



**Special Parliamentary Committee on
2022 General Elections**

NEW GUINEA ISLANDS REGION CONSULTATIONS

11th May – 12th May 2023

Gazelle International Hotel, Kokopo, East New Britain Province

Committee Members (Present)

Honourable Allan Bird (East Sepik) – Chairman)

Sir Puka Temu (Abau) – Deputy Chairman

Honourable Elias Kapavore (Pomio)– Committee Member

Committee Members (Not Present)

Honourable Robert Naguri (Bogia) – Committee Member

Honourable Jacob Maki (Mul-Baiyer) Committee Member

Honourable Keith Iduhu (Hiri-Koiari) – Committee Member

Honourable Saki Soloma – Committee Member

Honourable Charlie Benjamin (Manus) – Committee Member

Honourable Steven Steven Pim (Dei)– Committee Member

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DAY ONE

11th May 2023

Transcript

Time: 1pm

Venue: Gazelle International Hotel

In Attendance

Committee Members

Honourable Allan Bird – Chairman

Sir Puka Temu – Deputy Chairman

Honourable Elias Kapavore

Witnesses

Ms Emily Kelton – Election Manager – West New Britain

Mr Levi Mano – Acting Provincial Administrator – East New Britain

Mr Joap Voivoi – Election Manager – East New Britain

Mr Januarius Vosivai – Provincial Police Commander – East New Britain

Ms Theresa Sam – Assistant Election Manager – East New Britain

Ms Annette Bais – New Ireland

Mr Changol Manoai – Mayor Rabaul Urban LLG – East New Britain

Mr Emmanuel Melchior – Callan Services for PWD's – East New Britain

Opening Remarks

Mr CHAIRMAN – Good afternoon, everyone and welcome to the Special Parliamentary Hearings on the 2022 National General Elections. This is the last lag of our hearings and we are here in East New Britain.

I'd like to acknowledge the presence of the Governor Honorable Michael Marum who I think was present in the room, thank you. Thank you for your kind hospitality. The Governor will be observing part of the proceedings and then departing once he's ready to go.

We have completed the other three regions and for some of you who have been following the format, you will probably know already that we've covered some of the most significant problematic areas of the recently concluded elections.

However, we had initially wanted to come to the New Guinea Islands first because from our initial findings, we realized that the best conduct of the elections occurred in the New Guinea Islands region, however, due to the funeral arrangements of the Late Former Prime Minister Right Honorable Sir Rabbie Namaliu, we decided to put NGI towards the end and hence we are here today. Without further ado, I will go straight to, and I think we will start with West New Britain since you're the only one, na ol as ples ken go bihain.

Give us give us some feedback as to how the elections were conducted in West New Britain and some of the issues you encountered. I'd also like a particular brief on some of the frequent stoppages of counting and as you know the violence that you had in West New Britain as a result of the elections.

Ms Emily, you can press the green button and then for our record; oh, sorry before I proceed, this is a properly constituted parliamentary hearing. What that means is that, you are covered by the Privileges of Parliament so everything you say here at these hearings you cannot be prosecuted for, if that does become an issue then you should be given full immunity. So, I just want to make that clear to the participants so speak freely as public servants but also speak as Papua New Guineans. We welcome Ms Emily Kelton.

WEST NEW BRITAIN PROVINCE

Election Manager West New Britain

Ms EMILY KELTON (Election Manager - West New Britain Province) – Thank you, Chairman and members of the panel, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Could you please angle the mic towards your mouth so when you speak, we can pick it up?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Thank you. Alright the conduct of the 2022 National Elections in West New Britain; as a Provincial Returning Officer, we started off the election preparation back with our budget in 2019. The budget was prepared and sent to Port Moresby to our headquarters and from that, they submitted over to the Treasury.

The budget was not received on time so the planning preparation of election awareness that includes electoral roll was never done. There are three stages of the roll; the first phase is the displaying of the 2019 electoral rolls. The second phase is the maintenance of the electoral roll, and the third phase is the enrollment of new voters who turned 18 and above and who will be turning 18 on the issue of the writs. The issues of the do's and don'ts of the candidates and the scrutineers were not captured and it was never done. We had the planning but because of funding problem we never covered that. We received a little bit of funding around November of 2021 and we know that that's about six months away before the issue of the writs.

