections and you know given what Mr Telape has just informed the Committee, this bypassing of the Western Highlands Steering Committee and the election manager and dealing directly with the ROs and AROs, have you come across this occurrence in other places or is it just specific to Western Highlands in the last elections?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – In places where I have taken part in elections, in four elections past, I have never seen that. The Provincial Election Manager is the manager

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So someone in the Electoral Commission was giving special attention to this particular election in the Western Highlands.

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – It looked like it and I think it came out at the back of the changes in the ROs and the appointment of the ROs that concerns the regular changes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you sir, continue

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – On some occasions there were some issues with the election manager and other officers to respond to us. I had to go directly to the polling response board to make decisions for us because we were against time and moving. My commissioner told us to complete tasks on time because we don't have the funds and budget to carry you further and we were the last province to go into polling and this one-day polling method affected us because and some of the rollover team members were still in Enga.

Some were still in Southern Highlands Province when we went to the polls so we were really down with manpower. We need to look at the one-day polling team.

I once got a call on *Whatsapp* about recounting all the boxes at 11.00 p.m. I was already in bed getting ready to sleep when I received a text without realizing it was from the Police

Commissioner. It was a directive to recount all the ballot boxes and the declarations would be on the next day.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Let me understand you correctly. Your Police Commissioner sent you a directive at 11.00 p.m., to recount ballot boxes for which electorates?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – There was a gazette directive from the Electoral Commission to the Police Commissioner to pass it on to us to recount.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That was for which seat?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – It was for the Dei electorate.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – To recount all of the ballot boxes?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – I told the Commissioner, with due respect to Mr Pim, we cannot do that because if we have to re-count, we will have to count all the boxes again which will take up a lot of time. If there are any disputes, they can take it to the Court of Disputed Returns and we will go forward from there.

What I am saying is that the Electoral Commissioner giving eleventh hour directions affected our operations.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is it normal for the Electoral Commissioner to issue directives like that? In previous elections, did you and from your knowledge other commanders experience similar decisions?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – I have never experienced such decisions at the eleventh hour. Everything went as planned and whatever that was in the operational plan, we executed it. I just want to make it clear that, this was the first time that I have come in to run an election operation in the Highlands region and so everything was new to me.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Did you make any inquiries of your Commissioner as to why that last minute directive came to you for that particular seat?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – There was the issue that some of the boxes that was supposed to be counted were not counted so they wanted the boxes to be included in the count. Those boxes are now before the Court of Disputed Returns.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That is fair enough. Please continue.

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – As the other presenters have said, we, the security personnel, are under-strengthened so that anything that happens at the polling booths, we do not have much control over unless we have a QRF or RRF that can help with fire power.

In our deployments, we do not carry firearms. Our response teams are the ones that carry firearms and provide security to us. That was what the commander of the rollover team was talking about.

As previously mentioned about the interference from candidates and scrutineers in counting areas and also on social media, we need to control the social media space because it was one of the challenges that we encounter.

I must admit that we also have internal problems. Some of our officers in the Highlands have affiliations with politicians and candidates and so that affected the preparations. We try to manage those that become quite obvious, and we deploy them to some other areas to neutralise that area. That has been one of our challenges.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Let us investigate that because we heard from Enga Province that they were being threatened by security force personnel. What is the process for dealing with security force personnels who in an election decides to take sides and then try to influence the outcome of an election? What is the process within the Police Force?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – We have the normal discipline channels to follow through if somebody is doing something they are not supposed to at the polling booth or the counting venue.

We get the report, prepare the charges and serve it to them and extract them from there. The first thing we do is extract them

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – In the last election, was any officer charged with such election offences?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – No; what we did was, as soon as we picked up some information on some officers, we posted them out to some other provinces so that they don't hang around those areas. That really helped us to manage those issues.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So we did not discipline them, we just transferred the problem somewhere else?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – No, we transferred them to other places where they can work during the elections; not the whole time. So now these officers are back at base.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Would there be any interest to discipline those officers so that they don't do similar things in the future?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – If they are caught doing it then yes, they would be disciplined. But when we moved them out based on information we got.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you are acting before they do anything silly?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Before the polling, they were already posted out and that neutralized the situation.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough.

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Another thing; the Electoral Commission never provided the aerial support to us; and that really affected us. They engaged a consultant who did not have any idea about the environment here and so he came into the office and he told me that he wanted to

go back, and I responded by saying that he should not hang around here any longer because it was not going to work in here.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We are all aware of the short comings in the Electoral Commission; we are aware the RPNGC and PNGDF supplied all the air logistics, while 90 per cent of the air logistics for the PNG Electoral Commission. So that is something that we will enquire into because we want to know where all the money went to. Because if the Police Commander and the Defence Force Command paid for the hire of the helicopters that were used in the elections, then I still want to know what happened to the money that went to the Electoral Commission for the hire of helicopters. We are on that; you can proceed.

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Another thing; the Common Roll was not being updated on time so we also had problems in there. Here in the Highlands, we still have existing election-related issues. Some are in the court rooms, and when the cases are over in the court rooms, we have problems on the streets. So, what I'm trying to say is, we should have some financial support to provide security in that area too. As I speak, there are still ongoing election related violence taking place.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– So what you are suggesting is for more personnel? More money?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Well, what I'm trying to say is yes; make available some funds and support, so when there is an issue of such, we have some resource to use to attend to that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Say, we sent Police or Defence personnel into hotspots if you like, that flared up during the elections, and there is fighting going on and so on and so forth, how much risk do we place our security force personnel under, in such situations? And is it something we want to do? I mean you are a divisional commander; do you want to send your man into situations like that?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – We do not want to take any risk but again, we need to manage those situations on the ground. What I'm saying is, there's got to be some resources available for us to use. For election related-violence especially in Jiwaka, at the moment, I'm trying to investigate those killings that had happened but I don't have funding to support or enable me to do that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So there has been killings in Jiwaka?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Yes, there was.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How many people have died so far?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Almost about 12 or so.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – 12 people have died?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Yes, not in one spot but in different locations.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – In total?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Yes, in total; and there was five in Western Highlands; four up there in Tambul, and one in Dei.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And you haven't been able to establish who the perpetrators were?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Some of their identities are known; we have tried to apprehend them but they have gone into hiding. As the others have said, they are willing to die for their candidates.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So a similar attitude to Enga is prevalent in Jiwaka?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Chair, one thing I want to make mention here is that, in the highlands, I have seen that the pride of the tribe mentality is really cutting.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So the elections in the Highlands is highly tribalized?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Exactly. So, it's the pride of the tribe, that's the way I can put it. I've operated mostly in the coastal areas and you can see the two candidates standing together and chewing a betelnut while people come and vote and go home but up here, you can't. If they are very close friends yes, but otherwise –

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – If I may, that's a very interesting point you've raised. Do you think the voting system in the Highlands, when various parts of the country should be amended or changed, to reflect those cultural peculiarities? Do you think?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Well I'll come back to my recommendations to maybe answer your questions.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Just for this question, if you can entertain this question.

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Okay, whatever we do has got to be standard across the board for everybody. And so that's the way and like my other colleagues have been saying on the Enga side, we need to change the system of voting. We can have the pride of the tribe there but we have to change the way of the system of voting so that it helps. We cannot stop everything but we manage some of the issues.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Do you think the current system is working for the Highlands?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – It is working to some extent but mostly it's controlled by the tribe.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– So don't you agree that the pride of the tribe should be accommodated in our Electoral Commission?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – If there is any way, but I want to see that individuals should be given the democratic right to vote.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Thank you.

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Okay just going through some of the recommendations, what I want to say here is that we need to prepare early for 2027, otherwise we won't go anywhere. The Government of Papua New Guinea to increase annual budget allocation, annual not until the year of the election. Increase the annual budget for all the security forces and the Electoral Commission so that we start updating and do what we have to do in preparing ourselves before the day comes. And for us the security force, we want to build up the force before the election comes. The last election we were trying to rush but it didn't really happen.

The Government of Papua New Guinea to synchronise and complete the NID card, national census and common roll updates annually and it should come from a one-stop shopping system. Now, I applied for the NID card in 2017, I couldn't even get it so I applied for another one through another office and I got it, but the first application when I went and enquired, is still waiting for this and this and this. So you fill a lot of forms and you wait years to get those cards. So once I come to fill a NID form, I am also entering some information for census and I'm also entering information for the common roll update; so just one-stop-shop.

The other recommendation is to make NID card mandatory for access to all government services including election process. So, if you want to go to Air Niugini, you don't have to produce a license, just the NID card, without NID card no travel. So, in that way, it will force people to get NID cards. And then when you go through the polling, you can produce the NID card to vote.

The Government of Papua New Guinea to build and improve road and transport infrastructure in the districts to enable effective, efficient government service delivery including elections. Most of the times, the roads off the main highways are dirt-roads and we have to push and pull and whatever and get this election thing done. So, we'd like these services improved. And we use classrooms and when we go to the rural areas, we use aid posts. So once officers get injured

out in the field, it will take ages to come back so if we can have better aid posts or health centres there, they can be attended to first before being evacuated.

The RPNGC or the PNGEC or the Government to introduce, test and trial out and use the biometric voting system in 2027. If we can have the NID card mandatory for everybody to have one, then when somebody uses the card, automatically it is already updated on the common roll.

So when we have a biometric system, you go and swipe the card and you are already counted so you can go into any polling booth to cast your vote but only the first vote will be counted against your card.

PNGEC to formalize and legislate a provincial election steering committee to become part and partial of the formal election process for PNGEC to facilitate and manage the elections through this committee and not to listen to any RO, ARO, or human being regardless of status and prominence, and as I have already mentioned that we have found a lot of problems with that.

My recommendation is that the provincial election steering committees should be a part of the law so the Electoral Commission should be listening to them and not anyone else. And there should be legislation to control social media and its negative impact because there has been a lot of misleading information being published.

Finally, I observed that we should have early awareness and intelligence-driven police operations before any major elections so that we minimize risks and threats for the officers who carry out the election duties. Thank you.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you. I think one person has not contributed so I will ask Mr Mon, if there is anything that you wish to add. Then, I will allow the committee members to ask some questions and I will release you for this afternoon so we can have a break.

### **Provincial Planner-WHP**

**Mr PIUS MON** (Provincial Planning- Western Highlands) – Thank you, Chairman. I have nothing much to say. What should have been said was all covered by the Election Manager, Assistant ARO, and the acting PEC. I would just want to clarify something about the counterpart funding from the provincial government, the K1 million.

The money was given but it was not given to the election managers or provincial election operating account rather it was kept in the administration and it supported any shortfalls in the

running of the election. I remember there was a payment made for fuel to assist the logistic support teams, a little bit of lunch, and the rest was paid as the counting allowance apart from the allowances that were paid by the Election Commission.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, sir. On that issue, I think all of you will be receiving a letter from our committee and we have given a deadline by the end of May to receive a coalition of both your reports. Rather than the election manager giving one report and the provincial government giving another report, we would like to see a consolidated report from the province with all of those different expenditures from all those different entities to be presented to us by the end of May.

So rather than giving those itemized explanations, I urge you to work with your counterpart, the election manager and produce a report for the Committee. Is that okay, sir?

**Mr PIUS MON** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, Komiti Membas, sapos yupela gat sampela askim yu ken askim ol na bai yumi olgeta go malolo.

**Hon JACOB MAKI** – Mi tok sori olsem mi kam late. Sapos balus bilong papa blong mi, mi nonap kam late. Enga Provincial Government, Police, the Election Commission, and Mount Hagen ACP who acted on behalf of the PEC. I would like to thank you all. I would have been here earlier but there was a delay in my flight so my sincere apologies to the Chairman and members.

The ratio of policemen maybe is 1:4000 or 1:3000. The elections are very important because they come after every five years, as we all know.

I always stayed in the coastal areas and run elections by myself as a policeman by profession. I ran elections but I never experienced Highlands region but the last time I came up here I experienced a lot of things. They are very muscular guys on this earth. I think the police, election manager, both Enga and the Western Highlands have experienced this. So now this committee has been formed and if there is a need to change the system, we will. We are all parliamentarians, we

are representing the government of the day. We are here for you, what you offer we will discuss and table it so that in the 2027 Elections we do not face the same problem.

We are talking about election matters and election-related offences and some have not being followed up and arrests are not being made. Like in Kimningap I saw the Mul- Baiyer RO being bashed up good and proper by policemen. I don't know if any arrest was made or not. I was not being told and informed. This means the case is still outstanding, but if the arrest was made, can you brief the committee after I finish?

Eleksen em kamap pinis tasol mipela mas sawe yumi mas stretim. Long Highlands region mipela mas stretim, yumi ol Highlands yumi save tink olsem parliament em bilong mipela tasol, bilong papa, tumbuna, kandere, na sister bilong mipela dai long em. So we fight, we kill, mipela paitim bros long bignem na kain olsem. Nau mipela ol lain i stap, we have to change it. We have to change the system. Mi proposim wanpela samting lo floor long mipela ol man i stap na long olgeta arapela hap tu. Wanpela ples yumi mas kam vote. Mipela i gat 3-4 distriks, kam long distrik na vot na meikim isi long ol police, counting officials, na defence, ol bai kam long wanpela hap bai vot. People have different reasons. Ol bai meikim olsem long avoidim problem na dai. Wan distrik yumi putim long hap, polis na army stap olgeta mas go vot long hap.

Coastal people are okay, in Highlands we are not alright. I can't understand. Mi experiencim dispela so yumi save painim problem stret so that is why yu lukim olsem politicians yumi kam insait, mi current memba nau bai karim RO na ARO bilong mi kam, narapela bai karim RO na ARO bilong em kam, we'll create problem. We get court orders after another and obstructim balus after balus bai na mipela meikim olsem tasol. To do away with all these things mipela mas discuss nau putim long mipela, yupela ol dispela lain nau. Wanem sampela samting mipela i ken meikim so that 2027 mipela bai igat gutpela eleksen. System mas change, mipela mas senisim dispela tu. The system now is not working, it is forced working. We have been forcing it and it is not working and that is what I see and observed.

So we have to change it, make some good recommendations and then mipela meikim 2027 eleksen a peaceful election in the Highlands region. These covers Highlands regions like Hagen, Chimbu, Jiwaka Enga, Southern Highlands, Tari, mipela mas meikim sampela changes so bai yumi kamap gutpela. Pre-plan – Police, Electoral Commission don't wait for the last minute, start knocking now so that we can make amendments to this current election system that we have in

place. We will change it so make some good recommendation to us so that we can discuss and we'll look for a better 2027 Elections, thank you.

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Chair, sorry, if I can make a response to his first question. I actually told the RO to bring the medical report and come to see us but he has never come. So, I'll check up with the PPC to find out whether he has attended to the ladies complaint. But whilst at the common command centre I did tell him to bring his medical report and will get a statement from him to start the investigation process but he's never come with those documents so I'll check with the PPC. Thank you.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Alright, thank you all very much, I think that was very comprehensive. We still have Chimbu and Jiwaka to call up and if you are in the room, I thank you for your patience. I am going to ask for 15 minutes coffee break so everyone can kind of walk around a little bit, we've been sitting here for a while and then we will reconvene. But, I want to express the committee's sincere gratitude to the Engan team, I think that was really comprehensive.

I want to thank the three of you and also Western Highlands, we didn't expect to receive such honest answers which you know are quite daring when you think about it. Planti samting i save hait long em yupela putim kam ples klia. So, I wanted to thank you all for your courage in speaking up and I think it shows your love for the people that you serve and there is a keen interest in making things better. I am sure if the people of Enga and Western Highlands are watching, I think at some point they would want to see a semblance of a free and safe election, particularly for our women and girls who will find it extremely difficult in situations like that where you have warring tribes trying to support the pride of the tribe as you put it –bai kamapim planti hevi na ino allowim ol man lo kam na expressim rights bilong ol or hap tingting bilong ol.

I want to thank both teams. I know we have got some LLG members in the room and also there are other candidates who want to contribute and we will see if we can provide an opportunity for that once we get Jiwaka and Chimbu up on the stand. Mi laik just putim tok i go pas.

Thank you all, it is now 3.22 pm so I want us to reconvene at 4.45pm if that's okay.

We have coffee and biscuits in the back, I know I need a coffee so I am sure most of you need one too and we will continue with the session at 4.45pm.

On behalf of the Committee, thank you very much and we are now adjourned until 4.45 pm.

*Suspend for Afternoon Tea*

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Good afternoon everyone and welcome back to the afternoon session of the Special Parliamentary Committee into the conduct of the 2022 General Elections with a view to improving future elections.

This afternoon we have the Chimbu team and one person representing Jiwaka. We also have a women's leader representing the Engan Council of Women. They will be contributing and of course Commander Negi is still here representing Jiwaka and Chimbu if need be.

Let's start with the electoral Manager for Jiwaka.

**JIWAKA PROVINCE**

**Election Manager-Jiwaka**

**Ms ROSIE PANDIAU** (Election Manager - Jiwaka) –My name is Rosie Pandiau and I am the Electoral Manager for Jiwaka Province. I started with the Electoral Commission in 2012 as the Assistant Election Manager and in 2015, I was appointed election manager. I was part of three national elections and two LLG elections.

Most of the concerns especially the problems and challenges we go through as electoral officers on the field have all been said but I will go through the challenges I face as the female election manager in Jiwaka.

As we all know elections in Highlands are always variable and you expect the unexpected to happen and in every election the people are always a step ahead of us. We do our plannings and everything but we face challenges with implementation. The voters come up with new approaches and they take us by surprise.

For example, during polling days in Jiwaka, one of the things that I've realized in this election is that polling was more like a consensual thing where people agreed and ballot papers were shed among them and certain people were chosen to mark on behalf of the voters in a ward. Therefore, voters like women don't really have a say when it comes to voting.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, that's an interesting revelation when you say people come to an agreement. The entire community comes to an agreement or just certain individuals within a community come to an agreement?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Certain individuals in the community.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, it's not the whole community?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** - It's not the whole community, certain individuals come to an agreement; for example, if I am a supporter of this candidate and if there's a supporter of another candidate in that same ward, they agree to split the ballot papers. So they mark the ballot papers and if that person agrees to give one to his candidate then they circulate the two amongst the two candidates and that's how it's done, especially in this election I have realized that in Jiwaka.

In 2017, the polling teams were sent out to the field it was around 9 or 10 o'clock and they came back late, but for this election, the teams were dispatched around midday and 1 p.m, but they came back early and I was surprised and I was thinking what really happened but the later I found out that they their way of voting was different. The ballot papers were shared among individuals and they somehow agreed on whichever candidate to vote for.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Was there anyone dissenting to that? Did anyone come and complain and say I didn't get my opportunity to vote?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – No!

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So generally, you think that the community was happy with that?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Generally, I think some maybe were against it but during that time they don't really have a say. They are being suppressed.

**HON KEITH IDUHU**- Who gives these individuals in the community access to the ballot papers? How did they gain access to the ballot papers to be in a position to make a decision like that?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – When they go there during the polling. We have the security personnel but they are outnumbered and the polling officials are also outnumbered so when they go there they just ask them to release the ballot papers to them and then they just mark them and give it to them to bring it back.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, continue.

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – One of the challenges that I've realized, especially in the Highlands region is they don't really use the common roll. So in every election the government is spending a lot of money on the common rolls to improve the quality of the roll, we do roll update, enrolment and all these but when it comes to polling, we don't really use the roll. They just stand on the line until all ballot papers are exhausted. So, it's not like one person to one vote but it can be one person to 10 votes or 20 votes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay that's interesting. You just made these two revelations and we've obviously heard about this but mipela harim tok-win tasol. You're a credible person for giving this information. Given this sort of practice, is that accepted given that you've been in Jiwaka for two elections now?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Three elections.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So every single election is the same?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Yes, every election is the same. So you know, as an election official, I am really disappointed because I put a lot of effort into improving the quality of the roll but at the end of the day people are not following the roll.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Do you report these occurrences to your superiors? Do you make a report about these occurrences?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Well, every end of the election we do have a workshop so we discuss the challenges and way forward and all these. We highlight what we field officers face during election time.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So what you've just described to the committee, you've discussed that?

**Ms ROSE PANDHIHAU** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And what the does the Electoral Commission do with that information?

**Ms ROSE PANDHIHAU** – For me, I do my part in reporting the challenges and issues that I face on the field when it comes to election but for the way forward we have never changed from the way it has been done and currently we are still practicing the same thing. Again, it comes back to the attitude of the people and the behavior, how people perceive the election and in the Highlands they see it as a tribal thing, as one of the speakers mentioned already. So they take it so personal, they can kill and put their life on the line for their candidate and it's very difficult to control when it comes to polling.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– In your observation Ms Pandhihau, has this been the practice for as long as you can remember or did that trend alter at some point. What was the practice in the past from your memory?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** - In 2012 till now it has been the practice.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**- And prior to that in your view?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** - Prior to that, I have no knowledge because I never took part in any election.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – As a general citizen though, from your general observation, prior to that would you have any observations or comments?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Prior to that maybe, but they did follow the roll until such a time when people's behavior started to change

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**- So you can say that it's not a 'highlands thing' it's not a tribal thing. It's human behavior. So you can't attach it to tribalism, can we? So to say that if our grandfathers were voting this is what they should have done?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – It's all to do with how people behave when it comes to polling

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– Thank you.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, proceed

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – One of the challenges I faced during the elections was the candidates and supporters tend to confuse themselves with roles and responsibilities of an election manager, the returning officers, provincial returning officers and assistant returning officers. They think that the election manager has more power to decide when it comes to being in a counting room or when it comes to making certain decisions but they don't realize that the gazetted officers are the ones who are empowered with the authority to make decisions in the counting room.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Could you clarify what you mean by making decisions in the counting room?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – They decide over the legality of a ballot paper or a ballot box and the election manager supervisors or looks after the admin and logistics of the election.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough, you have to bear in mind that I’m asking that question because there are obviously candidates who are watching and if you say they make decisions in the counting room, they’ll obviously think that it’s making an illegal decision in the counting room. Yu save kain het bilong yumi. So I just need you to be specific. Continue.

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIAU** – So sometimes the candidates and the supporters put pressure on the election manager to make decisions that he or she is not empowered to. Even though, I explain to them that I am not in a position to make a decision regarding the matter, they will just tell me, ‘you are the election manager and you can make decision.’ Sometimes when I refer them back to the returning officer or the provincial returning officer they don’t want to listen to them, they want me to go and explain or to go and make decision. Sometimes it gets very challenging for me because they cannot listen to take their grievances to the right person so when it comes to especially in the counting room they think the election manager has the power to make decisions but it’s the gazetted officers who have the powers to make decisions, the election manager only looks after the administration part of it.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– Do you think the gazetted officers should be a bit more informed and more authoritative in the discharge of their duties? You realise that the disruptions in the counting centres are caused by conflict between scrutineers and returning officers. Is that correct?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIAU** – Yes that is correct.

**HON KEITH IDUHU**– And therefore, the positions taken by returning officers has to be well informed, legal and that person should have good support in the counting room at that point. Is that correct?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIAU** – Yes.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– It should be made known to scrutineers and their candidates that any disputes thereafter should be only reserved for election petitions.

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIAU** – Exactly.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– If all this is done, the elections will have been conducted smoothly and without confusion.

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIAU** – One of the challenges that I faced is that some of the candidates and their supporters do not know the difference between census and electoral roll. They tend to get the figure from the census and confuse it with the figure on the electoral roll. We try to explain to them that census captures information from a baby up, and the electoral roll captures information from persons 18 years and above who are eligible voters.

There was an incident that happened in 2012 when we were conducting training. A candidate and his supporters came to our training area and wanted us to explain to them why the census figure was different to the electoral roll and they were accusing us of reducing their figures. We had to calm them down and explain the difference to them. We informed them that we are not responsible for census because it is done by a different organisation. We are only responsible for the roll thus the figures will not correspond. This issue needs more awareness so people can understand and differentiate the role of the Electoral Commission and the NSO.

One of the major problem that we faced after every election activity is the payment of the temporary election workers (TEW). It takes a while for them to be paid because payment is made from Port Moresby. It is quite a process and while we wait for payments to be made, we are bombarded with people who come and attack us.

It would be better if the headquarter releases funding for payment of the TEWs and decentralised the KunduPei System to the provinces so that when an activity is completed, they are paid on time. When a person has an account problem or does not get paid, we can sort it out in the provinces instead of travelling all the way to Port Moresby, which costs a lot money. Imagine spending two weeks in Port Moresby just to get them paid and to fix small problems like account problems.

It will be better for them to decentralise the function of the KunduPei System and then set it up in the province so that when there is a polling, we are prepared to process their allowances maybe a day or two after. The same can be done for counting as well.

When they don't get paid during counting, they disrupt the process and they go on strike which will cause us to stop, which are just unnecessary disturbances. It is advisable if they can decentralise the KunduPei System so while they are doing counting, a day or two after we just pay their allowances instead of them not getting paid for a month and then they come and start to bash up the ROs and the AROs or they come to the office and make accusation of stealing. That is one of the problems that we have.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Mr Chairman, may I intervene here. This particular point that she is raising is a very serious concern, especially during election petitions as well. In the election petitions, there are people who are holding on to documents that the court needs. This happened because of payments not getting through

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Perhaps I should respond; the provincial governors had a meeting and my personal point of view, given the continuous failures of elections going back many years and hence this committee was set up at my request. I want to improve processes.

In East Sepik, what had happened was because we had a very competent provincial administrator; the provincial administrator took a decision on his own to make a lot of the payments. In fact, we gave a million kina to the Electoral Commission, which was in our budget. The provincial administrator spent another K4 million to complete our elections.

So, I'm well aware of the situation you are describing because Sepik Provincial Government paid the allowances for the Police, the counting officials and for the Defence Force, including the hire of the helicopters, so we are well aware of all these. Personally, I'm interested to know what the Electoral Commission paid for, and this is one of the things we are going to get to the bottom with.

A simple solution would be – and this is why I think if you were sitting earlier, there are three elections coming up, which are going to be run by provincial governments for the first time in our history. This is about pushing the responsibility further down so that you don't face those sorts of problems. We are about fixing and finding solutions. I just want to assure you and sort of give you an insight into our thinking that we recognize the problems and hence we are here. So, everything you are saying just collaborates what we already know. I want to thank you for that. So please proceed. There is not need for you to labour it.

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – One of the things that was kind of an inconvenience was, during the election period, the security forces were based out of Banz. One of the platoons was based right outside the airport near the Waghi Bridge, at the border of Jiwaka and WHP; another platoon was based in Minz, and in Banz there was none. My concern was, the election activities were in Banz, the provincial election was in Banz, counting was conducted in Banz, and the security forces were based out of Banz, and so response was always late.

So when there was something going on, we could reach them in time but the distance required to reach Banz was another issue. We were lucky to have the DF from Kurumul, Singarok Baracks, who were there so they assisted us a lot. The only problem with them was, when they were doing the operation plan, they did not capture them in the operation plan. It was one of the concerns that they raised; that they weren't captured in the operation plan and they did not have a budget for them and all that, so I had to assist them with fuel and allowances because they assisted us a lot. So, I think in the future elections, they should be considered as part of the team, as they are based in the province.

I want to be frank here about the PSCs; different provinces have different PSCs and their experiences might be different from me.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Could you clarify for the person who might be listening, what do you mean by PSC?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – The provincial election steering committee.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, fair enough.

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – The chairman of the provincial election steering committee is the PA and is comprised of other senior members of the provincial government. I've realised that sometimes decisions are made but the decisions are always biased. So, as an electoral manager, even though there's a – you know sometimes they reach an agreement and in the meeting, they note down in the minutes that we have to do this or that, but when I see that the decision is biased and it's not going to satisfy the public, then I have to make a decision that's fair to everyone. So,

there are advantages and disadvantages of having PSC members. Sometimes decisions are biased so when I want to deviate from the decisions that have been passed, they complain that I'm not following PSC decisions and I'm not implementing PSC decisions, but they complain to the commissioner but I explain to the commissioner that no, I have to be fair, the decision that needs to be implemented has to be fair, so that we don't create unnecessary assumptions.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Please clarify for the committee. My understanding is that the provincial elections steering committee deals mostly around logistics. They have no powers to deal with returning officers and that sort of thing. So, could you clarify what you mean? What is it exactly that they are influencing in your jurisdiction that you feel is being biased? What real powers do they have to influence things?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Yes, you are correct. Sometimes they want to step into the recruitment of polling officials or counting officials. They want to recruit and come with their list to say that these are the counting officials and polling officials that have to be recruited and PSC is going to endorse them but this function does not belong to PSC. Establishment of PSC is just to have a committee in place in the provincial level to support Electoral Commission to deliver elections. They are allowed to make recommendations only; they cannot make decisions. They can only make recommendation and the recommendation are looked at by the Electoral Commission who makes the decision. That's the difference. But most of the time, the PSC members confuse their functions and they want to make decisions they're not supposed to. So when such thing happens, it creates a friction between election office and the provincial government or the PSC.

When an instruction is not followed or when a decision that has been made at the PSC level is not implemented it affects the working relationships between electoral office and the provincial government. For me especially, I did not have a good partnership or working relationship between the provincial government and my office because as I said, I always make decision that is fair to the public.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– If I may, Ms Pandhihau, what is the capacity of your Electoral Commission team in respective provinces? What human resource capacity do you in Jiwaka for instance?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIIHAU** – In Jiwaka I have four casuals plus me.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– And that is the Electoral Commission team on the ground in every province?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIIHAU** – Yes, the electoral provincial team. And it is similar in every province.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– So, to manage this election better you think it will be prudent to take a reform that delegates more or decentralizes more from Port Moresby to the provinces? For the Electoral Commission that is.

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIIHAU** – Yes.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– So, when these gazetted officers come in, they are also part of your team?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIIHAU** – Yes, they are part of my team.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– So, these are the officers that make decisions of the term of the issue of the writs and the return of the writs?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIIHAU** – Yes.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– And their powers end upon the return of the writs?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIIHAU** – Exactly.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– But, you think that it would be good to have a team from the Electoral Commission to be decentralized to each of the provinces that would pick up the pieces after the return of the writs to carry out any reforms or tidy up in preparation for the next election?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Yes.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**- At the moment, what is the situation? You only have yourself as the election manager?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – I am the only one there because those who were engaged were on a casual basis and they were already laid off.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– So, there is a vacuum in the coordination of information, data, and even logistics preparations? That is why you rely on the provincial governments to supply an election steering committee; if I am hearing you correctly, counter-productive with the mandate of the Organic Law that you should deliver a free, fair, and safe election?

**Mr ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Yes.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– Thank you. Do you want to expand a little further because this goes to the heart of managing a successful election?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – The core staff; the election manager and the assistant election manager are permanent positions but when it comes to election activities they engage on a casual basis.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– Now, the electoral roll which I find you are quite passionate about, are they managed within your office or how does that work? Can you explain this to the viewers?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – The electoral roll and all the data collection are managed at the office and then the final information is sent to –

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– Which office?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – In my office and the final information is sent to Port Moresby for the rolls to be produced. As you all know or maybe only in the Highlands it has inflated to a level where you cannot believe. You will not expect a particular ward to have so many voters.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That is an interesting point that you just raised. Could you explain to the committee in your opinion, how is it possible to inflate the common roll? What is the process and how does that happen?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – It has been done over time. You know, we are using the same technique to collect raw data from the field so when we employ the same technique we do not expect a different result unless we change the way in which we are collecting information then we will expect a different result.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, if the committee was to recommend a robust system that ensures that one individual can only have one record in the voter roll, do you think that could resolve the issue?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – One person - one name will resolve the issue. Right now, for us to collect data from the field and it has been the practice over time that we send one or two people to a ward to collect names.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We are aware of the process as it is but if it was to change and we can guarantee that you have one record for that one individual, would that help?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – That will really help.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you.

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – I would just want to elaborate on what I was saying. When I went to conduct some interviews on the field I was asking people if – let me rephrase, in the last enrollment I saw that over time we were using that same technique to collect information by sending two people to a ward to collect names but later we found out that these two people didn't just go to houses and collect names, they just go and hide away somewhere and fill up the forms. If they are supporting this candidate and they enrol only supporters of that candidate or their family members and majority of the voters are left out and are not enrolled.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Isn't that why there is an allowance for the electoral roll to be available six months prior so that objections can be raised to correct the record?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So in your experience was that ever been done?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – No. Funding comes late and then we are rushed to produce the roll, we don't have enough time to go around collecting right information and then period for objections, and all these we don't have time for all that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – It all comes back to the whole issue of decentralization again. So if a local authority was available that could provide the funding without you having to wait for the Head Office, would that resolve the problem?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – It depends on who the authority will be.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Elaborate.

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – I mean the roll is a function of the Electoral Commission so if we are going to take it to give this function away to an authority then it depends on whoever is going to take this role.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – The electoral roll has been the function of the Electoral Commission for 47 years, it's never been fullproof. Your own words you said, if we've been using the same method and getting the same outcome without change then obviously we are going to still getting the same outcome. So quite frankly it's time to change the way we look at that particularly. The electoral roll in my view does not belong to the Electoral Commission, it belongs to the people of Papua New Guinea. People of Papua New Guinea need access to that roll, and my own experience running four elections I had never had access to the electoral roll. That was my perspective as a candidate and now as a governor and I think my people of East Sepik and I think the people of Papua New Guinea deserve access to that roll and this committee is adamant that we will give them access to that roll.

As far as I'm concern work of updating that electoral roll will start next year if I have anything to do with it and if this committee has anything to do with it. In my province we've never had election violence until 2022 and for the first time in the history of East Sepik two ballot boxes which were plastics by the way got damaged on the first day of elections. You know why. Our young people turned up and their names were not on the electoral roll. Most of our people when they found out that their names were not on the roll, they cried and went back home. That is why I am going to make sure that does not happen again and I am sure other members of the committee sitting here.

My personal view is that if the people of East Sepik don't have access to the electoral roll I will go to court to make sure they have access to that roll so I want to make it clear to you my own passion about fixing these elections. I'm saying that because I want you to understand that some of us are not going to accept the same results that have been driving our country down the road; that is unacceptable. So I appreciate the comments and I think that we will fix it. For me the electoral roll is 80 percent of our problem and it is certainly the problem for East Sepik. If I fixed the electoral roll and 100 percent of my people can vote I will have no election violence in my province. I'm assured of that and that is my personal interest I'd want to make clear to you. While I understand some of the issues I want to also make it clear that we are on the same side. Please proceed.

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – I totally agree with you on what you said, most people don't see how an electoral roll looks like and in the last enrollment I decided to take a different approach.

I saw that sending two people to the ward is not working out so I decided to do a patrol team just like I did for the ward grouping, and identify one person per ward and formed the team. So, they moved from ward to ward and they were centered in central locations where people came in to check their names on the roll and many confirmed what you said. They said; ‘this is the first time, we have never seen a roll and this is the first time we actually see Electoral Commission workers here with the roll and all this time when you were sending people, where did they go?’. They never come around to take our names, they just do bias enrollment and when they don’t have any more names; they want to exhaust the forms, they just come up with names and they just fill up the forms.

So, they were quite satisfied with the approach that I took to send out a patrol team. They were scheduled to be in that particular ward for certain period of time to allow people to come in and have a look at their names and confirm whether or not they have their name on the roll. Most of the people complained that most of their names were not on the roll and even their kids. And they were saying that all these names didn’t exist in their ward.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That was prior to you taking matters into your own hands?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Yes, prior to taking matters into my own hands.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I commend you for that.

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – We received positive comments from the voters, they said ‘this is the right approach at least you are giving opportunity to us to check our names to see the roll to make sure we are enrolled or not’.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, now that’s with the issue of the electoral roll and I think we’ve spent considerable time on that. Election violence, polling, counting, what was that like?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Happens during polling and throughout the election period; polling, counting, and then after counting election violence continues.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, you still got violence continuing in Jiwaka today as we speak?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Yes, the election-related problems are still continuing because we had some killings and all these.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I note we don't have the Jiwaka police commander here so Commander Negi rather, can you make a comment?

**Highlands Divisional Command- Eastern End**

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Yes, like I've already stated during my presentation we have election-related violence still in Jiwaka. So, the elections are over but violence still going on and I hope it will stop somehow but like I stated earlier on; people are fighting for the pride of their tribe.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, what you saying is their pride lost the election?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Exactly.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, that's the reason for the fighting.

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – I think looking back the way I see is; if I contest and win, the tribe also wins and so I have to look after the tribe in one way or the other that's the way I see. And so, if I lose then the tribe doesn't have any hope.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, what is the tribe fighting for; is it fighting for the K10 million PSIP or government contracts or I mean what are we fighting for? I'd like to understand that. What are our people in the Highlands fighting, for their pride?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Well I think those are some of the things they are fighting for. If I am in power they will get some benefit through me.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And that's a financial benefit.

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Financial benefits and all those other things such as school fees that comes together. The tribe get priority over others that's the way I see things. Maybe it's different in some areas but I have seen it working out that way.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – In my Sepik society our culture is to look after those that are least to us. Ol man longwe mipela save lukautim pas na mipela yet behind. Mipela ol lain bilong kaikai bun na ol narapela man save kaikai meat, em olsem pasin bilong mipela, so I am struggling to understand this concept where ol lain bilong yu yet bai sindaun na they feast at the table while everyone else is waiting for the crumbs to fall. That's pretty sad tribal culture if I may add but, anyway, at least you're giving us that information first hand.

So fighting em i still continue yet and you have no idea how we going to resolve the fights.