So in general, the Electoral Office in Kimbe in partnership with the Election Steering Committee could not do much. The total budget for the election in West New Britain Province was K4 million. And out of that K4 million, we were given K1,223,475.40. Our partnership with the Provincial Government through the Election Steering Committee was excellent and we worked well. They supported us but we broke down because of funding. The Provincial Government supported with K1 million, however that K1 million was used by our security personnels; the Defence, the Police and the CS. They were not fully funded so they had to get support funding from the Provincial Government to cover their allowances, vehicle and boat hires, rations, fuel and accommodation.

We still have outstanding bills of K192,105.78 to pay for the service providers, mainly the boat hires from people in the rural areas who provided us with boats, we need to pay them for their services. Additional, to the support from the provincial government, they also support us with manpower. We use the government outboard motors and vehicles which reduced some of our bills to conduct the election.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Could I ask you a question? This is the first Provincial Government that we've come across where certainly from the hearings that used government vehicles for the election. Did that create any issues with the supporters?

Ms EMILY KELTON – No, it never created any issues. It was an instruction from the Office of the Provincial Administrator.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So the candidates and their scrutineers didn't have an issue with the provincial government using provincial assets?

Ms EMILY KELTON – As far as I know, there was no issue.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you and you may proceed.

Ms EMILY KELTON – We have a total of 125 polling team. We received nominations although we had no funding for that. We had to borrow some money to look for refreshments to cater for the nominations. We had a late release of funds from the Treasury to our Head Office and to us. That was the issue but that never stopped us, we went ahead and conducted the nomination.

We had a total of 93 candidates; 22 for the Kandrian-Gloucester, 18 for Nakanai, 32 for Talasea and 21 for the provincial seat. It all went well. We did the order of draw and the candidates left but we could not conduct the training for the scrutineers for the do's and don'ts because they left early in a rush for their campaigns.

So, nomination was conducted peacefully although we had some issues but there was control, the police were there to control and we managed to get the nomination out of the way. We had a total of 125 polling teams and 875 polling officials. Meaning that in one polling team we had about seven officials to a team. That's one presiding officer, two assistant presiding officers, two poll clerk, one ballot box guard and one door keeper.

We did not have the briefing with the scrutineers, as they were out in the field on the polling day and they did not know who was doing what work at the polling area. So as a result of this, we had a hectic time at the counting centre, when it came to the identifying of the signatures at the back of the ballot paper.

There were two signatures so that's why they question me where was the signature coming from and I said we had to assist the presiding officer so you will see one will go take a leave and the other one will take on board the signing of ballot paper, which was ok but because they had no training whatsoever, so that became the issue that held our counting back. So, that is for the polling.

Due to funding problem, we had no chopper. The chopper did not assist with the dispatch of the polling teams so through the PSEC we had a meeting and it was decided that polling teams go out but they will engage additional manpower as carriers to carry the ballot boxes and ballot papers from one point to another in the inland of Kandrian and outer islands like Bali Vitu and these areas. So that's what we did because time was running out and we had to deliver this on time.

The counting and polling teams arrived on time and we did the counting. We had a CCTV installed at our counting centre and we started on time. But like I said, there was lack of information reaching the scrutineers and even the candidates themselves so we had a hectic time.

Nakanai Electorate was the first electorate to start off with its counting, however it became the last to do its declaration. These little disputes on the signatures on ballot papers and all these things and candidates coming in and calling for meetings after meetings for me to sit in with them and explain why there were so many signatures on the back of the ballot paper and so forth; those things held back our time and instead of delivering in just one week, it took us almost two weeks to do that.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Madam, can I ask you a question? How long have you been conducting an election or involved in elections in West New Britain?

Ms EMILY KELTON – I did 2017 and 2022.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Fair enough. In 2017, did you face similar challenges in the pressure being put on you by the scrutineers because of a lack of understanding of those issues that you mentioned? Did you face similar issues in 2017?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes sir, I faced similar issues but not tough as the one in 2022. There were similar issues.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Did you conduct training in 2017?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes, we did conduct the training and we went as far as the LLGs. We involved the LLG managers who were our AROs and they took the training down. It was the training and the awareness like I said.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So that was probably the difference between the –

Ms EMILYKELTON – That is correct and that is how I see it. Because of lack of awareness and lack of training we were given a hard time in the recent election

Mr CHAIRMAN – So just a lack of understanding of the election processes by scrutineers and candidates?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Correct.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay you may proceed.

Ms EMILY KELTON – Thank you, so we had counting and like I said we had ups and downs from the scrutineers. We had to attend to the scrutineers, we had to give them the information and we have to explain to them so it took a while. They would ask me to stop the counting and then I will have a break for about 20 minutes or so and then we'll start again and it kind of went on and off until I was told bluntly that we would have to failed the elections in West New Britain.

But I stood my ground and said I would get this election done and the people of West New Britain would have a say on the Floor of Parliament. And yes, from one week into the second week we made declarations. Kandrian-Gloucester was the first electorate to be declared and then followed by Talasea, Nakanai and the provincial which I took care of. It was the last to be declared, because I had to complete the other electorates first.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Ms Kelton, just one question, was your counting centralized or was it at each of the LLG areas?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Sir, it was centralized because of law-and-order issues and we had to bring all the teams into Sasindran Mutuvel Stadium which catered for every one of us during the counting; the 12 LLGs plus 625 presiding officers. We just had to draw the boundary in order to capture for the different electorates. So everything was captured, the counting was all done at the provincial headquarters.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – At the counting area, what were the issues that candidates were raising?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Thank you, sir. One amongst many issues was that, they were not happy with the signatures at the back of the ballot papers. They questioned why there were two signatures which I explained to them how it came about. The candidates had their own differences. One candidate disputed the other candidates because perhaps the scrutineer must have briefed him about something so they had to put a stop. Most of the issues were between the candidates themselves. There were allegations of bribery brought to me which slowed down the counting. I had to sit down and talk to them and ensure that the flow of the counting proceeds without delay.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So you did allow the candidates into the accounting area?

Ms EMILY KELTON – No sir, I did not.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Explain.

Ms EMILY KELTON – I'm not supposed to do that and I will not do that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So how were you getting the information from candidates, and then, were you going outside or you're calling them in?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Sir, they would call me to the gate where the police and defense personnel were and would demand for answers. There were two times when eliminated candidates were brought in to wait under the stadium for me to go and answer them. They did not come into the actual counting center but they came through the same entrance and I had to go and answer their queries. In doing so, I had to suspend counting to address those candidates.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Were you allowed by law to respond to them that way, the way you did or you had the legal powers not to listen to the candidates?

Ms EMILY KELTON – I had to do that in order to explain and get some message to them. They need to know what I was doing, that is why I was responding to them. Because if

I did not attend to them, they would continue to pester me and they will continue to delay the counting process.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What were the roles of your returning officers? You are the Provincial Election Manager and the returning officers in the counting room should have been the ones to communicate with you on the issues raised by candidates or were candidates coming straight to you as the Election Manager? Where did the ROs come in, in this process, because they were inside the counting room too, right?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes, sir. The ROs were also in the counting room and as the provincial returning officer, the candidates direct all the questions and queries and whatever straight to me, and when I attended to them, I went with the returning officer in charge of that electorate.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Sir.

Ms EMILY KELTON – Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Before you do, sorry, just some clarification. You know there might be candidates who are watching this session so, in terms of your process of doing of counting, is there any reasonable grounds under law for you to stop the counting?

Let me just do this on behalf of those dissenting candidates; do they have any right to send their scrutineers in to stop the counting? Is that allowed under law? And if so, what sort of situation would warrant the Electoral Commission in this case, yourself and your returning officers, who are conducting the counting to stop the counting? Ol igat rait lo stopim o nogat?

Ms EMILY KELTON – I nogat.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Ok, sapos ol i nogat rait lo stopim counting, then why is it becoming such a regular practice?

I've been involved in five elections and I've never once asked my scrutineers to stop the counting so I'm just trying to understand that? Because it was my understanding that we do not have the right to stop the counting.

So, how is it that people can successfully stop the counting and under what circumstances can they do that? Or, do you take a decision just to stop it so you can go na trai na resolving more issues? You take the decision?

Ms EMILY KELTON - Thank you, sir. All the candidates and scrutineers have no right to stop the counting, it's not allowed.

What happened and why it happened was because if I don't address them these scrutineers are very tough. I had to stop the counting and address their issue first.

There were a lot of arguments and that was the fear that was faced by the returning officers. They would argue with them and so they would come and drag me as the PRO to go and make my ruling.