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – The physical confrontation and the gun battle fight is on and off.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Gun fight?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Where are the ammunitions coming from, do you know?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – I have no idea but I can only assume that it's coming through the security forces, navy or through some illegal trader across the border.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – If it is coming through the security forces and obviously you're a very senior member of the security forces, what can we do to fully account for the ammunition that is in our armouries to make sure that they are not fuelling these fights that have come about because the pride of the tribe lost the elections. Is there any way we can do it?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – I think our armouries were being broken into and our ammunitions are still floating around. Some of them could have been stolen several years ago.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, forgive my ignorance, I mean how many ammunition and firearms are we talking about? I'm sure the people of Papua New Guinea would be curious to know how many rounds of ammunition. Is it 10,000 or 15, 000 or 100 000 or is it 50 or 60 or 100?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – I cannot give the exact figure.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is the information available?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – The Defence Force armouries were broken into several years ago in Goldie and Taurama.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How about police ammunition, is that secure?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – For the police ammunitions, mostly they are secure but there are some that have been lost along the way from being careless and some of those ammunitions have been lost. Maybe some have been given back or not I am not really sure.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Speaking for the police, I'm really interested in figuring out how we can resolve some of these fighting and I think cutting the ammunition supply is one way of doing it. Within the Police Force, is there an accountability mechanism to first of all lock up your ammunition and second of all to trace them if they are issued somehow? Do you have that system and do you account and audit for it?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – We do have armouries where we lock up all the arms and ammunitions but most get lost especially during operations. No mostly during operations but sometimes people just sell them or do other deals and they just say lost or whatever. So, I'm assuming that it's lost through those ways but most times when people go out for operations, we do record what goes out and comes in.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**— And is there a large discrepancy in what's coming back?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** — Sometimes, yes, I think.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** — For a member of Parliament and I'm sure the people listening here, it's really scary to hear that it's possible for police firearms and police ammunition to be available to those individuals like what we are just hearing in Jiwaka that want to obtain them. In my view, we should be doing something about that. You said to the committee just now we should be able to find some way to resolve these tribal fights over elections. Now, if we are the ones that are supplying the ammunition then obviously these tribal fights would not stop, they'll continue.

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** — I'm not saying that we are the only ones, there could be other sources as well. They are importing them from overseas. I don't have real figures but I have some ideas as to how they are coming in. So, across the border is one of sources.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**— Fair enough. That might be a part of another inquiry.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**— That sounds like part of another inquiry or the one that has already been heard but the question is, while we are on this subject, do you think the disproportionate possession of firearms in the general public is probably a cause for all this disharmony? I'll try to break that down again. Do think out of 100 people, before 2012 or 2002, elections were conducted in an environment where there were no firearms or very little firearms and that's why elections were safer and friendlier? The tribalism was always there but in a very controlled environment and in a very organized cultural environment, correct?

Since then to now, more people in the community have now attained possession of firearms that even though a larger group doesn't have, a greater group does have, if you know what I mean? About 25 per cent or 45 per cent of the community probably has high-powered firearms or homemade guns and 60 per cent or 50 per cent or the 55 per cent of that doesn't have. It is the 55 per cent that is not feeling safe in the process of elections because of the forty percent increase of firearms in the general public making law enforcement even more difficult. Do you agree?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Well, I do agree with what you're saying. In the village, I come from Highlands and I want to be frank here, there are firearms there but they are for the safety and security of the village. So they don't use it unnecessarily.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** - So these are illegal firearms?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – Yes, they are illegal firearms. The fear is there. So, they know what sort of firearms are in the community and they cannot touch each other. The only time they bring out these weapons is when there are issues.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– When the other person knows that one has –for instance if I know you're carrying one firearm and I'm carrying one firearm, there will be peace between us, correct?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – There will be peace but they are always –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That sounds like the US and Russian with all their nuclear weapons.

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – So that's the situation.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– There could be a solution, I'm just thinking.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So maybe we should all have guns.

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – So, I think the only solution is to cut down the ammunitions supply line somehow and then the guns would be useless. That is the only way I see. The guns are floating around even here in Hagen city. During the peak of the election period, we had rapid fire scene all over the place. We couldn't do much and when you go and ask, the people will not say anything.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– Coming back to the tribalism and conduct or behaviour, I think the team from Enga made an important point about ostensible authority and authority of leadership. Do you think this behaviour could be controlled if the leaders are held responsible for their own support behaviours?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – I think so because most of the Engan people have said that it is like somebody buying and feeding the local people and we have cut off that supply line.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Let me expand this a little bit more and post a hypothetical situation. Let's just say this committee comes up with draft legislative amendments and one of those amendments says that whichever candidate is found guilty of using firearms on their supporters to influence the outcome of an election win or loss, say this person first of all gets fined and perhaps jailed and then banned for life from contesting for elections. Do you think that would cut down election violence in some of these communities if they know that we are willing to go to that extent to deny your qualified right to stand for elections forever?

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – I think that will be a good approach and the other thing that I found out when I was attached with Australians is that any person who wishes to become a candidate has to apply to the integrity board so that they are properly screened by the board. So, I think that will also help us.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – An integrity board for candidates.

**Commander RIGGANEGI** – Yes, so the integrity board will recommend you to be a candidate for the election.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That's a better idea.

**Commander RIGGA NEGI** – We have to exploit that idea and see what happens.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Commander. Back to you, Rosie, any last things you want to add before we move to your colleague from Simbu?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Yes, one of the challenges that most of us face is the PNG Electoral Commission doesn't own anything so all it does is renting out the containers or renting the land, or office so sometimes when we are at the peak of an election, the landlord comes and locks up the office saying that rental was not paid and you cannot access the office. This creates an inconvenience for some of us who want to come into the office to get things ready for polling the next day.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Locking out government officers is very fashionable recently so you're not alone in being locked out

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** - So it would be much wiser if we can cut costs. It's advisable that Electoral Commission can have its 22 offices in the provinces so that we have our own yard for storage and we don't pay rental any more. We can use the yard to store our containers and all other materials

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Since you are operating in the provinces, what's stopping you from accessing provincial government assets? Like the provincial government would have a storage yard, why couldn't you use that during the elections without paying anything? Provincial governments have office buildings and so forth, why couldn't you have access to those sort of things.

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** - I could not have access; they asked me to but you know the people's perspective so they don't want to –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I'm talking about the provincial government; I'm not talking about your governor. Your governor and your provincial government are two separate entities, as far as I'm concerned. Your provincial administration is another entity; it should be anyway. You're saying that it is not in Jiwaka?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** - It is, but for me to use a facility, you know, people perceive it differently. So when for example they give us an office space, people protest. Like you cannot, you have to be in a neutral location. I've been through this.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What a trying working environment, I feel for you. I'm sure there's easier jobs, that's crazy what you have to put up with. But I think the people of Jiwaka need to learn to trust rather than putting their faith in guns and ammunition. We've got to find some way in restoring their trust in government authority, I suppose.

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** - Yes, that's why we are working around to secure land to build our office and have our own storage to be on a neutral ground so we don't have accusations and such from people.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Very sad situation. Thank you Ms Pandhihau. Mr Sine, Chimbu, thank you for your patience. Please give your report and press the green button.

## **CHIMBU PROVINCE**

### **Election Manager-Chimbu**

**Mr TOM SINE** (Election Manager – Chimbu) –Chairman and the Committee, I apologize on behalf of the Simbu Administration as this day today we have our new provincial administrator being installed. It was supposed to be Monday but it's happening today so I couldn't bring my team except the staff officer and the PPC Chimbu.

A lot of things that I wanted to say would have been said already by my colleagues. A few areas that I need to stress and firstly, I must thank God for giving you this wisdom to raise this in the Parliament. We have raised it on our level in the organization. A lot of changes that we wanted to see goes up to the headquarters and then stops. Probably there is no one to take it to the Parliament. Like for instance, we asked for the criteria for nomination and a lot of suggestions that we put forward would technically narrow down sitting MPs. CLRC or the Constitutional Law Reform Commission helped us to do a submission on this and up until now they can't take it up because nobody has taken it to the floor of Parliament.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you are saying that CLRC is sitting on some recommendations?

**Mr TOM SINE** – Yes, this is for the criteria for candidates before they can be allowed to nominate. We had a submission there, I remember being part of this.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you Mr Wena, make a note. We'll have to call them. Please continue

**Mr TOM SINE** – Two weeks ago when the same CLRC committee came to Kundiawa with the agenda of whether the country should vote for prime minister, I also raised the same issue. But thank you, I want to commend this team. Now that we have parliamentarians in the Committee, they can present what we find challenging in delivering. Our organisation is responsible for making leaders in this country. We are like the engine where leaders of this country can be raised.

Leadership is a serious thing so things must be done properly. Em ino samting bilong pilai.

I have a lot of problems with candidates in the province when it comes to counting and polling because they only show up during elections. Our people in Chimbu say, emi nogat toilet, meaning they do not have a house in their own villages and electorates.

In a very short time, with the help of their material wealth and so forth, they can influence people to cause problems. After the elections, they are gone and the poor people that participated in this are the victims. I am happy that this committee can look at some of these issues.

The first issue that I want to talk about in Chimbu Province is that we have realised that voter education through awareness helps a lot. With the changes to be given to the electoral cycle to make it more effective, awareness must be planned properly and must be taken.

We discouraged campaign houses in Chimbu Province for the 2022 National Elections as a local approach and it has proven to be effective. We discouraged that because people are congregating there for free food and just wasting a lot of time. While they are there a lot of social issues arise, for example, marriages are broken up, teenage pregnancies, spread of HIV/AIDS, TB and so forth. That is our Chimbu version of trying to implement something, and maybe this committee can take this onboard too when they do awareness. Campaign houses in the Highlands

region should be done away with because there is no need for that. LPV does not favour campaign houses thus people are only wasting time. Candidates should be going out and doing awareness.

Another thing I have realize is that our headquarter's awareness branch produces a lot of awareness materials but it arrives when the election is over and are now stored in our storage areas. This should be a priority; for instance, when the candidates are campaigning during the eight weeks of campaign, we can do awareness and educate our people. When the people are educated, they will give importance to election issues because they will understand leaders can be elected from this.

Secondly, my colleagues have mentioned the issue of common roll. For Chimbu, we want to have a draft roll six months to a year. The roll belongs to the people so we have to display it. If they want a copy, we have to be able to give it to them. Why should we be hiding it? And from our experience, the final roll comes with the ballot papers. Oli kam, polis na ami tu istrik long em ya so emi go stret lo kontena.

As an election manager, I have no power to open this up. If I do, then people will be suspecting so we let it stay there. And when it is time for distribution of ballot papers, we also distribute the roll, which is totally unfair. Candidates should know how many people are living in each ward so they can campaign and plan. The candidates want to be leaders so we give them this opportunity. For Chimbu, whatever it is, the roll must come back for people to have their say, six months to one year.

As soon as they have their input there, and we have this corrected, the final roll must come and we must have it with us long before the ballot papers are printed. Why I am saying this is because, like my colleague from Jiwaka said, we are doing the same thing. We should have improved the roll. Why aren't we improving the roll? In 2017 we had one ICT specialist, an expatriate who developed the program for the roll update. In 2022 Elections, we have a local guy, so we did not have consistency there.

So that is why somewhere along the line, cut and paste is taking place, information is not being entered; so, it's a waste of resources and waste of time doing updates. That is something that we may have to look at.

In the Highlands region, the roll is in alphabetical order, so everybody with their names starting with A, doesn't matter whether they are from different families, or different clans; as long as their names starts with A, their names are there. This created an opportunity for them to just line

up. The interest on the ground was that, they wanted to complete the ballot papers in a short period of time.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you don't have a way of verifying the bonafides of a voter, or they just lined up and did as they wish?

**Mr TOM SINE** – That's what I'm saying; when the teams arrived into the area, the people were already lining up because they know. So, we suggested that –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – You know that is very unusual because from where I come from, the people would come and wait for their names to be called and they would come forward and vote.

**Mr TOM SINE** – It is not happening here. So maybe if by 2027 the biodata is not collected and we don't go to biometrics then for the Highlands region, we suggest putting the voters back into their families. And if we are going to do this, it is a lot of work so we better start early.

My next point is; our office is active six months or even one year before the election year. Our four main casuals are laid off and as soon as the election is near, they are engaged. We are like a dead office. So, I recommend to this committee that there should be funding for this office and provincial officers.

The four casuals to be maybe made permanent and things like roll issues and all these we have to do it. There's to be a five-year thing or it's has to be a four-year thing. For funding a lot of colleagues may have mentioned the the delay issues, which has also affected our work program. I realise that by listening to you while sitting at the back East Sepik Provincial Government has assisted the election office very well. For Chimbu I was only given K111,000. Can we have something that is mandatory for a certain percentage of the budget so that any budget officer doesn't come up with whatever he thinks is good for elections; it has to be consistent.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – This is the reason why we are requesting that every province; Jiwaka, Chimbu, you have to provide your full financial report both on provincial government funding, police funding and security forces in general. We want to see the different streams and we want to tabulate all of that and look at it across provinces. For example; see you guys got K110,000 and if

I recall correctly Milne Bay got half a million, Gulf got a million, so you know it's inconsistent all over the place. So, we want to understand the method or the criteria why Electoral Commission will give K4 million to NCD. I think all of us want to understand so they'll hopefully constitute part of the report so I would request that the two of you before the end of the month provide your reports to committee headed by young Werner sitting over there. Please proceed.

**Mr TOM SINE** – Thank you we have our reports done but now we have to get it from the province and put it together.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I am sure Chimbu Province would provide financial report and we need to understand these things. Olsem yu yet tok first time ino samting hait na yumi wokim na yumi haitim na karim raun. We have go to put all these things up in the open and be fully accountable for our use of public funds and how well we have applied them or not.

May I thank you, continue please.

**Mr TOM SINE** –For Chimbu I am happy to also make a mention here that in terms of electoral matters, I think they are educated to a certain stage where election issues like tribal fights and all these, we are not experiencing them as much as in the past. Very isolated few road blocks and whatever but time is a healer too so maybe two or three weeks later then things fall back and people are back to normal. But the important thing tht needs to be considered is the criteria for someone to be a candidate is something that this committee can also put in place. As I said and I want to repeat again; we are talking about national leaders and we want to have people who are genuinely representing the people as leaders.

I had problems with some youths coming in to be nominated and when I refused, I had already created enemies because they know the criteria. Criteria allowim mipela long nominate na why yu tok olsem. So, if we have an updated criteria that will help.

We in Chimbu would recommend for all primary counts be in the district headquarters, right after the polling so that we do not waste time. According to our electoral calendar for 2022, there were seven days for counting, and that is impossible to declare somebody unless we have three or four shifts working through the night then it would be possible.

We also recommend for councilors be in the districts and that should be mandatory so that no candidate can manipulate the electoral team but if it is part of the law then we can refer back to the law. So that was something that we really looked at. CCTV was also introduced in 2022 and I think that it was very helpful.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Did that help? Do you have CCTV in Chimbu?

**Mr TOM SINE** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Did that help and in what way did that help?

**Mr TOM SINE** – It helps because it records what is happening in the counting center but the bad side of it is that as the man in charge of all the programs in the province, I have no access to the data that is collected.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Who has access to that?

**Mr TOM SINE** – They said they send it straight to headquarters.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– Who at the headquarters has possession of that data?

**Mr TOM SINE** – I have yet to find out. I did ask this question but am still waiting. But with the election petition cases, I am hearing that some of the candidates have access to this. But how they have access to it, I don't know.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What was the purpose behind having these CCTVs cameras installed?

**Mr TOM SINE** – We were told that it was for transparency purposes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So after it is collected, it is hidden away. How is that helping transparency?

**Mr TOM SINE** – I will agree with you because I still have this question unanswered.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So was Chimbu the only one with the CCTV or were there others?  
Jiwaka did you have them?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Yes, we had them too.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Enga? Enga is not here. Western Highland? Ol i stap yet oh go pinis?  
None of you have access to that information. Chimbu nogat na Jiwaka?

**Ms ROSIE PANDHIHAU** – Nogat.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Was it locally recorded or was it directly transmitted to Port Moresby?

**Mr TOM SINE** – I talked to the IT man on the ground and he said that it is sent direct and as soon as it is sent it gets deleted.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Wow!

**Mr TOM SINE** – I am not sure if other province used this but –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We didn't have it in East Sepik, so I am just curious when I am hearing of it.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Is the IT man an employee of the Electoral Commission?

**Mr TOM SINE** – No, I think from the local company that is responsible for installing the CCTV. I have never seen –

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – What is the name of the local IT company?

**Mr TOM SINE** – I don't know.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU**– Is there anyone from Electoral Commission that can help?

**Mr TOM SINE** – No.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well, I think Werner, you make a note and we will summon the Electoral Commission back to answer that question. You may continue.

**Mr TOM SINE** – If counting can be done electronically it can shorten the time. I know it is going to be very expensive but it will be faster.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Just to let you know, we are seeking advice from countries that use electronic counting and so we will look into the feasibility of that. It might not be something that we will do immediately but it could be something that we do over time. We do not want to throw the whole thing out the window. There are working bits and there are things that are not working.

**Mr TOM SINE** - There was a big discussion on the appointment of ROs and AROs. I don't want to go into this. There is one thing; the ROs and AROs know that when they are gazzetted they will not listen to election managers on the ground. I don't have higher power. Election managers managing the election on the ground should be given the powers. If an RO or ARO steps out of line, instead of asking the committee we can terminate him on the spot.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Could I request on behalf of the committee given that several of you have raised that issue that the documentation that you have contributed to this particular discussion after the elections, if you have written material, I'd like you to submit that to the committee rather than yumi toktok lo maus wanem kain ol samting yumi painim aut pinis. Submitim kam in writing copies of those reports, highlighting that particular issue with returning officers because we don't have the same issue in East Sepik, yet you are having it here. Anyway, if you could provide that in writing.

**Mr TOM SINE** - For the temporary election workers, now the election officials are beginning to realize that they are important people and candidates cannot come directly to us but they are using these people now.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Which people?

**Mr TOM SINE** - The temporary election workers whom we have engaged to be presiding officers or assistant presiding officers, polling officials and counting officials.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So candidates are using them for what purpose?

**Mr TOM SINE** - For their own gain. On one side they are working for the Electoral Commission and on the other side they are watching and collecting information.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** - So they are selling their services?

**Mr TOM SINE** – Yes, so what I am thinking now is that we have to have a database and it should be made up of mostly public servants whom we can easily discipline when they commit an electoral offence.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We share your view. They should be public servants and if they mess up the elections they will be charged under the General Orders.

**Mr TOM SINE** – We can then have some people who are always there so given their experience we can achieve a maximum result. They know that they are working and getting paid so they can be honest and we can use overtime. One of the things that we can do is create a database here instead of every election we advertise positions and they apply and hence we are getting new people who may have alliance with candidates and so forth.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We have already established that there is no vetting process for the selection of ROs and AROs. We’ve already established that, that’s going to take place.