But, even when I did my ruling, it seem it was not enough. If and when I wanted the accounting to proceed, they said no, and they demanded a verification of the two signatures on the ballot paper. Even the police in charge of the operation assisted us but they still insisted which resulted in the police just belting them and sending them out of the gate.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, the police did use force to remove them?

Mr EMILY KELTON – Yes, they did because of them continuing to stop the counting.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, describe that scenario for us, what was it like? You know ol man i singaut o ol man i koros or you describe it for us?

Obviously, we were not there and we you know it's good for you because you bore the brunt of it all. Yu ken diskraibim na we can record it for our purposes.

Ms EMILY KELTON – Thank you, sorry before that in fact not all candidates did this, there's some good candidates. It is only those bad ones who did this?

Mr CHAIRMAN – No, that is fair enough but just describing way ol i bin aprosim yupela.

Ms EMILY KELTON – The scrutineers were standing at the back of the counting officials, not even a metre but right at the back. The counting officials were sitting like this and scrutineers were sitting right there at the back.

When we asked them to move away, they will move and then they'll come back. They wanted to see us allocating the ballot papers to the right candidate, their candidate.

Mr CHAIRMAN – The CCTV camera that was there, could it have or did it capture those scenes?

Ms EMILY KELTON – The CCTV camera captured them all. It captured those scenes of the counting process and the scanned ballot papers. The CCTV camera captured all that was going on.

Mr CHAIRMAN – I'm interested in that the CCTV camera is able to recognize the vote for a certain individual. Is that what it did?

Ms EMILY KELTON – No.

Mr CHAIRMAN – It just captured the general process?

Mr EMILY KELTON – Yeah, exactly but for the individual ballot paper vote to which candidate, no that is not allowed.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, fair enough, you may proceed.

Ms EMILY KELTON – So, I really did not know the issue between the candidates themselves and the scrutineers getting frustrated at the counting center, I wouldn't know but I believe maybe it's something to do with what happened during the campaign period. I don't know I'm only making a comment here but that is what happened in the counting center for West New Britain for the 12 LLGs, and the three electorates including the provincial seat in the recent 2022 election.

Hon ELIAS KAPAVORE – Madam, I'm not sure whether you'll be touching on the total number of voters, or will be touched in the next discussion? I'll just ask these questions.

How many voters were you expecting to cast for the entire West New Britain Province in 2022 National Elections? And, you also said that you were in charge of the elections in 2017

and 2022. So, which of these two elections do you think was the most challenging that you managed in your province?

Ms EMILY KELTON – So, you mean the actual eligible voters on the electoral roll?

Mr ELIAS KAPAVORE – The expected eligible voters and the actual numbers that were expected to cast their votes? Did you think that was the number of voters you expected to vote?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes, in that 2017 we had about 169 800 eligible voters.

Hon ELIAS KAPAVORE – In 2017, it was 169 800?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes. And in 2022, we had 173 665 eligible voters, so although we have these figures a lot of people still did not vote. I cannot give how much figure but I know that not all of them voted so otherwise that is the figure for the 2022 Election.

Mr CHAIRMAN – You may continue.

Ms EMILY KELTON – Thank you. Just a few recommendations I put down here for our noting that funding must be made available to carry out election awareness and enrollment after the national elections because it is what we failed to do in 2022. We could not get the awareness out to the people of East and West New Britain and as an end result, now we had to go through this hectic time during the elections.

For the electoral roll, I recommend that the provincial government must take ownership of the electoral roll and make a budget for that annually for the roll's update. The Electoral Commission can just come and get from 18 years and above and for those who will be turning 18 on the issue of writs.

And the candidates must provide names of the scrutineers with their profiles six months before the issue of writs so that it will make it easy for our office to know which scrutineer is for which particular candidate and their background information. A lot of scrutineers turangu no knowledge at all to pasin blo rid, rait and understanding so that is why it is good to have a profile of the scrutineers before the issue of writs.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Do you have a standard, brief for educating scrutineers? Yupela long Electoral Commission i gat sampela kain ol liklik skul bilong ol and what is expected of them, all of that and what role they play? Do you have something like that available for educating scrutineers? Yupela gat o nogat?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes sir, we do have that information which we call scrutineers information. We did train some, and that is way back in 2017. We trained some and then there were changes in the scrutineers. So, the first lot we trained went back na taim ol i go senis gen na he or she bai kam bek, but em ol dispela liklik samting i sa contributiut i go long –

Mr CHAIRMAN – Alright, nau taim candidate i kam na baim nomination blo em, yupela sa givim dispela infomeisen or educational materials i go long kendideit or nogat?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes, mipela sa givim before hand when the candidates are filling up his form from 29 bio-data we gave them and told them that whoever scrutineers they have, this is the information and that's a standard.