**Mr TOM SINE** – Otherwise, Chairman, these are the challenges and recommendations that I wish to bring forth on behalf of team Chimbu and my staff officer. In Chimbu we have a very good relationship with Police. The ACP always runs to Chimbu when we have a situation over there. He is a good bloke and he helps us very well. The PPC who helped us in 2022 is now in Morobe but he’s a very strong man and he stood his grounds so we were able to deliver the elections. So through you, if he has something to say.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Certainly, thank you sir for your contribution. Sergeant John Joseph, staff officer to the PPC. Would you like to add anything to the report given?

#### **Staff Officer-PPC Chimbu**

**Mr JOHN JOSEPH** (Staff Officer – PPC- Chimbu) – Thank you, Mr Chairman. I have nothing much to say but mostly during election time in Chimbu, we assisted the election manager in doing what we can do because most times we do not have the funding and the resources to assist him.

Most of the time you will find that there are only two police officers at a polling area and sometimes there are none. Planti taim ol man na meri isave go vot long laik bilong ol. Em i wanpela bikpela problem bikos most times when our roll-over troops went to the western part of the Highlands, they came back about two or three weeks later. By then, most of them are tired. Ol taied pinis na kam and when we want to deploy them to the polling places, em hat nau. Ol taied. They are not actually present at the polling booths. So planti taim, we have people lining up, na taim oli kolim wanpela nem olsem Margaret, eni meri ken go na vot tasol. This is what happens on the ground.

Maybe next time around, we conduct elections on the same day because Chimbu Province is always last in the Highlands and in Papua New Guinea tu. Emi wanpela risens bilong mipela, we are down with logistics, funding, manpower and so on. I don’t have much to say bikos planti samting em ol wanwok bilong me long Enga na Western Highlands i tok pinis. We all faced with the same issues. Thank you.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you sir, for your time. We now move to a women’s representative, Ms Sabeth Yengis. She is the representative from the Women’s Council in Enga. Is there anything you would like to add to these proceedings?

**Women’s Council Representative**

**Ms SABETH YENGIS** (Women’s Council Rep - Enga) –Firstly, I would like to thank you the Chairman and your team to come to the highlands region. Mi gat bikipela hamamas long hat bilong mi. Taim ol i tok Highlands krises i kamap long 2022 ileksen na ino gutpela. Mi tok tenk yu long tupela hailens tu istap wantaim yupela ol nambis na bai i nogat wanpela samting bai kamap gen long 2027. Yumi mas raun gut na ileksen ba kam gut.

On bihap long ileksen manager na lawyer bilong mi tok olsem long 2017 ileksen, mipela i nogat wanpela seperet poling booth but long 2022 mipela ibin vot. Mipela ol meri igat seperet poling booth bilong ol yet. Klostu lo taun, em mipela vot gut bat autsait long rimot eria we kar na balus ino save go long em, mi ba nonap long tok olsem ol meri i vot bilong ol yet o ol miks na vot

—

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Seperet poling booth bilong ol meri long ples long Enga we emi kamap, em wok gut o nogat? Wanem tingting bilong yu long dispela?

**Ms SABETH YENGIS** – Mi lukim na mi gat bikipela hamamas. Mipela ol mama na ol meri mipela igat sans long go makim husait lida mipela ilaikim long em.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So vot bilong yupela ino olsem mipela i harim long Jiwaka we ol i pasim tok –

**Ms SABETH YENGIS** – Em i nogat. Long hap bilong mi klostu long Wabag taun, em mipela i vot gut. Mipela igat tupela seperet booth bilong ol man na bilong mipela ol meri yet. Em dipen long wanem lida husait ba tekim ownasip na kontrol.

Sapos mipela i nogat gutpela lidasip long ples bilong mipela, em planti kainkain samting bai kamap.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So long lidasip? Yu min long wanem samting stret?

**Ms SABETH YENGIS** – Olsem ol wod memba na mejistret, pablik seven mas tekim ownasip na mipela bai go na putim vot long laik bilong mipela. Mi gat bikpela hamamas long kam bilong yupela na long 2027 bai nogat sem samting bai kamap gen olsem long 2022. Sampela rimot ples inogat gutpela ileksen bilong ol.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Yu bin stap insait long planti ileksen bifo na olsem yu sindaun na harim Enga, Western Highlands, Jiwaka na Chimbu i toktok. Long dispela olgeta toktok ol i wokim, long tingting bilong yu, yu ting mipela nid long wokim wanem kain samting long senisim we em bai helpim ol man meri long Enga na hailens long igat gutpela ekses long vot long mekim election long 2027 moa better than nau em kamap long en.

**Ms SABETH YENGIS** – Okay long lukluk bilong mi na mi kam sidaun na mi harim olsem ol kain grants sa kam long national gavman, ol mas fast trackim hariap long givim long ol lain long wanwan province bilong ol we ol ken budget na wantaim provincial gavaman ken givim liklik long ol. Bikos sampela taim ol save delay na provincial gavaman tu bai delay liklik na taim mekim olsem i save gat bikpela hevi long province, i wanpela samting na narapela em long common roll. Yumi mas updatim hariap na kisim NID tu we bai match wantaim list. So sapos nogat NID na list tasol em wanpela ba go vote olsem two three olsem election manager bilong Jiwaka i tok, em tok tru. So nau em yumi mas prepare hariap long kisim ol NID we ol sampela province ino kisim. Long Wabag, open member bilong mipla takim ownership na mipela olgeta lain save go kisim free. Na sampela ol remote area bai ol kisim bihain liklik bikos nogat access save go olsem road na balus. So mi laikim olsem gutpela common roll update na NID mas olgeta province mas kisim, especially long Highlands.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Tenk yu long gutpla contribution bilong yu. Members, are there any questions for the participants this afternoon?

**Hon JACOB MAKI** – Jiwaka, regarding land you are requesting. If you want to get land for offices and secure your containers and documents to keep safe in one particular place, I think

it's better for you to negotiate and secure a place close to or adjacent to the police station. Police station is better than anything else. You talk to the Police Force commander and they can secure and give you a place where you can put everything there. It might cost you around K500, 000, that's what I believe. This would include Simbu, Hagen and all around Papua New Guinea.

You discuss with your officers, superiors, we need to have land. We have the administrators here; we have the governors around like Governor of East Sepik is here. We have the governors around, they can secure funds and assist with this because we have containers still at the police station. That's not police property, that's your property and you should look after it. Who else is going to come and look after it?

Those things are still valid. Court cases are still going on and documents are there. You have the responsibility so I think you should have an office of your own and then yu putim olgeta document bilong yu stap na yu bai monitorim ol na kisim wokman bilong yu. Mekim so that em bai stap long lifetime, yu nau yu stap and then the other person will come in and it goes on. People will know that there's an electoral office available.

There's an office available close to the police station so that you can keep your containers there and security personnel should assist and look after them, that's what mi ting olsem. Yu gat wanem kain tingting emi stap long yu.

Common roll is very important, it's very very, very important. Mi olsem mi Highlands man na mi lukim olsem common roll bilong yumi ino up to date. If the adminsitrators are here, DAs are here, em bai yumi toktok na yumi bai mekim in a way that common roll should be updated. Ino late, by now we should prepare. Em mi lukim olsem em bikpela problem. Wanem taim bai yumi stretim. When are we going to prepare this? Mipela weitim wanem samtin. Em displa kain samtin so yumi toktok na bai yumi stretim so yupela mas toktok. Ino mipela bai kam toktok but yupela mas toktok na stretim. Talk to the administrator, talk to ADA na talk to DDAs and the electoral managers in each provinces. Highlands region mipela ken bung na toktok, I think em bai orait.

Toktok wantaim polis, yupela toktok na meikim kilia wanem samting bai mipela meikim. Let us take elections as business because now election trabol, hevi, gun bribery, man dai, life ino orait, em eleksen tasol i meikim na ol dispela samting i kamap. So yumi stap long kontrol em bai yumi kontrolim gut. Em dispela na yumi toktok long common roll update.

What I think and as committee here too, we can make changes for the elections. You are not proposing anything yet, you are talking about discrepancies and say em samting olsem na olsem but wonem samting bai yumi meikim long 2027. Can Hagen people go down and run elections in Madang, Madang can go and run elections in East Sepik, East Sepik can go to Daru, can we do that?

We are talking about changes in ROs or AROs, election managers being manipulated by the candidate and politician, chief leader, gun paia long coffee garden i stap ol poret. Yumi i ken senisim ol man i go i kam, yumi toktok na bai yumi meikim, yumi i ken senisim, that's what I think. What do you think? Mipela kam long hia, wanem yupela tingting long em. Yupela submitim long report na givim long mipela na wanem mipela tingim long em em mipela meikim. Mipela mas senisim dispela 2027 elections.

We set some precedents already, police you are on danger point now. Mipela kukim ballot box na go pinis stap long Parliament, yu save tu next em same samting bai kamap. We set precedents already, nau kot bai kam na bai tok nogat or tok orait na bai yumi go, em laip bilong ol man em yumi deal wantem. Nau mi no karim wanpela mani long poket na kam. Go tokim ol lain bilong yupela long ples, mi no karim wanpela mani kam, there is nothing. Mipela save pait. Nambis man in politiks em ino kisim wanpela mani olsem K40, 000 pei na mi kisim K50, 000 pei em nogat. Wok em same, samting em same but mipela ol Highlands em mipela putim ol samting na mipela save tingim em and there's nothing. Nau yu tok wanem, mi no harim gut skul fee na ol narapela benefit long kisim.

There is no benefit, nothing, everything is controlled and monitored. IFM systems in place you will never get anything. This poor man will die on the street without getting anything. Let's tell him to go educate himself in the village, tell him you will never get anything, you are dying for nothing. Yu toktok nating ating em senis moni bilong K10 yu baim Coca-Cola na K5 bai yu karim go yu pait raun, there is nothing else. Em kain samting olsem so that's what I see.

We have to do campaign, awareness and control this place na yumi mekim olsem. I see most of the firearms in the Highlands are from the Police Force, Defence and other disciplined forces. I have sighted a firearm somewhere in Papua New Guinea and in Enga, which belonged to a police officer in Madang and it went missing. Ol tok olsem ol sinkim long solwara, but mi lukim dispela firearm ol karim kam, mi polis man so mi luksawe long dispela firearm. Ol karim raun na ol holim

ol man raun na mi lukim. Em firearm bilong polis, why ol dispela kain samting stap long han bilong yumi.

Yupela tu i gat question, mipela tu igat question tu. We'll control these things and then elections bai orait. Sampela samting yupela yet discuss na putim, sampela mipela bai discuss. We'll have to discuss and then we'll have to make sure this election 2027 goes well. Prosperity outcome bilong 2027 election bai kamap sapos em mipela wok long toktok repeatedly and then we carry it forward. Thank you long ol gutpela point yupela i wokim tu na mipela reisim tu na kain olsem mi tok tenkyu.

**Hon STEVEN PIM** – Chair, thank you. Tenkyu long olgeta presentations, na mi tekim dispela taim long tok tenkyu long ol gutpela inputs yupela i givim. Mi bilong Western Highlands na electorate bilong me tu i kamap wanpela electorate especially long electorate bilong mi we dispela bin kamap. Telephone cal long nait em long electorate we ol telefon kol long nait na dispela kamap so mi larim long han bilong Papa God na em bai skelim. But mi laik tok tenk yu long Chairman, em wanpela hardpela man na mi meikim statmen olsem yumi shud gat mo long dispel kain Chairman.

Nau yumi toktok long olgeta problem na career belong mi em long politics. Mi save karim olgeta kainkain briefcase bilong ol politician na helpim ol so mi save long dispela system gut tru. Ol nambis, New Guinea na Mamose man em ol gutpela lain but olgeta problem em yumi ol Highlands tasol save mastermind na neutrolisim ol system. Na mipela stap long Parliament na toktok stap, mi no pinpoint long wanpela, mipela olgeta save benefit long dispela system.

Nau ol Kompiam-Ambum gun pairap stap na hamaspela man i dai, na Mr Pundari stap long Parliament long Moresby. Em bai kam lukautim ol pikinini, ol tribesmen blo em na ol constituents blo em or nogat? Yumi wok long kilim yumi yet stap.

Lo Laigaip-Pogera, em kamap long Southern Highlands pinis, Hela wok long pairap stap. Yupela votim mipela go stap long Parliament na mipela go daun long Cairns, Australia, Philippines na kam bek na bai mipela stap olsem. But yupela bai pait yet na kilim man, lusim han, leg na ai.

Olsem gavana bilong East Sepik tok ya eleksen i save gut na ol i sa stap na mi lukim olsem em wanpela man tasol sa stap na raun. Bihain mi lukim Memba bilong Bogia na Memba bilong Hiri-Koiari ol nogat man sa bihainim ol. Yumi Highlands ya yumi em narapla kain species na mipela ol lida tu, taim ol man kam mipela baim na givim ol man bikos mipela laik kamap olsem

“Alpha Male”, dominant force. Mipela olgeta lida. Em mas seating memba baim so mi mas baim tu long counter olsem em laik mekim em bai mi gat stron long mekim. Mi gat hausman stap, mi gat bol; mama karim mi orait na papa karim mi papa stap. Dispela kain tok pisin save stap na kamapim bikpela problem long taim bilong eleksen, mi lukim.

Yumi toktok long 2027 eleksen na mi wari stret. Sampela bikpela samtin mas change na yumi mas votim man lo trupela way. Nau yumi toktok bikos mi appreciatim toktok bilong yu, ol dispela yumi wok long toktok long provincial election steering committee em politicized one side. Sampela ol provincial election managers conspire na kaikai moni. Ol politicians na candidates igat moni putim moni i go insait na ol gat hire kar. Dispela kain system kamap na yumi compromisim olgeta sumtin.

Long electorate bilong mi, wanpela man i bin dai. That is why mi wok long lukim dispela eleksen o ron gut but man i dai long em ya, dispela box i bin buruk long em bikos election manager laikim box i counted na electoral commissioner laikim dispela box counted that is why ol i kolim ACP long countim dispela box. Ino planti box, wanpela tasol. Ol tok olsem mi no sapos long win long em, mi stap tamblo na kam go antap so dispela box yupela mas countim so man bai go daun but Papa God sa makim ol lida.

So, yupela mas kam toktok na olgeta samtin yumi toktok long em long dispela electoral system mas change. Chairman bilong mi, yu stap long gavman so yumi mas strong long dispel. Electoral system must change. The way it is funded is corrupt, this election funding must come from provinces. The provincial election managers and each electorate must come with funding that is readily available lo province.

Wokim budget na givim mi na funding mas kam stret na yupela sentrolaisim funding long hia. So that yumi noken weitim Electoral Commision. Hedkwata lain igat wei bilong ol. Kain kain alawens ol bai peim. Just last week enkwairi long palamen Electoral Commissioner bin kam na tok olsem em spedim K50 million on hire cars. Na milukim long hia yupela Eleksin Manager nogat hire car na nogat permanent staff. Emi no add ap! You represent the big institution and you are the election manager and you should be proudly driving a 5-door Land Cruiser visiting your electorates and ward members and planning now.

Chairman, I am grateful for what you are doing and we need more of this. Mi lukim olsem ol gutpla lidas kamap na yumi usim system long marginalism but yu mas save olsem the favor of God istap antap long dispela kantri bilong yumi.

Nau mi lukim ol gun em ol narapela kain gun. Yupela tok long M16, A2 na A1, SLR na AR15 em maski samapla kain na narapela kain gun ol kam insait na ol high-powered tasol.

Mi half Enga na Western Highlands so mi save. Anatap long Enga gun em pipia. Hagen too hun em pipia. Southern Highlands na Tari em maski em oil and gas pumping so em gun em pipia na pipia. Yumi givim hatwok long olgeta ol citizens bilong mipela.

Dispela problem em lidasip problem. Mipela ol wanwan lida mi tok ok em mi save olsem ol hausman bilong mi em planti gun stap. Em wanpela bikpela problem.

Observation bilong mi long votim taim ol meri bai stap long meri lain na ol man bai stap long man lain em trupela toktok yumi mekim. But in reality, ol kolim Maria, ol kolim Betty, husait nem ol kolim em anybody bai go. Distribution bilong ballot pepa tu em narapela samtin. Box igo long narapela samtin. Taim mipela tok one-day poll it is another story. This is what is happening on the ground mi explainim.

Mi lukim olsem mipela start long 12 o'clock na sampela ol kounsel ward for instance long Hagen Open em wanpela counsel war igat 10,000 man or 5000. Sampela bilong mipela em 3000, 6000 or 4000 so how yumi kisim ol namba em yumi kisim and yumi holim stap nau. Wanem samtin stap long common roll em ol pinisim mipela tok. Police bai mekim wanem? Defence bai mekim wanem? Ol tok olrait em base vote bilong yu so yupela kastim so mipela castim now. Ol presiding officers katim numba bilong mipela, just to finish the allowable ballot papers. Ples we nogat candidate go long em mipela olgeta candidate tok dispela lain ol vote long like bilong ol. Ol kaikai raun so 1, 2, 3 em number tasol. Mipela save wokim dispela so fair and just safe election mi em mi sem long stap long dispela komiti but because Chairman em mi privilege long stap long dispela komiti mi lukim olsem bel blong mi, mi laikim bai imas gat sampela change.

Elektoral Komisiona winim powers bilong olgeta narapla power. That is why yu lukim olsem em ken failim wanpela man or em ken makim or kisim wanpela man as returning officer. System em makim returning officer but bikos ol powerful man wantaim moni na influence, ol former na current politicians, yanpela skul man we oli gat relationship wantaim Electoral Commissioner, ol toktok long em na ol system bilong ol insait how ol deal wantaim ol yet mipela no save but em commissioner mekim appointment so long gazettal em i gat power.

Yumi mas try na managim dispela ol powers bilong Electoral Commissioner. Em nogat wanpela inherent powers where m bai exasaisim dispela ol powers.

Narapla samtin mi lukim long en em funding issue. HQ mas operate na oversee long elections. But long ronnim na fundinm em mas stap long provinces na payim ol wok man long time na ronim election long Budget. Sapos yu manager bilong Jiwaka na yu exostim budget bilong yu then you are responsible.

These are my recommendations to consider and we must never spend K50 – K60 million on hire cars because that is too exorbitant. We run elections with only K2 million or K3 million. These bills have been inflated and the Government is struggling to pay them.

If we go from electorate to electorate like now we are doing in Hagen Open, we will move to Mul-Bayer, Tambul Nebilia then there will be cost measures involved for manpower security. The polling is one day. So if we are to run one-day polling – I am mixed Engan so for instance at Wapenamanda we will have to get on trucks and go to other areas.

This system is promoting too much corruption. At least yupela raisim ol issues na mipela bai discuss. Mi yet mi candidate now mi kamap member olsem ileksin petition tu stap insait ol box so larim tok true bai kamap. Larim system wokim wok bilong em. Bilong nau yet mi tok tenkyu long ol gutpela feedback bilong yupela so mipela ken traim best long wokim ol wok gut.