Mr CHAIRMAN – And that's the standard practice?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes, initiative to get it out.

Mr CHAIRMAN – I am asking because I have never been given any scrutineer and I am a sitting Member of Parliament. Em olsem mi longlong man mi askim yu dispela question and it goes generally to everyone. So, if I have never received any and perhaps em failure bilong ol lain bilong Sepik tasol but olsem yu tok yupela usim initiative long laik bilong yupela so it's not standard practice to provide these materials to candidates and if we prove to candidates, do you think that would make the conduct of the elections a little bit easier?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Materials bilong mipela was prepared but funding problem na mipela bai movim ol i go olsem wanem. So, with whatever little information mipela i gat, we have to go ahead and educate them, but like I said earlier on, taim mipela laik educatim ol, ol i hariap pinis tingting long go wokim campaign bilong ol nau.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Fair enough, we appreciate the good work you are doing. I am just interested in the general process of the Electoral Commission and the electoral process, it's not a criticism of you. I am sure you've done a tremendous job in very difficult circumstances so you know I commend you for that. I am just trying to get information from you so that if it is not standard practice for the Electoral Commission or the electoral officials to provide these sorts of information i go long candidates long stat bilong election, then it's something that we would be interested in our recommendation to say, wanem candidate em i go nominate same taim givim em olgeta information em inidim long hap so if the Electoral Commission is unable to provide training for whatever reason, logistical or otherwise, at least candidate em yet igat ol dispela samting na em yet ken mekim wok.

We were with Eastern Highlands and they took it on themselves to exercise their initiatives na ol i askim ol candidates long kam na peim wanpela fee long tea, coffe, sugar na wanem samting na ol i provaidim training.

So, whilst we are going around collecting reports, we are also looking for the things that some people did right and we're looking for answers as well. Noken ting olsem mipela kros long o mipela ikam long kritisaisim yu; nogat mipela i wokim wok panim aut so please proceed.

Ms EMILY KELTON – Thank you, sir. One of the recommendations we mi bilip em imas kamap em gazetim ol scrutineers. In that way, candidates will not change scrutineers and we work side by side. We have the context and like we learn from what happened in 2022, na mipela gat contact bilong ol na toktok wantaim ol na give them awareness and all these things. So, I want scrutineers to be accepted and that's one recommendation. Na narapela em installment of CCTV or what we call electronic machine bilong counting dispela em compulsory. Planti hevi tru even with the scrutineer because dispela i stap long polling station ya, is not in the polling area it's a totally different person but they belong to the same candidate and that is the reason why the one in the counting center is giving us hard time.

So having this electronic machine on hand will be of great help. Na sapos yumi no kisim electronic machine, at least a safety vehicle. We have to have some means of transparency inside so this electronic counting because we can see that ballot paper belongs to which candidate and you read number, wan bilong husait, namba tu bilong husait na namba tri bilong husait and it's given accordingly to that so that will really help come 2027.

Sapos bai nogat bai yumi gat bikpela hevi gen long 2027 because koros pait isave kamap long ballot paper. They wanted to know about ballot paper informal or bilong husait. The

scrutineers were interested in that so ating em liklik recommendation bilong mi na brief bilong West New Britain. Tenkiu Chairman mi lusim olsem.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you, madam. Any questions?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Ms Kelton, thank you for the report and I hope you will submit to us a written report. You recommended another important recommendation that is the gazettal of scrutineers, advise the committee on the timing, because you and I know you'r scrutineers right now because they wanted to follow their candidates during the campaign trail.

So in the process what would be the recommended time. That by this time, all scrutineers must be gazetted and officials will only deal with these gazetted scrutineers recommended.

So, what would be the recommended time? Because some of these things are happening during the campaign period and everybody is confused. Some are campaigning in one part of the province; another is close to where you're holding the training so nobody is turning up. So, in the process, I would agree with your recommendation to gazette scrutineers so you can know who they are, and then you can organize training and give them the pamphlets so that they know the rules.