Time is not on our side, its 2023 and we will be going to 2024 and we are talking about electronic and bio-voting system. If the coastal people run this country I will truly and surely see a hundred percent in changes. If we were to come and pass legislations and make it law em mi yet bai mi kam kisim taim stret. Ol makim mi kamap long parliament emi no birthright bilong mi. Sapos true true mi lida man ol man bai votim mi. Whether the system is good or bad we will put it through and test it to see.

Ol narapla hap em olrait. But long Highalnds em mi lukim em ol man meri pikinini, bubu aipas, iau pas, leg buruk olgeta because long corruption ol laik kaikai yet. Mi stap long dsipela time bilong nau yu kamap member, yu tu mas mekim same long mi long mi kaikai.

Money bilong savaiv yumi yet yumi kaika,i bihain Ombudsman Commission olgeta ol lain long ORD na Fianance Department ronim yumi long compliance. Dispela go back, mipla ol politicians bai go back long braibim ol dispela lain.

Mi inap nau, tenk yu Papa God long lukautim yumi olgeta.

### **Closing Remarks**

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, emi gutpla yet olsem wanpela bilong yupela yet kam toktok na yupela harim. Em tupla blong yupela toktok na yupla harim. Igat planti man oli sceptical. Oli tintin olsem dispela committee em narapela giaman ken ol gavaman bai wokim or kind olsem.

Let me state my own personal desire here. When the two ballot boxes were broken in my province, it was for the first time in the history of East Sepik. One was broken in my district and another was broken in Wewak on the same day. They destroyed these two sealed ballot boxes. Their simple frustration was that, their names weren't on the electoral roll. After they broke the ballot boxes, they went home. They did not try to stay back and create more trouble.

Listening to all of you today; Enga, Western Highlands, Jiwaka, Chimbu, Commander Negi, as well as our two panel members, Hon. Maki and Hon. Pim; it touches me to know that all of you were honest and forthright. You express that you want to see something different. There are probably others out there watching.

On behalf of the committee, I want to say thank you all for your honesty. I did not know what to expect when I led this team up here. You did not hide anything and just made everything so clear and put everything in the open. Admitting the faults in the way you conduct the elections is a good starting point. If you as officials can admit that there is a problem, which you have; then I hope that all your people, who are watching right now, can do some serious soul searching.

The reason why the election goes well in my province is not because of the people. It's not because of the public servants. It's because the people themselves want it to go like that. So it works like that. And so, we want to enable that and we want to make sure that everybody enjoys that right that is guaranteed in the constitution.

I want to say thank you to all of you for speaking out and putting everything in the open. We have another day tomorrow; for all of you that are watching in from outside, if you have a grievance and you want to come and air it, we have another day here at Highlander; you are all welcome to come. We are interviewing mostly the public servants because they are the ones responsible for this.

At the end of this process, we will produce a report which will go to Parliament. If you can see here, there is a general consensus amongst members of Parliament that we want to make a change for the better. We want to make sure that the future is better, not just for us but as Honourable Pim said, 'we want to do this for our people and our children for tomorrow.'

Thank you all again. To the provinces which we did not go to, may I say this; if a particular province whether it's in the Highlands or somewhere on the coast want to have a say, you may make your submission to the committee and we will schedule a time to come and listen to you. Next week we will be at Momase and next following we will be at New Guinea Islands.

The important thing is that, all of the issues that you've raised, we want to work on them and we want to resolve them. So that is the undertaking on behalf of the committee and I am giving you. We have sat well passed out time, so I will now suspend the hearings until tomorrow morning at 10:00 AM. Thank you all very much and I hope you can join us again.

**Meeting Adjourned to Next Day**

**DAY TWO**  
**28<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

**Transcript**

Time: 10 am

Venue: Highlander Hotel

**In Attendance**

**Committee Members**

Honourable Allan Bird – Chairman

Sir Puka Temu – Deputy Chairman

Honourable Robert Naguri

Honourable Kieth Iduhu

Honourable Steven Pim

Honourable Jacob Maki

**Witnesses**

Mr Joseph Puri- Provincial Police Commander – Southern Highlands

Mr James Sipa – Provincial Police Commander – Eastern Highlands

Mr Joe Kubu –Provincial Data Coordinator – Eastern Highlands

Mr Baffic Rasowe – Returning Officer-Goroka Open-Eastern Highlands

Mr Simon Parak – Provincial Administrator – Eastern Highlands

### Opening Remarks

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We have before us the Eastern Highlands election team and we have the PPC for Southern Highlands. We couldn't get the full Southern Highlands team but I expect that our reports in the Highlands are fairly similar and that's the sort of things we would be expecting today.

Just for all of you who have been called before the Committee, this is a properly Constituted Parliamentary Committee which means that everything you say here are protected by Parliamentary Privilege. So, feel free to speak about the issues that have affected your elections generally but more so if you have broader election experience coming from the past, we may prop into that so we can have a better understanding.

The role of the Parliamentary Committee, and I just want to make this clear; a lot of the people I guess are kind of skeptical because there has been a lot of issues in the elections particularly disgruntle candidates who will question what we will do. Well for the first time in a history we are using the powers of Parliament and if you will notice, it's been a long time since powers of Parliament have been used. There are three arms of Government; the Executive Government which everybody knows about, Judiciary and the Parliament.

So, this Committee represents the third arm which is Parliament and Parliament is usually always silent but with the inclusion of many new members of Parliament including those of us who are sitting here plus the support of some of the most senior members of Parliament like Sir Puka Temu, who is the Deputy Chairman of the current Committee, he will join us shortly. We are interested in probing some of the major issues affecting our country to enhance this committee. We want to express our gratitude to the Prime Minister, Hon. James Marape for also taking a keen interest in understanding the issues that affect the outcome of our elections and then to look at how we can improve them so our ordinary citizens can participate meaningfully in the elections.

So that's what we are here for and we are not a court of law; so that means if people have legitimate grievances about outcomes in 2022 elections, then there is an avenue for that and it's the courts which everybody goes to for restitution. So, em ino wok bilong mipela. If people have issues that they want to raise with us, for example you can't raise issues with us if your issue is before the courts. However, you can raise particular points that we can take notes of so it forms part of our reports as an appendix so that it gives some context to our report when it goes before the Parliament.

But just to make it very clear to our people of PNG who are watching in, we are not a court of law even though we have similar powers which we can summon people and if they act against the wishes of Parliament. We can call them up for contempt and they can be charged as well. So just to make this clear but for you participants, I urge you to speak freely.

Yesterday we had Western Highlands, Enga, Jiwaka and Chimbu, and it was quite revealing on what was presented before us and I think it was truthful and they didn't hide anything and I expressed my gratitude before of the Committee yesterday and I will do so again. I encourage those of you who are here; that you people run elections and at the same time receive a lot of criticism from the public, members of Parliament and from those who took part in elections. So now it's the opportunity to tell your country your experiences and then to point us in the right direction as to how we can go about recommending fixtures for the future so that our elections become better. At the end of the day its you people who will be running the elections again so with that as it is, I will ask Southern Highlands to go first because its one person and then we will spend our time with Eastern Highlands

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I will call on the PPC for Southern Highlands and if you can state your name and your designation; you can give us a summary of the written submission you have presented. To be quite frank we all know Southern Highlands was a really messing Election that's putting it mildly so let's have your report.

## **SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS PROVINCE**

### **Provincial Police Commander-Southern Highlands**

**Mr JOSPEH PURI** (Provincial Police commander– Let me take this opportunity to express my thanks Chairman, all the Honourable Members of this Committee; it is my pleasure to be part of the team here. I acknowledge the Media team and the National Parliament staff that are here. My Name is Joseph Puri and I am a Chief Superintendent by rank and I am the Provincial Police Commander of Southern Highlands. This is my fourth month serving as PPC in Southern Highlands.

Previously I was appointed Provincial Commander out at the Western Highlands Province on the eve of the Election and then I was side-lined and just recently took up the office in the beginning of the year as PPC SHP.

What you have in front of you is a brief that I prepared for our NATEL Police Operations debrief at the end of election. What I will be talking about is my experiences in the past elections and as well as the recent election which I was not a part but I observed and participated in Western Highlands and Jiwaka as a whole. I won't speak for Southern Highlands because I was never there.

In any special police operations like on elections or any other operations, our elections are always prepared in phases and usually with the National General Election, we have three phases in the election operations. The first part is the pre NATEL Operations and that is the part we usually execute even before the issue of writs. Basically, to do with awareness on law, and order issues, intel collection, as well as neutralising or defusing any possible threats that we see during our intel collection. This is the part that we have to prepare for the election proper.

The second part is the election proper and the third part will be the post-election part which is when we anticipate results and everything else. After the declarations, you anticipate some destructions, damages and disturbances may arise. These are the three phases that police operations are conducted in preparation for the election, during the elections and after the elections.

Mr Chairman let me touch on the conduct of election throughout the province. I was the Provincial Commander for the Western Province and in 2017 the election was delivered peacefully without problems in Western Province.

But coming up here, I encountered a lot of problems that I never experienced and these are problems orchestrated or instigated by some leaders, political supporters as well as the people or supporters on the ground. The first experience was the appointment of the returning officers for the elections. I think in Western Highlands, especially in Hagen Open Electorate, we have experienced even before the issue of writs and the appointment was challenged in the court.

Another serious problem that I have discovered is that there were two different appointments made and they both were gazetted in the appointment of RO for Hagen open and this triggered a lot of problems and you have seen in the media the close down of the airport and blockages everywhere in the city of Mt Hagen. These problems were still in progress and the problem for the appointment of RO in Western Highlands, especially in Hagen Open Electorate was never progressed. It was going through court processes and delays were taken as we all know and have seen. However, the appointment was somehow confirmed and we had to go through the process.

Some of the challenges that I experienced or came across were some interferences from the Electoral Commissioner. We have a Provincial Election Steering Committee that supposed to be

the medium for the flow of information into the Electoral Commissioner and people on the ground, the electoral commission staff, the polling officials and Ros. I have seen that the Provincial Elections Steering Committee in which we were part of had no powers or no teeth to bite as I would say from my experience. Some of the information that were flowing came directly to polling officials.

Some of these information were supposed to be filtered through a process with the election steering committee and I believe that the provincial election steering committee would be the most appropriate body to filter and they should be empowered by swearing in and making conditions or come with some packages that must be in place because when the information is coming, whether from the security forces or from the electoral commission, it must be channelled through the Provincial Election Steering Committee so that they must process it. They must be the only people in the province to release information to all the polling areas, polling officials and everybody and even the politicians and candidates too, so that there is a control of information.

But it wasn't like this, many information came up such as; some people said the polling must stop while other say it must continue. So, pressure was mounting and building and everybody did not settle in probably. In these circumstances, police had to use appropriate common sense in dealing with this because when tensions build up, literally no one would settle to listen. So, these are some of the things that I have seen which we should at least, with this body to make recommendations that we must follow some suitable approaches to not repeat this in the future. One of the many recommendations that people voiced out was the use of the biometric system of voting. They say it is the most appropriate and I can give you more in my brief on the recommended system.

The NID be completed and must be mandatory to everybody. With the NID we must have to have the biometric system of voting so that everybody will settle down and vote properly. The system will cost the Government much start the process, but I believe in the long run it will work for the people. The biometric system will have less expenses and also less debts and I believe we won't have any bloodshed. In Papua New Guinea, we have been campaigning so much about and free, fair and safe elections but I personally have yet to see a free, fair and safe elections since the time I started voting until now. So, for us to have a free, fair and safe elections, the whole system needs to be overhauled. We must develop a new strategy and that's why the biometric system of voting will help us deliver a free, fair and safe elections in this country.

Firstly, we thought that Highlands is the only region that is violent when it comes to elections, but that has changed. We have people migrating to other so called quiet provinces and we are starting to see supporters coming up with all kinds of nonsense to disrupt the elections. Before we know it, will be happening all across the nation. I thank the Government for coming up with such a committee to at least establish something that can enable us to find a way forward for the future elections.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you sir, we have now provided an opportunity for person like you. Obviously, you are a senior police officer involved in many elections and your testimony before the Committee of very high value and we’ve had other members of the security forces give a similar assessment.

I wanted to ask a couple of questions, we have a prediction from the Police Commissioner in Port Moresby; during our first Committee Hearings, he said and I quote, ‘*we think, based on our information*’ that the 2027 will probably be the worst elections ever, if we don’t change some of the systems or improve some of our processes in the conduct of the elections’ and you have given some testimony to that.

I was interested and I wanted you to explain a little bit further; you said that you came from the Western Province, where you were a Provincial Police Commander there. You presided over the conduct of an election there and then in 2022 you were in the Western Highlands, just observing and you made the comment ‘it was peaceful in Western Province, it was not so here’ and obviously you’ve told us the story.

One of your recommendations is that we’ve got to fix the Electoral Roll and that’s something the Committee has already noted. If we don’t make any fixes in your opinion as a professional policeman for a long time if the Government, if the country does not fix the way we conduct elections, what would be your prediction of the way it would look in 2027, if we did nothing?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Thank you. The contributing factors are so enormous; I would say if we didn’t fix it, there are many contributing factors to that. First of all, internally, within the security forces, we are a very poorly resourced in terms of manpower and logistics.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay let's dig into that. How many men did you have available to you in the last election and what sort of numbers do you think would help going forward, give us an indication?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Thank you; in the Western Highlands Province we have less than 200 personnel which is not enough. I assigned police officers to every polling location in Western Highlands Province and I have found out that in every polling booth, we will have about one or two personnel. That is if we have to deploy all the personnel that we have. But on the other hand, we also have to cater for our administration, command post and we had to pick up a team of personnel to support other provinces like, Hela, Southern Highlands, Enga and Western Highlands. We call this team the roll-over team.

In Western Highlands we provided well over a hundred personnel to the roll-over team, and that is half of the manpower that we have in the province.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Did you get any men from the PNG Defence force and the CIS? Are they included in the number that you are telling us?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – They are not included in that team. We had them on what we call the Quick Response Unit (QRF) and prior to that we had them doing awareness and the preparatory part of the election before the polling started. Many of them were on the QRF unit which sometimes does not happen in the most remote parts of the region due to logistics problem. We had to come up with some ways to deal with problems detected in the polling areas.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, for your time, members do you have any questions to ask?

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Mr Chairman, if I may ask some questions; thank you, Mr Puri for your report and your statement given to the Committee. You mentioned a number of things from your observations.

Before I get to the question of biometrics, you mentioned that the security forces were disproportionate to the population that you served. For instance, in Western Highlands Province,

there were 200 police personnel to about 346,000 people. Obviously, that is not enough and you will require more manpower on the ground.

Did you have a figure in mind, in terms of manpower to be proportionately allocated for such an operation?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – I would want to have ten or more personnel to neutralise every polling booth. If a situation arises, we could call for the quick response unit but that did not happen. My plan was to have at least ten members minimum in every polling booth to at least rectify some problems such as block-voting and split-voting.

For example, in regards to split-voting, in order to equally share the votes between two or more candidates from the same area, they split the votes. Firstly, they find out about the total number of ballot papers in the boxes and then they decide who to vote, for instance, how many votes should go to each candidate. They decide these things prior to deployment of security forces and counting officials to those locations.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That is interesting; split-voting is a new concept, as far as I am concerned and you have just explained it. What you are saying is that certain people within that particular voting area will make a decision before-hand who gets how many votes.

Is there an agreement arrived at by the community? Em ol man o meri save mekim dispela disisen o olgeta lain wantaim save bung na wokim? What's the process? Or is it just a bunch of men in the hausman that colluded with each other and agreed on what to do? How does that work?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Well, I would say, being a Western Highlander, in my area there is a population of almost 4000 people who are eligible voters. However, most of them did not have their names on the Common Roll, including the vulnerable group of people. When the say vulnerable group of people, I refer to the old people, the pregnant mothers, breastfeeding mothers, disable people, etc. This vulnerable people have equal rights just like everybody else, and they have not been given a chance to cast their votes. They only become spectators in the polling booth, and sadly return home without having exercised their constitutional rights.

When I say split voting, I mean, the voting is decided by a leader. During the election and the polling period, every human being in a particular village is a leader. They know they all have

a right to vote so everybody else goes out and feeds off from all the candidates, and when it comes to casting their votes, every candidate will come and bargain for a vote from them.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Obviously we are dumbfounded by your revelations that is why Hon. Iduhu and I are gaping to ask you questions. Let's just use your people in your community as an example; your 4000 voters, because you are familiar with them and I would assume you hold the leadership role there, given your position in a very important government institution, with is the RPNGC. Do you talk to your vulnerable people that you just mentioned? What is their opinion? Are they happy with this split voting arrangement?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Negative.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So they have expressed that to you?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What can we do, as a committee to make sure that this phenomenon of split voting doesn't occur, so that everyone, including the vulnerable people in your community can get to vote.

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – There may be other options there.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – You suggested like, if you had 10 men manning the polling centre, then that would help. How would that help?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – That may not help in some circumstances but there will be a control flow of people into the polling boots and that is where vulnerable people may be given an opportunity to cast their vote, provided that their names are already in the Common Roll. If their names are not on the Common Roll, it will never eventuate.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Operationally, for all the security forces, and I assume that for the province, you would be the commander. That means, PNGDF and other personnel would come under your command; my assumption, or it could come under the ACP, I'm assuming. Because usually, it's a civilian operation.

Having that understanding, are you able to move personnel around so that you do get those 10 men per polling centre, or is that not possible? And if you can't get that 10, and had more days for voting, and you are able to move your men so that you can cover this many polling stations; would that work? Assuming your men don't get tired as you know, they spend one whole week guiding polling stations.

I want to understand how we can make this practically work. Assuming we double the police force in the next three years, which is what the government is intending to do. Even if we double the police force, that still does not give you the numbers that you need. Even if we double the PNGDF, that still does not give you the numbers that you need. So, I'm asking you about your operational planning; so that we could understand how it would make it work so that you could have the 10 or the 15 men or whatever you need.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How would that work? I mean, you're on the ground you do these things, you tell us.

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – The people of Western Highlands are peace loving people and they respect law. The situations that erupted here, but it all the situations cooled off because we went out and spoke to everybody. Even the road blocks at the airport, just up the road, we had huge roadblocks but when we approach them and spoke to them, they just simply walked away.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you're saying here that the people are peace loving all of the time until this thing called elections comes around and that's it? All hell breaks loose?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – That is what we can say at this point in time because that's what we see. Everybody runs around like what I just mentioned about the democratic right that they have in elections. They go out and feed from all candidates that come and campaign and when it comes time for voting, they vote for their own candidate. So, this is the kind of mentality that people are

used to, in feeding off other candidates. And when it comes to voting they cause all these issues and disturbances at the polling areas as a result many are not given equal opportunities to freely cast their votes.

Basically, you will find in the common roll here in Western highlands that most of the names have been left out for some reason or maybe taken out and placed somewhere else and that is something that we really need to dig deep and find out where the names have gone to. My name should appear in the electoral roll under my village, not in somebody else's council ward where I'm not from or part of.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, I think that's a similar concern that we have heard from everybody else; it's around the electoral roll. Let me just assure you and our people in Papua New Guinea that are watching in; the electoral roll is going to be the number one thing that this committee will have to deal with. And to my mind, as the chairman, I would want to have that roll ready at least one year before the elections.

It is my desire as chairman and I speak for the members as well. That I would want the roll available to all Papua New Guineans so whether you get a printed copy or you go online in your mobile phone or computer, all of us should be able to have access to that roll. That's one of the things this committee will ensure happens.

You know, when you look at democracy, there's a certain word that the French use and they call it *liberty*. *Liberty* is the thing that democracy is built around. This is what I would think we would do with the electoral roll. See right now it's a secret document that nobody knows and the Electoral Commission kind of protects it to the point where this thing is destroyed. But I think that if it belongs to the people, it should go back to the people; and it should be available to the people. They should have the liberty to go and look at it.

So, like for your 3000 or 4000 people in your community, you should be able to pick it up and go and give it to your community and say em ya, em electoral roll ya, yumi stap o yumi no stap o. And if we give enough time to object to it and you know, we've got to fully proof it. I have asked a question of the Electoral Commission. I said, look, how is it possible that you are able to adjust numbers in a particular voting place? How is it possible?

Maybe ol save na ol haitim or I don't know but as far as I'm concerned, that document or roll should not belong to the Electoral Commission. It should belong to the people of Papua New Guinea. So, Sir I want to assure you that one thing, if we don't fix anything else, that is one thing we are going to fix. Let's just assume whatever the number is, olgeta neim bilong ol stap long electoral roll, how then do we go forward and make that voting work. Will a single day polling still be useful? I am asking hypothetically now. If you are not going to have 10 men at one polling booth, how do you want this thing to work so that we can ensure that all of your people, assuming they are already on the electoral roll.

All of them hau bai yumi make sure olsem ol bai go na vot? Yu tokim mipela nau. We are looking forward and we accept the issues and challenges of the past. We assume that the Committee bai make sure olsem mipela i fixim and let us take the electoral roll out of the picture now. Dispela electoral roll em bai kamap property bilong committee on behave of the people of Papua New Guinea. We will change the law so that em bai ino inap property bilong Electoral Commission, em pinis.

They had it with them for 47 years and they were never been able to fix it. We are going to listen to Einstein and we are going to change the way we do business. Enough is enough, so your people, let's just say ol stap pinis lo electoral roll how do we then, yupela security force na government, whether it is Western Highlands, or Southern Highlands, we accept that there are similar problems and you already said that the problems in the Highlands are going down to the coast. I am from the coast I do not want the same practices in the Highlands to come to my province. So, I want to nip them in the butt. Let me make that clear and I need your help to do it so you tell us sapos electoral roll em i fix, how do we ensure that the vulnerable people in your community and everybody else gets their free fair election, how do we do that, you tell us?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Thank you Chair and welcome Sir Puka Temu. I see that if the common roll is fixed then in my opinion, I see that the ballot paper that need to be distributed to a particular polling booth must be strictly counted according to the number of voters at that polling booth, no extras no less. If they are less, we can always say it is all finished and done with but if we have more than that becomes an issue. If the common roll is updated and fixed to the number of voters in that particular council ward, then the number of ballot papers issued must be fixed too.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay assuming we do that, how do we stop the split voting that you just described. The split-voting that disadvantages the vulnerable people in your community. Sapos yumi salim, say you got 3999 voters, mipela konfemim, electoral roll em stret na 3999 ballot papers em kamap long ples bilong yu, how do we guarantee that split-voting will not happen? Ol no inap pasim tok na tok orait yu kisim 1000, nay u kisim hamas and those who are supposed to vote get excluded. How do we deal with that situation that you described?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** - Naturally people will be aware that, because before the polling starts, I know they will count the number of ballot papers with the number of populations in the commo roll and that will ease a lot of tension naturally, because everybody who is here will vote no matter what so there won't be any split-voting or block-voting as some others have already mentioned.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, because the Electoral Roll was deficient, emi krietim dispela response nau yu woklo toktok lo em ya.

**Mr JOSEPH PURI**– That's right.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, hamaspla ballot pepa i go lo wanpla hap em yupla just dividim equally na vote tasol? Well, wanpla or tupla man makim olgeta.

**Mr JOSEPH PURI**– That's right.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That happens in Western Highlands and I supposed other parts of the Highlands?

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Did that happen in Jiwaka too? I am saying this because I observed the Election in Jiwaka

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – This is something interesting.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Chairman, may I step in please?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Sure.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Good morning, Superintendent Puri thank you for your time and good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Chief, I have three issues to raise with you so I just need straight forward short answers.

Do you think the Government made the right decision to decide to have one-day polling in all the Highlands provinces?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI**– Yes, it did.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – It was a good decision and it achieved the results that you expected?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI**– Timing was a factor. If we started on time, then I think we should have achieved some results. But we started off late because the polling officers that needed to be in the polling areas were delayed; transportation is one, isolation of the polling area is another.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Why were they delayed?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Well the transportation was delayed because people who suppose to be present at the council wards were suppose to pick up their polling officials and deploying them into the polling areas were late, they came in late –

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Chief Puri, may I interrupt? You just advised the Committee that your men power stretched out because you had to distribute your 200 men to other provinces. That is to do with one-day polling so if you had enough time, say maybe two or three days polling, you would have kept all your men here?

So, you are telling us that one-day polling is still good for the Highlands, even though you have shortages in your men power?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Yeah.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Okay, my second question, we just heard from a female representative from Enga yesterday that she was very pleased on how the Electoral Commission decided to have two separate lines for the male and female at each polling stall. She was very pleased that it worked out in Wabag. How did that go in the Western Highlands province as a whole?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – I do not think it worked out for Western Highlands because I remember making announcement for two separate polling lines for male and females in my community and they were very happy but during that time I was in Jiwaka, and when I came to vote in my area at around midday it was all completed.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – So. It didn't work out in Western Highland Province?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – So, I am assuming that it may have not worked out in Western Highlands Province.

**Mr ROBERT NAGURI** – It goes back to the attitude of people in each area. Would you agree with me in saying that?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, you arrived at 12 O'clock and by then the voting of 4 000 people was completed?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – We were only given 1200 ballot papers so what can you do with that?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, the 1,200 ballot papers were split as you described?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, thank you.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – My last question, we had a very disturbing incident in the 2022 Elections in Western Highlands Province, which was the closer of the Kagamuga Airport. That is something to do with a criminal nature; would you elaborate a little bit on that just so the Committee and people know what really happened or caused that criminal activity to go on disturbing flights into Kagamuga Airport at that time?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – It was the effect of the appointment of the Hagen Open Returning Officer, which sparked the supporters to take it out to the street -

They block the roads and the airport. The criminal behavior at the airport led to the pouring of oil onto the runway which disrupted the inflow of flights however. It was done in the middle of the night and early hours of the morning around at around 3 O'clock and no one could have been identified at the time.

**Mr ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you Chief Puri no further questions from me.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Thank you PPC, I have about three questions I want to ask you, but before I do that can I seek your indulgence to explain as the head of security personnel. The typical environment of a polling area on that single polling day. In very short brief give us an outline in words, what your memory serves you as to how a typical polling area might look and feel like.

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – The typical polling area in the highlands from my memory is such that people dressed up as warriors especially, young men. And I would say people who indulge themselves with drugs. They front up in the polling areas because they would like to force people to vote for their candidates and that creates a hostile environment at the polling place. People are naturally in fear. That's the kind of environment we have, some maybe peaceful but others that I have seen most of them dressed up as if they are going into war.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** –When you say they are dressed up as if they are going into war; what do you mean?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – They paint their faces so we don't recognize them.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – What are they carrying?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – I have never seen any firearm but obviously you can feel the environment that is not safe. Its tense because it is intimidating and it's provocative.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So in one word, you would agree that the the polling booths are in so far as security is concerns, volatile?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Yes, I would agree.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – That being the case; do you think that is because there's only one-day polling allocated to the Highlands region probably the case that people are wake up and want to get in there first and exercise their democratic right?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – I think like in the highlands, when we want to kill pig, we don't sleep we stay up till day break, doing moka or anything. And electing a leader is also similar so people don't sleep. One-day polling is sufficient because if we allow Mul Baiyer district to vote one day first then we shift all the resources to Hagen Open, and then we shifted to the Dei Council. I tell you people in Mul Baiyer who have voted there will also shift across to Hagen Open and same people may shift across to Dei and that's where we will have influx of people in every district. So, one-day polling is sufficient in every district but it is the people who will be conducting the elections who need to wake up early and be at the locations very early.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So, if the Parliamentary voting which is suggested as a way forward was introduced for 2027. Do you think the volatility and the high-risk security situation might be

curbed or reduced? And if so, will it also have the numbers that are actually voting - one person one vote, do you think it will work in the highlands?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – It will work out if we allow this system of one person one vote, definitely it will work to my opinion. But if we consider the other options that are available and the factors that will affect for instances, transportation of polling officials into the polling areas will cost a lot. It is the Government to decide a central location where all the voters must come to vote in that particular area so all the resources and the security forces are centralized and easy to control and managed.

However, if we split them out into one or two in one polling area then some may be very isolated. The responsibilities can be given back to the candidates that if they want their people in the remotest places to vote then they bring them to the central locations to vote and then transport them back. Instead of security forces and polling officials splitting up and creating stress upon ourselves we simply centralize the location, what about that?

**Hon KIETH IDUHU** – That's an option and there are many other ways to look at it but in terms of practice, that voters have now become accustom to which you mentioned about block voting, split voting and vote sharing, section 208 (a) of the Organic Law on National Elections specifically prescribes voting to be conducted in private. Does that happen here as well or not aware of?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – I don't think they practiced that here because voting to some extent, we see that the process has been highjacked, people voting for others, even the ballot papers are being controlled by certain individuals and telling the voters to wait whilst they vote at their own will.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So its tribal voting you mean?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Well when it comes to voting in such manner some tribal members support candidates from other tribes too and they are watching and the tribal system is very effective in each highlands provinces, only if a particular tribe doesn't nominate a candidate for

the election, then that tribe is free and they can select any candidates they wish. And when it comes to voting then this is where they spilt or block voting whatever they decide to choose. But our tribal system here is such that they respect the leaders and the people also respect their leaders as well.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Do the people in those voting areas understand the LPV system that we have because the LPV system is designed in such a way that your first vote is the tribal vote and your second vote is to go along party lines or to share with someone else. The third vote is to vote the popular candidate, the one that everybody wants and that's the reason why LPV was designed like this.

Do the people in the highlands understand this because you can still give your tribal votes which is your number one vote but the two you can share the three is suppose to be for the popular candidates. That's why that system was brought in to allow people to still exercise their rights particularly with the third vote. Is the LPV system used this way in the highlands o nogat?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – I wouldn't say much on that because I haven't seen how the LPV system has been distributed or observed but I am sure everybody in the highlands have understood the LPV system which refers to as everyone has three changes of voting so you can give your first vote to your candidate, your second preference vote to another candidate and the third preference vote to another candidate. But in the system like this that I have explained about block voting and hijacking the process and taking the ballot boxes to their houses and voting in the night and bringing them back, it is somebody deciding for them.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So that happens generally in the Highlands region?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – I would say yes.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So generally we are trying to figure out and understand –

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – I am not aware of this process here in the Western Highlands but I think from observations and information that we received from other parts of the highlands provinces it happens.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So I was going to say commander, that being the practice say like you said 4000 in your stronghold and there are only 2000 ballots issued. You made mention that ballot papers are shared or distributed if you like between candidates who is really in charge of the voting area and the voting distribution? Is it the Electoral Commission, the Security forces or is it the Community that takes charge?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Obviously, not the security forces and Electoral Commission but the community. Sometimes they put pressure on the leaders to do this because people have been biting from the candidates so they have to come up with strategies to satisfy all their candidates.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So what is the purpose of the law enforcement agency on the ground then?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Well our job is to provide security that all.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But in this instance you have provided no security. The instances that you have just described suggest that the presence of the security forces was of no consequence.

**Hon STEVEN PIM** – Thank you PPC Puri, let me give some back ground and clarity. As a candidate and now a member, for the record, I will have to clarify because we want to fix the system, the Elections in the Highlands region differ from that of the coast, the New Guinea Islands and Momase and eventually these practices will spill into your regions because when in politics we endorse candidates we are going to use our tactics. It will happen. But for now, like the good PPC said, a lot of our participants have given their experiences in running the elections.

In the Highlands and as I have seen in my electorate and the province, the issues like the distribution of the ballot papers if you have 4000 eligible voters in your polling area and you were only given 1200, and the 2800 eligible voters have missed out. The ballot papers in proportion to

the common roll was given but there was a conspiracy with the people who have are handing out the ballot papers. The question is where did the 2800 ballot papers go to? It goes to fill in with the other candidates who are able to strike a deal with the returning officer.

These are realities and when you want to balance the returns it adds up because there's no more extra ballot papers. The ballot papers that were given by the Electoral Commission was balanced with what has been returned, but the 2800 poor people were missed out in their rights to vote, when it comes to block voting and all of that which I have experienced and have done it.

We have an unwritten understanding consensus within the candidates and I think it also applies to other electorates as well, but for Dei Council, there were 27 candidates including myself and we all had a meeting with the returning officer and we had agreed and that we would have only a day and we would be given our ballot papers, we all agreed and signed and we said, my council ward is my base votes, your council ward is your base votes, how you vote, I don't want to know about it. We agreed and even told the security forces about our respective base votes.

Members of the committee, if you have to make some recommendations, I don't care but this is the reality on the ground. Because of the time factor, we have agreed and this is how we cast our votes. Like the good PPC had said, the distribution of ballot papers and transportation of ballot boxes to their respective polling areas had taken a lot of time.

The supporters are guarding the ballot boxes and by the time it left the central locations to the polling area, it took half of the day and we realized that we had lost almost half of the day, when actually it's a one-day polling.

So, we excuse everybody including the police personnel by telling them that this is my base votes so let me get all the one and two and three and we share the rest among the candidates. This is the reality on the ground. We do that so all the other candidates knew that they are not going to come and get my votes. You can't spend your little resources on my base votes. If you do, then it's just like a donation because my tribes will vote for me and I dictate.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Thank you. I just want to ask a question if I can veto our memory. This discussion on the voting style in the Highlands and that of Papua, New Guinea Islands and Momase vary and I'm going to ask a question that deals with the law and practice that follows or shouldn't follow. Do you think, to assist the committee and the team here, do you think the model of voting, because we're talking about democracy and leadership of a country and the future of our

people in our country and those who are not even born yet, this is our responsibility that we must set a standard or we should or shouldn't.

Do you think it might be fair for lawmakers to start thinking along the lines of acceptance of voting patterns in respective areas so one type of voting is not illegal? The way Papuans vote is not seen as unfair. The way Momase people vote should not be seen as unfair. If we're going to go for the same seat or same house than either we all have get voted the same way or we don't but law has to reflect that.

Do you think that might be a way to do things so it's accepted? We're not seeing things through different eyes. The Papuans should not judge the way the Highlanders get voted in and likewise the Highlanders should not judge how Papuans or Motuans or Sepiks or Tolais are voted in for that matter. What is your view?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** - Well the way the Papuans vote or the New Guinea Islands vote is democratic, its democracy that's how I see it. In the Highlands if we have to vote, I would say it's a forced democracy to some extent if we have to apply that word or expression because people are forced or if not, they are denied and the process is hijacked.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** - In your opinion sir, or just taking note from that I mean your admission is quite astounding to say the least but do you think given the questioning from Honourable Iduhu, the highlands people would see value in the way say we vote down on the coast. Would they see value in that? Let me describe to you how we vote in my village; we vote in council areas. I have seven villages in my council area, the ballot box will start from the very last village. People will vote everybody gets to vote if their name is not on the electoral roll they leave peacefully, they are unhappy but they don't vote, then the next day, they walk with the ballot box to the next village.

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Yes, I know that because I've experienced that in the Western Province.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So it will take about seven days of voting, because there are seven villages. At the end of that, everyone goes back to their respective homes.

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – And no disturbance to the ballot box.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – No disturbance to the ballot box. You don't even need a policeman there.

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – That's why I said it's a democratic process there.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So describing that and you know if our people in the Highlands are listening to me describing how it happens in my village and my people are described as the last Sepiks. Mipla em ol lain we inogat planti save lain lo em, em ol lain blo mi. So many of us are least educated then the people of Western Highlands, let me put it that way. That's our practice, this is how we work. Would the people of Western Highlands, and generally in the Highlands like to see this kind of voting in the Highlands?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Definitely they would want to see that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Then why is there a strong desire to move towards, as you said controlled voting or whatever the word is, why yupla laikim osem kain, we yupla fosim ol man lo go in a certain direction, is it because of the one day voting, because of the restrictions, does that force you to do all these things or is it a cultural thing where as we heard yesterday, it's the pride of the tribe thing where you fight for your tribe and your tribesman has to win and if he doesn't there's a lot of problems. What is it, what drives this? Help us to understand

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – I would say its power greed; candidates, go out psyching up the people saying the little seat that he or she is standing for is a small seat, is in his or her pocket. He or she is carrying it around and no one will take it. Even if they know that they won't score and phase out in the first round of count, they will still claim the seat is theirs and that's where the problem is. it starts from.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So should we look at the qualification of the candidates? This was raised yesterday.

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – I think we should; we should take a serious look into the candidates that would like to contest

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – The candidates are driving this; okay thank you.

**Hon JACOB MAKI** – Morning all, Mr Puri, good morning. I want to take you back regarding NATEL operations. The time that's given to you by Electoral Commission to conduct NATEL and pre-NATEL operations. As a policeman, the time that's given to you to conduct pre-election NATEL operations. Is that proper, the time during and before the elections two to three months' advance

You think the time given to you is enough to conduct pre-NATEL operations in the province and the districts you look after or do you need more time regarding the matters that we have just discussed?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Thank you, Honourable Member for Mul-Baiyer. Timing for the NATEL operations is sufficient because I started my pre-NATEL operations at the end of December during my Christmas-New Year operations and that continued on to January up until the Issue of Writs to the polling period.

The timing was sufficient. It was because of interruptions from students fighting and the nomination for the Hagen Open seat, that we concentrated all our resources around that area to make sure that there was peace.

**Hon JACOB MAKI** – With that, we should have pre-NATEL operations in respective provinces consisting of Provincial Election Steering Committee (PESC), the Parliamentarian National Election Steering Committee, the police force and the electoral managers two years in advance with the updated common roll to prove to the people that we are prepared.

They will know that we are on the ground with the committees and that the police are working. Can we prepare in advance so we have the police force and the Provincial Steering Committee on the ground to do work in each province, maybe two years in advance? What do you think about this? What will be your recommendation?

**Mr JOSEPH PURI** – Sir, I fully agree with that. In some provinces you will never find their election managers on the ground. I find it very difficult to establish the Provincial Election Steering Committee in this province. I have to crash-land in the provincial administration just to identify the members and where they were working at. These kinds of things should not happen.