Some candidates select the toughest scrutineer to go inside the counting room and the weak ones are left at the polling area. So people who have knowledge of the law can rebut certain procedures in the counting room. So, I agree with your recommendation on the gazettal of scrutineers. My question now is on timing; when will it end so that everyone is trained well.

Hon ELIAS KAPAVORE – Just one point from me, there were many experiences of the election team or managers when the voters saw their names in 2017 rolls and then they missed out in the 2022 common rolls. How did you approach those who voted in 2017 but did not have their names again on the 2022 common roll? Can you give you an experience on how you address some of those issues?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Thank you, sir. That was the hardest moment where the person voted in 2017 and come 2022, he didn't vote. I had no explanation to give but I just had to send him or her away. I couldn't do much because polling was on and I just couldn't. Emi koros, swear lo mi. Even threaten lo paitim mi but that was the end. I just said if you don't have your name on the roll you cannot vote.

Mr CHAIRMAN – In your understanding, you work for the Electoral Commission. Lo lukluk blo yu. How bai displa samting ikamap? Because we have some instances now where even sitting members of Parliament oli contest lo dispela election na oli win but nem blo ino stap. They were there in 2017 common roll but 2022 nem blo ol no stap. How would something like that happen? Is it a manual process that there is a human being that sits there and records people or takes them off and put them back on? Or is it just an input thing where theres an interface between say the data collection lo West New Britain na emi interface wantem Waigani na somewhere in the middle oli lus na pundaun? I mean I am just trying to understand that. How is that possible? Or is someone physically removing the names off? Do you understand the IT system that yupela igat o nogat?

MS EMILY KELTON – Thank you. Rolls are done like for West New Britain, rolls mipla wokim just within the six months' period leading to elections. After the quality check between the returning officers and the assistant returning officers, I had to back them up in their respective wards and LLG s so I took them personally to Port Moresby.

Mr CHAIRMAN – You took the forms?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So it wasn't an electronic interface?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Mi diklerim lo Air Niugini saying this an Electoral Roll na mi mas kisim go lo Port Moresby. So Air Niugini assisted mi na mi go kamap mi go streit lo data room bilong mipela na me sindaun wantaim ol lain bilong handelim electoral roll bilong West New Britain i stat enterim na me sindaun long hap.

And that is what I know that ol i enterim ol data igo insait long system but printing out long em, I know that all the data entered into the system and I knew that they were ready for printing out, so mi kam bek long Kimbe to get myself ready for the nomination.

So, by the time rolls i kam kamap, I went through the rolls na me lukim, I knew that I will have problems but then it was too late and I couldn't do much. Ibin nogat taim, timeframe bilong mi long go back bin nogat. I had no time.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, in that period we ol i wokim dispela data input ya, is it possible that it is during that time that names were taken off? We are interested in those that were there in 2017 na ol i ten up long 2022 na name bilong ol ino stap. I'm interested in that particular phenomenon. How does that happen?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Okay, long dispela sait, em mi nonap toktok bikos mi no stap long IT. Thank you.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You just handed them over in the data room at the Electoral Commission and then that's it?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes, I was there and made sure that ol dispela Form-11 mi karim igo mas igo tru long system. Ol dispela niupela eligible voters ya mas go down so em wok bilong mi long wokim.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So, there was no process where you would double check whatever came out of the computer was what you actually brought? There was no process where you say, hi, nogat, sampela neims mipela sabmitim ya ino kam out lo kompiuta ya. Was there a process of verifying?

Ms EMILY KELTON – I receive those, like I said, mi kam bek long Kimbe to prepare for the nomination and that is where mi kisim ol rol i kam bikos candidates need to know that their names were on the rolls bipo ol i nominate.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What actually happened was, some of us never saw the roll. I actually haven't seen the roll. So, what happened in West New Britain?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Wankain, mipela ino displeim ol rolls tu. Ol dispela rolls sapos em kam em mipela inap long displeim ya, but mipela ino displeim bikos inogat time. At that time, nomination i start. Sapos igat taim, em mipela displeim roll na mipela bai fain out long ol dispela hevi.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – In 2017 you displayed that?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes, in 2017 we displayed them.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – In what month did you displayed them?

Ms EMILY KELTON – That was before the nomination.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – How many weeks before the nomination?