One of my recommendations in the document that I presented to the Chairman, I recommend that the Provincial Election Steering Committee is supposed to be the power disseminating information to the Electoral Commission and to the candidates and election officials on the ground. There should never be another body to filter any information from outside and inside sources going out, whether it be from the security forces or politicians in the government.

That is the body that is supposed to be empowered in the provinces to filter and pass any information because we are collecting information in the counting centres, in the polling area, from outside sources just to build up our own pressure which is not right.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – May I intervene; I think you have given that response already so I thank you for that. In the interest of time, I have to say that your contributions have been extremely valuable to the committee. It is unusual for us to come across a testimony like yours where you have such a rich depth of information; and not only that, you have a personal interest because your own village was disadvantaged and we thank you for sharing that information. I want to move across to Eastern Highlands now because I realized that we are running out of time. However, if at some point we want to recall you, I want to ask you to be available because we just might, given the richness of your contributions. I thank you for that, and please remain with us.

The committee now moves to Eastern Highlands; you have obviously seen how we have dealt with the testimony from Southern Highlands, but mostly Western Highlands because that is where he was deployed during the cause of the last elections.

We will ask the chairman to lead the discussions; please give the committee a brief of your experiences in the elections in the Eastern Highlands. We have heard almost on everything, from common roll, lack of funding, all those we have got that. Perhaps your focus on some of the experiences like you have just heard from the PPC, Southern Highlands.

We want to understand some of the experiences particularly voter and candidates' behaviour, polling officials; how you responded to all of them, similar to what we just heard. You have the floor sir; please state your name and designation for our record.

## **EASTERN HIGHLANDS PROVINCE**

### **Provincial Police Commander -EHP**

**Mr JAMES SIPA** (Eastern Highlands) – Thank you, Mr Chairman, Hon. Governor for East Sepik, the Deputy Chair, Sir Puka Temu and Members of the committee. Thank you for having team Eastern Highlands this morning with you.

I am James Sipa, I am the Deputy Chair of the Provincial Election Steering Committee for Eastern Highlands. I want to apologise here to you chairman and the team, and members of the committee, honourable members of Parliament. Unfortunately, the Provincial Administrator is not present with us, as he is attending to other matters in the province. We've got the Kerema issue, the LLG stuff so he is probably flying today to Kerema.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough, you go ahead and give testimony for your province.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – The election manager is in New Ireland with one of the remains of the

—

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That is okay, we have already been told, so you proceed with your testimonies.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – Yes as you have heard from the PPC for Western Highlands, may be the issues and concerns raised are all similar across the board. The Common Roll is just a disaster. The common roll is a roll of electors and it determines how many ballot papers goes into one particular polling place. The common roll if I may say, is sort of an accountable book where it accounts for all the eligible voters; people who are 18 years and above of a particular voting place. But as you all know; this common roll is a disaster as also agreed to by the other provinces.

When we look at the common roll today, in every polling place, you have a father and mother in separate voting locations, thus making it a total disaster. So how can we correct that? We have problems, issues and concerns raised.

May I suggest how we could possibly address the ongoing issues of the common roll, and I will touch on a few other things and members of my team can add on for discussion purposes.

The last election 2022 is my ninth election. The first election mi tatsim em ples blo former Speaker of Parliament. Wanpla blo ol pioneer parliamentarians Sir Sevese Morea lo Vabukori. I was a student when I was called over to conduct elections there, I was a presiding officer, and team leader. The election was good and I observed eight elections ikam na nau nainpla last election. People and the voting were orderly. The common roll was honest, there was transparency in the common roll, ol kiap igo extrektim eligible voters from what we call head tax register books from LLGs.

Head Tax Register Book, was very good. Those who are taxable 18 years and above, every year the head tax collection team goes into one ward, ol lukluk tu lo neim blo papa stap, mama stap, olgeta pikinini lain, eldest to the youngest. It's all registered there so mipla kalkuletim date of birth there. Once mipla ritsim 18 ba dis taim, capital letter T is placed across the name of the child. So, its taxable and at the same time em registered as an eligible voter.

So, when you look at that, especially lo Highlands we have clans, we have tribes na kain olsem; so, role of electors will be to organised in a way which is acceptable. The common roll, when you touch a clan, a clan leader goes ahead, his name is registered, wife and eligible voters and that family and then the next. When you conclude that particular clan you go to another clan and then you have a compete common roll for a particular LLG ward or a polling place. But now this is not the case, we don't account for all our eligible voters in an orderly manner.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – While you're at that, you've just introduced something that I didn't know personally. What changed? What you've just described about the way the electoral roll used to look before, sounds brilliant to me. What changed na nau niupla wanem ya kamap ya? Do you understand what happened there?

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – Though we have people recruited by agents of government, like the Electoral Commission, go around with application to register, there is a form, an application to

register eligible voters. So, it's handed out and it's done at the laik blong husat karim displa form raun. Nogat wanpla form go bek nating, all the forms are filled up.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So the registration process is a faulty process?

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – Faulty process; very, very faulty, Mr. Chairman. If the people, the ward councillors and the ward development committees who are representing each respective village comprised of the ward, take ownership of the common roll, I believe. And I know Sir Puka would allude to me.

**Hon JACOB MAKI** – Let me interrupt a bit; regarding this, you should recommend which people to involve in this, to prepare common roll; church pastor, council or who's supposed to be and then hand the papers in to the electoral commission.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – Thank you Honourable Maki.

**Hon JACOB MAKI** – Who should be responsible in doing all these things?

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – I think it should correctly be the responsibility of each respective Ward Development Committee, headed by the Ward Council/Ward Member and assisted technically by the District Administrator and so called LLG managers and village recorders.

**Hon JACOB MAKI** – You are correct in that sense; I am saying this because there are a group of people, some are church goers, some are non-church goers; that responsibility is with the council. Church goers with all pastors; pastors are honest people, I assume. They can do all this work too. So, if I can recommend to you, to add on to this.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – Thank you. I think the way forward to fix this problem...

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Before you do, your comments are noted and very welcome and I think they are extremely constructive. You’ve been involved in nine elections, obviously this is not something you discovered on the 2022 elections it is something you discovered previously.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – That’s right.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Did you ever report your suggestions to the relevant authorities for action at the time when you realized that we had issues, did you make a report?

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – Reports as presiding officer we do.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Where does that report go to?

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – It goes to the Provincial Election Manager.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Where are these reports now?

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – It should be with the Electoral Commission. But those reports I do not know whether they get to be read them or not.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you are saying, based on your professional experience you have made these very good suggestions through to the Electoral Commissioner and when I say Electoral Commissioner, I’m talking about the position not the person. You’ve made those reports through and they’ve never been actioned.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – No. Nothing this far.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Mr Sipa, Eastern Highlands to me has been known for her performance better than other highlands provinces. You have just described the poll and I assume you were talking about your election highlights. Sitting near you is Mr Kubu, who is the Provincial Data Coordinator that means that you are telling Mr Kubu that it was a disaster.

So, I am going to ask Mr Kubu, what happened and the Deputy is describing the common roll that you used in the 2022 election as a disaster? How did you arrive to that as a disastrous common roll? At what point in your management of the common roll update process did you think that the fault was in these two or three areas or was the fault at the Headquarters in Port Moresby.

I thought the Eastern Highlands was okay but the poll has been described as a disaster so I personally want to know how did you manage the common roll update process? In Milne Bay, they said that some of the ward recorders couldn't be trusted and in Western Province they sent all the data but the entry at the Waigani Moresby computer people failed them. In Eastern Highlands what happened please explain?

**Data Coordinator-EHP**

**Mr JOE KUBU** – (Provincial Data Coordinator – EHP) – Thank you Sir. What I would say based on what Mr SIPA has said, I think he broadly generalized what has happened. It's not particularly in Eastern Highlands alone, probably the entire Highlands Region so this is basically a generalization of what's been happening in this region.

Basically, the common roll is disastrous and I would say with what we've been given from the Headquarters down. The Form 11 or the enrolment forms, what normally happens is that when the electoral roll update comes around, Headquarters gives us a certain number of enrolment forms so those certain enrolment forms are basically I'd say, non-negotiable so the numbers they've given to us we have to work with the numbers that been given to us.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That is okay, we understand all these; what I want to know is, how many of you when you went through that process and submitted your roll that you completed to the electoral commission; what Percentage was not entered and people came and you send them away after following all the process of Form 11 requirements etc.

**Mr JOE KUBU** – Yes obviously, after every roll update and the preliminary roll is printed out a certain percentage of eligible voters are left out. So, if I could give a percentage based on the Eastern Highlands alone from the last roll update in 2022, I would say about 39 to 40 percent of eligible voters were not captured on the roll. This has been ongoing for a number of roll updates.

**Mr DEPUTY CHARMAN** – Yeah, 40 percent seems to be the national number and out of the 60 percent who are enrolled, do you know who actually came and voted? What percentage?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – I would not have a concrete answer on the percentage or number of people that actually voted.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Put it another way; were all your ballot papers used or were some returned?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – Based on the last Election, all the ballot papers were used.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, so 100 percent even though only 60 percent were registered, fair enough.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – Thank you, Chair if I may add; the data coordinated here, as I have alluded to earlier on those enrolment forms are issued, and people are recorded by the Electoral Commissioner and then they come and give the enrolment form to the Data Coordinator so he just entered what was given to him during the enrolment. So, you cannot say that the people that are sent out to issue and collect the enrolment forms are honest in what they are doing. Normally there are collisions in between before the forms are actually returned to the Provincial Election Office to be entered and eventually produce the roll –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – You have already described to us that it is a disaster and we accept that. My concern is that you knew, people in the Electoral Commission, and all of us knew it was a disaster before it even went to the polls but there was no mechanism to tell the people that this is a disaster and there was no attempt to even fix it so that is what we are trying to understand. Now, in fixing it, what would you suggest to us?

We have for example New Ireland, East New Britain, Milne Bay, and even my province East Sepik, we have the desire to take over the Common Roll to make sure that our people are not left out.

So, there is a big push from the provinces to take out both the data collection and the update of the electoral roll and to make it available simply because of the failures and the disasters that you described.

In the case of Eastern Highlands, what do you think would be your recommendation as to how we fix this and make sure that the people of Eastern Highlands are properly represented on the voter roll?

**Mr JAMES SIPA** - Thank you, I think I have already mentioned that one way forward is to re-organize how we collect the data, go back to the LLG ward, and give the responsibility –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, the provincial government takes responsibility.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – Yes, the provincial government takes responsibility, and when the Electoral Roll is printed before the issue of writs people never get to cross-check whether their names are actually on the Common Roll. We do not have that privilege; the Electoral Commission retains the Electoral Roll until the writ is issued and when the people have access to it, they find out that their names are not on or missed spelled and etcetera. So, displa pasin mas stop.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – It's too late.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – The Common Roll once updated must be done a year before the issue of writs and must be displayed in each LLG and district headquarters so that the voters can cross-check if their names are on.

If their names are not on the roll, they can front up at the electoral office and can register because one is enough time for people who have missed out on the verification process, registering and updating?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So the situation you described earlier when you were conducting the polling when Sevese Moria was elected. At that time the voter roll was the property of the provincial government, they were the ones responsible for updating it, fast forward to today the Electoral Commission is updating it and we can't get it updated.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – That’s right, enrollment forms bipo nogat, we have it straight from the Local Level Government Head Tax Register Book. There’s a very big book; father, mother and eldest child to recently born get registered in the Head Tax Register Book. So, we just extract from the Head Tax Register Book, you know exactly how many eligible voters are there because they got the letter T across their names.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, the tax payers were voting.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – The tax payers over 18 and so as eligible voters are over 18. So, we just extract from the Head Tax Register Book and transfer to the common roll. Mi bin stap Kiap long 1982 and I have some experiences that I am sharing now.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We appreciate that experiences and we are looking for gold nuggets about how we fix this thing. I think the people of Papua New Guinea need that these things get fixed. Okay, I want to move across the Returning Officer, Mr Rasowe; You know we just heard that 100 per cent of the ballot papers issued to the Eastern Highlands was basically utilized for voting.

Can you describe similar for us, to what you heard from the PPC for Southern Highland? What was it like that at the polling booths, describe that for us the actual process, what happened?

#### **Returning Officer-Goroka**

**Mr BAFFIC RASOWE** (Returning Officer- Goroka) – Thank you Chair Honourable Allan Bird; my experience for the 2022 National General Election for the Goroka Open as the Returning Officer. We had experiences from 2019 LLG’s elections and 2021 bi-election for Goroka Open. We had come up with plan to separate the polling booths for men and women and that helped us to reduce queues and all other problems like harassment from the male voters and now female had their own polling booths to vote.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Were the women in the Eastern Highlands free to vote based on their conscious?

**Mr BAFFIC RASOWE** – Yes, they did.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – There was no spilt or block voting as described in other parts of the highlands.

**Mr BAFFIC RASOWE** – We had a separate booth for male and female.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough we accept that you did have that. My specific question is; we have a description here that largely across the highlands the practices of spilt voting which is a new concept that I just learnt this morning and block voting was widely practiced. Was that also practiced in the Eastern Highlands?

**Mr BAFFIC RASOWE** – No! We had females have their own booths.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, there was no block voting and spilt voting?

**Mr BAFFIC RASOWE** – No spilt voting; only separate polling queues to go into vote and then we have one polling booth for the Open and Regional Seat. So, females came through the other gate and then the males came from the other gate; they vote and have separate compartments and they did their voting and then they cast into the same ballot box. That's what we did so we had minimized the election related problems.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We just had an admission from your colleague Mr Kubu that 100 per cent of the ballot papers that were issued to the Eastern Highland was used in the elections. If people were allowed to vote individually, how is it possible that 100 per cent of the ballot papers were used.

**Mr BAFFIC RASOWE** – Through my experience and...

**Mr CHAIRMAN** - Were people's names called out to vote or how was the process done and did you turn up and check on the list?

**Mr BAFFIC RASOWE** – I only visited certain polling places that which I had time to go and the voting was done well and no harassment or intimidation and the people had freedom to vote and that's my observation in Goroka open.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So this polling places that you have visited, how many registered voters for those ward that you visited? You are saying that you visited some so what was the average number of people registered to vote at that polling area?

**Mr BAFFIC RASOWE** – Okay for Kabiufa Secondary School, we had 1700 ballot papers there and it was distributed between the male and female voters so like for 1700 ballot papers

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough did some people miss out on the voting?

**Mr BAFFIC RASOWE** – Yes, those who were not registered on the common roll.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Were they also present at the voting place?

**Mr BAFFIC RASOWE** – Yes, they were there and raised their argument but all those who were registered voted.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – What time did vote for Kabuifha Secondary School commenced and what time did it stop?

**Mr BAFFIC RASOWE** – It's close to town so we started at 10.00 a.m. and finished around 3.00 p.m.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – And 1500 voters managed to vote?

**Mr BAFFIC RASOWE** –Yes.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – Chair, normally the trend here is, previously we used to have what we call unused ballot papers and we account for it and do tally before we return it to wherever it goes to but you wouldn't expect unused ballot papers these days. The total ballot papers issued to one particular polling place was all used up unlike before we use to have this sort but now nothing

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough, how do you explain such practice? Because mipela long Sepik em plenti ballot papers ol save ritenim bek.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – Na long hia nogat all the ballot papers are casted. We go in circles, which the same person can cast his or her votes not once but many times.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We just hear the return officer for Goroka mentioning that voting went well and no double voting took place and now you are telling us something else.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – Yes, the returning officer was right in saying this because we have separate voting places and compartments for women folks and men folks also.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So if people went ahead and voted many times so a lot of these people were not ticked off the electoral roll and it was also useless in this.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – It was useless, how do you determine a polling place?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well how did you do that in 2022 and who decided?

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – The Electoral Commission decides how many ballot papers goes to the polling place using the common roll. But as we have earlier identified, the common roll is not factual and most people miss out. Their names are not on the common roll.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How did the polling official manage the process. Somebody who has no name they know that there are extra ballot papers to be filled he comes around and mentions that name?

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – He just comes around and gets a name borrows it and goes and votes. That is the reality. Previously, we have to have section 119; one who does not have a name on the common roll comes and fills a form and we put it in a Section 119 envelop and we put it in the boxes.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What happened to that?

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – It got phased out.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Why?

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – I don't know. It would be good for the Electoral Commissioner to answer that.

#### **Provincial Administrator - EHP**

**Mr SIMON PARAK** (Provincial Administrator EHP) – Let me say this; everything that we are discussing boils down to the common roll. The common roll is the blue print for any election, LLG or National Elections. Without the common roll, the elections won't be conducted the way we think it should be conducted.

I have been with the Electoral Commission in one major national election conducted in 2017, and 2022 was my second involvement. I have observed that the common roll is not given that much attention where we would like it to be. The honours will have to go back to the National Government to ensure adequate funding is given time in advance. We cannot have a common roll on the eve of the elections. That is impossible and straight away we will know that the common roll is not accurate and defective.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So, you would expect Mr Parak that the Provincial Administration have to take responsibility now? You are making that very strong recommendation?

**Mr SIMON PARAK** – I want to go into that now; the common roll issue is paramount and if we have partners that can ensure that we have a good common roll for any elections whether it be National or LLG elections; the districts will have to come in, and the electoral commission will have to come in and work together to produce an adequate common roll for elections. These must be done in advance. In the 2022 Elections we were told to fix the common roll, and this was three to six months before the General Elections.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So what is your time recommendation?

**Mr SIMON PARAK** – It must be done three years before the next big election and then we go down two years and then the final check and balance must be done at least a year or six months before the elections. It is very important we do that.

May I also suggest to the committee if we are to look at alleviating all the problems we face in elections, logistic, security everything we want to recommend to the Chairman that we must have a biometric system of enrolment. So, our identity is truly captured in the common roll, finger prints, facial recognitions, even our photo graphs is also captured; so, when we have that diligently and accurately it will cut down on all the problems we are facing –

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How far is the NID program going on in the Eastern Highlands Province?

**Mr SIMON PARAK** – I think the NID in Eastern Highlands is going on very well because I've seen how district MPs personally coming to the NID office and engage the NID officers to go down to their districts, council wards and LLGs to enrol people and I think in Eastern Highlands NID is doing very fine. Thank you.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** - Mr Parak, assuming those reforms that you propose are implemented and the common roll is up-to-date and that the common roll is when the biometric voting system is introduced but the way you just described it is that the biometric identification would give you access to the ballot paper. The voting would still be manual, would it? If the voting is manual but access to the ballot paper was digitalised, do you think the problems we are having today or the patterns that we have today will be eradicated or avoided or would that still be continue practiced? Thank you.

**Mr SIMON PARAK** – We can have a good common roll biometrics. We have done all the things properly but if we still go with the manual voting system, then we will still have problems so I would suggest if we do that common roll electronically, it must spread all the way through to the final process of electioneering through to the counting centre as well. That will fix everything.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** - So, in your suggestion, voting should be electronically done. Only then can we see some changes?