Ms EMILY KELTON – That was about one or two months before the nomination.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That would be a right period. One or two or three months would be a right period so that you can update before people start polling.

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes, na mipela displeim long LLG office na district office.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That was never done this time?

Ms EMILY KELTON – No, it was never done.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – I know that in 2019, you did present your budget so you were already planning three years ahead of everybody. What happened, 2019 ikam long 2021 November? What were the feedbacks happening? Mi askim dispela amount long 2019, 2020 na 2021 na how na nogat fanding i kam? Who were you communicating with?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Thank you, sir. Within this period while waiting for money, the PESC and the team were using our LLG network to do the best we can do. Mipela putim notices aut na try to get the message across to the people in the rural areas, but that was not enough. We had to travel out so within that period, em ibin askim long moni kam and we had been preparing some awareness materials while waiting for funds to be made available na mipela igo aut. We have our things ready for the awareness and enrolment but we could not move without funds.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So you are telling the committee that in 2019, 2020 and 2021 nothing happened although you submitted something?

Ms EMILY KELTON – No, nothing happened.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So you are running around in October and November of 2021?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes, I have tried my best but couldn't get anyway.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Okay, on the K1 million that the Provincial Government gave you, you've said that you gave them to the combine security forces.

Were you aware that they also received their funding directly from the headquarters that time? Did you bring that issue to your steering committee? Did the steering committee check that the security forces had their own budget? Why were they coming to you for support?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Thank you, Chair. The funding was made available but oli lain long administration yet oli lukautim

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Which administration?

Ms EMILY KELTON – The West New Britain Provincial Administration.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So the Electoral Commission funds came through the provincial administration.

Ms EMILY KELTON – No sir, the operating account em mani bilong Electoral Commission directly long headquarters Finance Treasury ikam igo long hap. For the provincial government too, em tu ikam e go long same account tu. They have more say on that money from the provincial government support funding.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So what's the role of the steering committee?

Ms EMILY KELTON – The steering committee briefed us on that and it brief us that that money would assist the police personnel. I made mention to the Chairman PSC that we all know that police have this separate funding for the elections. They know it all but in West New

Britain police came back asking us for fuel, asking us for rations, asking us for allowances and even the navy ship to move out to the Kandrian-Gloucester area, they still need rations on board and fuel so because we need to speed up the polling, we have no choice but we have to get this money and look after them.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So you gave them one million in your view without very good reasons?

Ms EMILY KELTON – I would say that, yes because they never gave us their budget even the PPC could not tell us how much they were given from the headquarters.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Well that's the role of the provincial steering committee. Isn't the PPC a member of the provincial sharing committee?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes sir.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Why didn't he tell you there? Em haitim samting o? Who is the chairman of the Steering Committee?

Ms EMILY KELTON – The chairman is Mr Robert Dao, the Deputy Provincial Administration.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And who are the members of the committee? Was the PPC a member of the committee?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Do you know now that the PPC and his team in West New Britain had also received funding directly from the police department?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Sir I have no idea like I said, if only we got a brief from the PPC then we would know.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So you had no idea?

Ms EMILY KELTON – No idea.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Have you submitted your financial report of your trust account to the Electoral Commission?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes sir, I have.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Would you give us a copy?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Just a further elaboration, you received K1 million from the PNG Electoral Commission, am I correct in your statement you directly?

Ms EMILY KELTON – Yes

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, now are you aware that the PNG Electrical Commission received a total of K311 million from the National Government? Are you aware of that as an Electoral Manager in your province?

Ms EMILY KELTON – No.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, so out of a total of K311 million that went to the Electoral Commission, and I think the Police Command received K156 million, Defence Force, I'm not sure, maybe what? I'll have to find my information, but in any case, police K150 million, PNG Electoral Commission K311 million, that's what they received.

Now West New Britain Province received K1 million to run its elections. You made an earlier recommendation that you felt that in the future, the update of the electoral roll should be done by provincial governments and I think that's the general recommendation we are receiving from almost all the provinces.

What do you think about the funding? Should be in future given this issue that the Deputy Chairman raised, you are paying allowances to the disciplined forces? In this case the Provincial Government is paying allowances. We have no idea if there's a second lot of

allowances that they are receiving from their head office and we could potentially be double paying allowances so I'm just raising these are public monies that belongs to the people of Papua New Guinea.