**Mr SIMON PARAK** – Yes, that will stop a lot of problems and it will save the government a lot of money.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Once your suggestions are noted, one of the things we have to be careful of is, if you look at the recent elections in Fiji and obviously all of you are in the business of elections, you will notice that they had a problem with their electronic vote counting.

So, Fiji is a law-abiding society so time ol igat problem lo hap, ol man na meri iwanbel. I would hate to think we had a glitch in our electronic vote counting process. Say, in Western Highlands, given the problems we already have now.

So, we have to be careful, whilst we note your contributions, we are interested in long term robust solutions. Some of these things we may have to walk through slowly and look at them. For example, when we were interviewing Gulf Province and NCD, we found out that the computer company that the electoral commission was utilizing their services actually stuffed the electoral roll and that's one thing we found out.

So, to put all of our eggs into the basket of a technology company immediately would probably be not a wise idea but we may stage it over time. We fix it slowly and slowly. Yumi isisi na go because in Papua New Guinea, I think if you have a serious breakdown in the electoral process and we can't count, for example computer go blackout or all these things that we have, em ol bai kilim yupla inside lo kauntim rum ya. So, you leave that to the wisdom of the committee and how we do stuff, but one thing for sure based on what you are suggesting I want to really deal with that.

The ownership of who does the data collection initially, who do you think that should go to? Personally, in my view I want to remove it from the Electoral Commission because they have given what you have just told us. There was an absolute lack of care in the way they handled the electoral roll, absolute lack of care. We have failed in our duty of care to our people, bikipela failure stret. So, as you heard from Sir Puka, there are many provinces already that want to take over because we're closer to the people and we want to make sure that it's done three years out. Like you said, it's available and people see it. Ino olsem nau ol tok sikret document.

If I had a suspicious mind listening to all of you and I've been hearing all you election officials for a while now, mi bai ting olsem somebody deliberately stuffed up the electoral roll so we would have these problems. And as we have these problems, it is then very easy to manipulate outcomes. That's the way I'm thinking now. Ah, sapos mi man blo gat suspicious tingting bai mi tingting olsem

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Yu tingting right, you have the same thoughts obviously. So, somebody deliberately messed up the electoral roll. They made sure it was stuffed up so we would have problems in the elections. That's why we have to fix it. So, recommendations blo yupla olgeta yah mi notim. Is there's anything else yu want to contribute, any of you?

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – While you are thinking maybe I'll introduce a question so you can answer as well. Through to Mr Sipa, you are not far from Simbu and Western Highlands and you have heard from the overall problems of elections in the overall highland's region. LLG elections is next year, with this intended thinking at this stage Provincial Governments, LLGs and DDAs taking charge of the management process, would it be proper for example, for us to recommend and knowing that big reform for the entire country had to accommodate.

Eastern Highlands if we recommend that, let's focus on the Eastern Highlands LLG elections. Let's give the authority to Eastern Highlands province to start fixing the common roll now because its next year and maybe bi-elections as well and just undertake what you are going to recommend to us should be done at your level. So, the country can experience a highlands province can be able to manage it.

Think about it. Given the closeness of all the highlands provinces by the highway, what do you think is the difference that in Eastern Highlands, the Returning Officer, just told us that everything was done, okay not 100 per cent but not like the Hagen or Kompam or Laigam, where there was too much tension.

What's contributing to the tension in your opinion, apart from common roll issues. Is it that people are buying supporters, officials and police with money from polling to counting? Is it the warlord ideology, or tribalism, which some of us are calling it? Is it church belief Christianity? What makes Eastern Highlands different, that we can promote as one of the recommendations to follow; and long term we can go for bio metrics but we are looking at the LLG elections and the bi-elections, not far away. So, we have to be realistic.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – Thank you Sir Puka through the Chair; your first statement we will take in. I think if given the responsibility of taking ownership of the registration of eligible voters in the province, I think our LLGs and districts are ready. I know the Ministry for District Affairs, Provincial and Local Government, they have in place a village record book sort of a thing. We have already partnered with an NGO group in the province, Oxfam and we have already conducted some workshops into the districts and we have introduced the village record books. They are registering deaths, new births, and updating the population in each ward and in each village making up the total population of the district and I would be happy as alluded to the Chairman.

If given the responsibility, who would like to take ownership? Take it away from the Electoral Commission because people in the computer room in Port Moresby are doing their own stuff. I don't know where they get the names from. All the species of banana and kaukau are in the common roll too. Ol man dai tu nem bilong ol tu stap yet. Give it to us and we will take ownership of that. All you have to do is provide the funding and we will do it for you.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Why are you different from the other highlands provinces?

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – In Eastern Highlands, the proximity and the locality there is different. Sampela attitude na pasin bilong mipela ino olsem ol narapela. We are more orderly when it comes to our approach of issues. Mipela igat pasin bilong hambol. We are not so very aggressive but we observe things. Mipela isave tingting na mekim samting.

**Mr SIMON PARAK** – There are some reforms that we took into practice during the 2022 National Elections, that is why our election was peaceful. Eastern Highlands is the second largest province after Morobe Province, boasting nine electorates including the regional seat. It was peaceful from 2017 to 2022 National Elections.

The major reform that we carried out was the separation of common roll. We divided the common roll into two parts; one for the males and the other for the females. So, when it came to polling, the women with their own common roll were able to conduct polling and it was done peacefully because the women knew that all of them are in the common roll to vote. I wouldn't be too sure if they voted with intimidation or not.

The womenfolk, people living with disabilities and the atmosphere was peaceful. There was no follow-up aggression or fights. So that was a contributing factor to the outcome of the elections in Eastern Highlands Province.

The Electoral Commission printed ballot papers with the name of the district, LLG and the ward. When it came to the distribution of ballot papers and counting, we couldn't take ballot papers from another LLG or ward and give it to people from another LLG or ward to vote or count because of that.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That was done nationwide. You were able to manage that but in Southern Highlands and other parts, they didn't care about that. They just block-voted and split-voted.

**Mr SIMON PARAK** – I wouldn't know but in Eastern Highlands, that was what happened. During the counting we were able to identify the district, LLG and ward so we knew exactly how many ballot papers were distributed and how many were returned after polling. All single ballot

papers were acquitted for whether used or not used. That contributed to the general good conduct of the election in Eastern Highlands Province.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What about the behaviour of the candidates? Were there disruptions during counting or polling by candidates or their supporters?

**Mr JOE KUBU** (Data Coordinator, EHP) – That is a very good question in regards to the candidates, I think, in relation to Sir Puka's second line of questions, I think EHP performed extremely well in terms of the delivery of the elections mostly because, out of all the Highlands provinces, EHP always planned ahead.

The separation of the roll was our brain child; the separation of the polling booth was our brain child; the 2022 counting setup was done in LLGs, that was our brain child. This is what we came up with; and this is also our recommendations.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So the preliminary counting was done in the Local Level Government?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – Yes, LLG's setups.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Council Chambers?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – Yes; and it was amalgamated.

**Mr SIMON PARAK** – Correction, it was done in LLGs but in one counting area.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – By LLG's but in one counting area.

**Mr SIMON PARAK** – That is correct.

**Mr JOE KUBU** – I think, that is what set us apart probably from the rest of the Highlands provinces.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – It is interesting because we did not explore that with the other highlands provinces but in your experience, you think that, that’s what you did in EHP but the others did not?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – I think, that is what we started and it was adopted and the other highlands provinces probably did the same. And when you mentioned something the other candidates; what EHP did, I think no other provinces have ever done. We had separate training for candidates and scrutineers.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How were you able to do that and the other provinces could not?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – That is what we came up with; we identified that a lot of problems that stems from polling, counting and election related issues are instigated by the candidates and their supporters.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – By a lack of knowledge on the part of the candidates and scrutineers?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – Yes; so, what HQ had setup for us in terms of training, was only for training of counting and polling officials only; but we went one step ahead and we said no, a lot of issues are instigated by candidates. Their supporters...

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Did they turn up for the trainings?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – We had an overwhelming number; all candidates attended. There was great feedback from them after the training. They told us that they thought they knew about the LPV system until they got that training.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How much money was used for your training programs? Did the EC put in funds into your provincial election account; as well as how much from the Provincial Government?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – That bit of information, I wouldn't know.

**Mr SIMON PARAK** – Generally for the whole elections, they gave us K4.2 million, and the Provincial Government helped us with K500 000.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What about for the training; the actual training aspect. Who paid for that?

**Mr. JOE KUBU** – The candidates paid.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So the candidates paid for the training?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – Yes basically to get their refreshments, that's all. We provided that training with whatever resource we had. It was free. But they had to pay like K20 for their own refreshments.

**Mr SIMON PARAK** – We obviously identified the limited funding constraints, so we came up with the idea that, since it concerned the candidates, why not we get them to pay a little.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – If they are going to spend half a million on an election campaign, what's a few kina to assist with. That was very smart.

**Mr JOE KUBU** – So we did that, and we identified since scrutineers were some of the people who disrupted polling and counting as well, we did a separate training for them as well. After the training, we gave them certificates. And so, because of all that we did, the 2022 Election for EHP went smoothly. We had no issues with scrutineers.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – You started on time and finished on time with counting?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – We set a record for Papua New Guinea.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well done.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Mr. Joe Kubu, you are the Provincial Data Coordinator; we understand the EHP is one of the provinces that used CCTV in your polling and counting venues.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Do you have the records of all those CCTV data? Do you know where they are kept? Right now, at this point in time?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – There was a team that was engaged to install all the CCTV equipment. 2022 elections they installed everything. All the records and the data from the CCTV have been given back to HQ, I believe, but...

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So what was the point of all of that? Do you have access to it?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – No.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I'm surprised. We spend all these monies on CCTV and whatever and nobody seems to have access to that. Sounds like another scam.

**Mr JOE KUBU** – Basically, the security forces were using the footages to monitor operation of the counting.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So if a disgruntled candidate wanted access to that for say court purposes, would they be able to access that footage?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – We wouldn't know but it was forwarded to the police or to the headquarters. The installation team was set up by headquarters so whatever data that was captured was been sent back to HQ.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – May I ask a question here? This CCTV, who collects the footage, Electoral Commission or Security forces?

**Mr. JOE KUBU** – From my understanding, I think they've been engaged by Electoral Commission.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So that's a private contractor engaged by Electoral Commission?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – Yes.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – I guess that's a question that can only be answered by the Electoral Commission then.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – I understand that the CCTV was established first for the Goroka by-election.

**Mr JOE KUBU** – Yes, that's correct.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – And then you used it in the main election too? After that it's been folded and you don't know where it is?

**Mr JOE KUBU** – We had a set up in 2017 as well and it was manned by the Police.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you. I think will make note. We'll have to call the Electoral Commission back on that one.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Chairman, what I would recommend is, you don't have a report for the committee. So far, we have been hearing about all the bad things but I will request your report on the positive things that Eastern Highlands has experienced so that we can tell the story in parliament.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – Thank you Sir through the Chair; we have got what we have discussed on paper. I will give it to the chair for the committee’s purpose after the discussions. But so far chair, we have discussed some way forward but one other thing I would like to mention here is, I want the overhaul of the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission. A complete overhaul of the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission establishment, the organisational structure and the funding structure.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Ok, first of all I’m going to suspend the hearings now but I just want to say that all of the findings that have been provided by the Highlands provinces have been very rich, to be honest with you. Things that I have not expected but to finally finish off with Eastern Highlands and you know, you are leading some of the thinking in what you are doing and this is exactly what we’re looking for.

One of the reasons why we conducted these hearings is to find out not just the problems. You want to talk about the problems, kantri em problem bagarapim yumi ya but we want to look for the champions. Those people that are doing things differently, thinking for themselves. Those who are ahead of the curve, and for me, and you can see the committee, it’s really, really pleasing to come across a province in our country where you public servants are thinking instead of just pushing papers.

So, we are delighted to receive your report and I think the key learnings that you have just shared here and for me, I’m really excited about the fact that you took the initiative to train your candidates and their scrutineers. My commendations on behalf of the committee and on behalf the Parliament to you for a job well-done. Congratulations and thank you very much. On that note I would invite you to stay with us for lunch. We have the Hela Province after this and hopefully some members of the community who can come and present their grievances before the committee. It is 12.35 p.m. and we’ll adjourn for lunch and we will reconvene at 1:35 p.m. Thank you all very much.

**Mr JAMES SIPA** – Thank you Chair for having us and the members of the Parliamentary Committee.

*Suspended for lunch*

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We are a little bit late but that is okay, it looks like we are unable to get our group from Hela because we did not get a message from them so we will summon them at a later date but we are happy that we still have our Eastern Highlands Team here.

We also couldn't get some members of the community except for the lady who came yesterday from Enga to participate but we will still have our PPC from the Southern Highlands.

So, as we come to a close, I think our team from the Eastern Highlands has some closing recommendations after which I will ask our team if they would like to make some concluding remarks and then we will adjourn until our next sitting in Lae, Morobe Province.

Team Eastern Highlands, Mr Parak.

**Mr SIMON PARAK** – Thank you, Chairman Honourable Allan Bird and Governor of East Sepik, Deputy Chairman Honourable Sir Puka Temu, Member for Abau, and the honorable members who are present in this session of Special Parliamentary Committee on National General Elections 2022. On behalf of the Eastern Highlands Team, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and thanks for giving us this extra time to come forward to the Committee with a couple of our recommendations which we feel that if we take it back it will defeat our purpose of coming to this session.

Our team leader, Mr Sipa has briefly mentioned our first recommendation but I would like to stipulate a bit further here is, if there any way that we can restructure the overall structure of the Electoral Commission. We would like to suggest that we have four regional deputy commissioners for all the regions so that they shall closely conduct and monitor the election processes in collaboration with our limited security manpower. So, that is our first recommendation.

The second recommendation is that, we would like this very important Special Committee to know that the Election Allowances are still paid at the same rates as they were paid in the 1960s. The election officers, the returning officers, and the temporary election workers; were engaged during the elections throughout the country. We seriously have to look at that and make changes where it is due.

The third recommendation, I think you have received a lot of support in this area, especially with the Limited Preferential Voting System, which is the way forward for current elections and

future elections. LPV is the right method of conducting elections in our country especially where we have tribalism, family grouping, clans, regionalism, and etcetera. We think that LPV is the way forward for us and it should be maintained in future elections.

Honourable Chairman, we also have other recommendations that we have submitted to you. Having said that, I would like to make a few acknowledgments here. Firstly, I would like to thank our Provincial Administrator who, back in 2022, was the Deputy Provincial Administrator of the province; Mr Allan Lawes, he was very supportive and the outcome of election in 2017 and 2022 shows how committed our Provincial Administrator, Deputy Provincial Administrator and the Provincial Administrations, in their support towards the conduct of elections in the province and we have achieved good result in elections. We have performed well, implemented reforms and I think this is the way forward and our upper highlands brothers can learn from us and implement those changes, adopt, and move all the highlands region forward.

We would also like to make mention of our Provincial Police Commander, Mr Michael Welly, he's been also instrumental. They are part of the Provincial Election Steering Committee members and they've been very instrumental; we've worked together and when teams from the PESC and the Electoral Commission work together, the outcome is very satisfactory. So, we would like to acknowledged him for his part in the 2022 elections.

And finally, least but not the least the most very important person is the Election Manager. Without an election manager who has initiated all these reforms and implemented them in the elections. He's been very instrumental and Eastern Highland is leading in election delivery throughout the country is because of people like, Mr Steven Gore Kaupa. He is a veteran in election and delivered so many elections and in Eastern Highlands in 2017 and 2022.

He assured that he can deliver an election well for a province. Big province like Eastern Highland when we have people like Steven Gore Kaupa as election manager, he can handle a big province and he's delivered well and we want to acknowledge and applaud him for a job well done. If it hasn't been for Mr Kore Kaupa this team wouldn't been here to present our report to you. We would like to thank him and put on records that he has done a marvelous job for Eastern Highland and I hope other provinces upper highlands will emulate from him and implement election reforms.

With that we would like to, on behalf of the team thank you very much Hon Allan Bird, Hon Sir Puka Temu, Hon Robert Naguri, Hon Steven Pim, Hon Keith Iduhu, Hon Jacob Maki and the

rest of the Parliamentary Committee Members on 2022 National General Elections Special Committee. Thank you very much.

### **Closing Remarks**

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Mr Parak for that submission on behalf of the Eastern Highland team and the committee gladly accepts your recommendations. I now defer to my committee members if there's any additional comments you would like to add before we adjourn the sitting until we regather in Morobe.

Well looks like everyone's had a long day let me repeat what I said earlier from team Eastern Highlands and I think you know its credit to your senior management team and to all of you that your individual talents have brought to bear on the very difficult situation that all provinces were presented with in these particular elections. Given the continuous degradation of the electoral roll over time the neglect of the electoral roll and you know our commendations also to the people of Eastern Highlands for that success.

Having said that, let me acknowledged the provincial government teams that did turn up; Western Highlands, Chimbu, Enga, Southern Highlands. Jiwaka for your very comprehensive and your remarks were honest and truthful and that's what we wanted and if Papua New Guineans were off the opinion that this was just going to be another white wash and we were just going to gloss over the issues and forget about it, I want to say to Papua New Guineans that the team that is writing the report for the committee is not the Parliament itself but we have engaged people like NRI who are heading the committee.

We have people like the Transparency International who are also part of this and INA. So, the report once written, and up until today no members of the committee have seen the report that's being drafted independently by NRI who have been collecting this information for a long time in fact since 1964 so they have been keeping the records of all the elections.

Now a lot of what you have said today particularly from our teams from the highlands actually collaborates with what we have collected from internal and local observers. So, I commend all of you for that. Ino samting bilong yumi long haitim.

If we want to fix something, then we got to put something out in the open and be honest about it and fix it. And to finish with the Eastern Highlands with your outstanding delivery of the elections as oppose to many other provinces that struggled, that's a key point that needs to be

mentioned in our report as well that you have very good public servants who are intend on getting good outcomes and I am talking about security forces. We have not seen one senior police officer that presented before us that tried to hide the situation but every policeman was forth right and same with the defense force and the CIS so all along, we have tremendous cooperation from civil servants and I think as a result of all of this and hopefully into the future, civil servants will stand up and do the things like what Eastern Highlands have done.

You will always be faced with very difficult circumstances and lack of resources and all this issues and how you respond to them is really a testament to your leadership on the ground in these matters. So again, my commendations to you a lot of your learnings will actually constitute a part of recommendations which I can see our NRI representative sitting at the back nodding his head so we have taken note of your recommendations and they will form a part of our recommendations to Parliament and our role is really to try and improve future elections.

Whilst we, except many people, will be dissatisfied with the previous elections and not much we can do about the past but there is a lot we can do for the future. So, with that thank you all very much and I thank our team comprising of the technical team and Parliamentary team who are present and I bid you all good afternoon and we will see you all in Lae, Morobe Province next week Thursday. I now adjourn the proceedings thank you all very much.

*Adjourned at 2.10 p.m.*