And it could be that because different agencies are doing different things for the same purpose and mipela olgeta iwok long dabol peim na moni mak i go antap olgeta. The total cost bilong ileksen emi aburusim K600 million plus all the outstanding expenses yumi bungim, it could go to another several hundred million.

So wanpela wok bilong mipela em long save wanem wok yupela i wokim long dispela moni and I don't mean just you. It's becoming pertinent now that mipela bai singautim ol lain long het opis and we are going to scrutinize how they spent this money. When we were speaking to them, mipela ino toktok yet long yupela ol lain long provins.

The most money a province received was K4 million.

Mr DEPUTY CHIRMAN – It was K5 million.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So according to our records, wanpela provins tasol ibin kisim K5 million and everyone else is cascading down to a million. Sapos mi kauntim olgeta 21pla provins wantaim wanpela spesol rigon, even an average of K5 million only comes to a K100 million.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – We don't know how much a province was given.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Yes exactly. So we would like to understand the total cost of the elections. The Provincial Government funding, all of the different agencies together, mipela i nid long save because at the end of the day it's just one government all these funds belong to the same people and we are using it in their name in any case.

So yu nogat luksave long disepla K311 million, the breakup of that expenditure was not shared with you as the Election Manager in Western Britain Province? Olrait, em wankain askim bai mipela i putim igo long narapela lain.

Madam do you have further questions to ask? If not, then thank you very much for your testimony before the Committee. Please remain with us.

Before I move to ask our friends from East New Britain Province, New Ireland Province yupela stap o nogat? Ol New Ireland istap. I understand that we also have some community members who will be participating in the second half of the hearings. Sampela membas bilong

kominiti istap we yupela laik givim ol toktok bilong yupela, toksave long ol lain bilong Secretariat long kona na givim nem bilong yupela so we can get ready for you all in the next session after we finish with East New Britain.

Mi bai stat wantaim Mr Levy Mano, the Acting Provincial Administrator for East New Britain Province. I assume you were the Provincial Election Steering Committee Chairman, yes or no?

EAST NEW BRITAIN PROVINCE

Acting Provincial Administrator East New Britain

MR LEVI MANO (Acting Provincial Administrator - East New Britain) – Thank you, Mr Chairman na olgeta membas. Tenk yu long mipela i bung long dispela taim na toktok long wanpela bikpela wok bilong kantri bilong yumi as per our Constitution.

During the election here, I was only a member of the Steering Committee at that time. But I have my Vice-Chairman here from the steering committee.

Although there are a lot of things that has been said around Papua New Guinea even in the region here and also we had a presentation from West New Britain Province, for us here we conducted the election according to what we think is right under the Constitution. We conducted it from a number of angles. First of all is through the through the Provincial Election Steering Committee which is chaired by the provincial administrator and of course it involves a lot of stakeholders, that includes the security personnels, other members like PNG power and Water PNG and everybody else including some members of the private sector that are also part of the Steering Committee. It also goes on to the four districts of the province so that's actually the steering committee.

The responsibility of the steering committee as we all know under its establishment is to coordinate the work of the election. The technicalities of how we run election belongs to the Electoral Commission. Mr Joap Voivoi will give more details later.

Maybe some of the things that has been heard from West New Britain Province relating will also be answered by our electoral office here but from a very overarching overview of the election here in East New Britain.

That's how the steering committee ran the election here in East New Britain Province, as per the responsibilities of the Steering Committee, we actually ran quite a number of critical activities leading up to the election. One of them was mass awareness into the community, educational awareness into the entire community of East New Britain Province.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – When did you start that? You took over and in the timetable, when did you start organizing? And then you are now saying we are taking some activities, give us a time frame on when were calling on the steering committee.

Mr LEVI MANO – Election is an ongoing activity, specifically the election office has got their own rules there and they do it all the time as per their own work but for us as a steering committee, we've always had a steering committee for all elections. As soon as we get instructions from the National Government on how we can start the work in preparation for a particular election, we normally do it, maybe more than two or three years before the actual election.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But for this election when did you actually -

Mr LEVI MANO – Around 2019 and of course, we had some problems with COVID in 2020 and 2021 but we were able to squeeze in some activities and we felt that we carried out all those activities as per the plan and one of which is –

Mr CHAIRMAN – Could I just ask you a question for clarity? Many provinces when we interviewed said they couldn't do anything because they didn't have funding. You just heard from your colleagues in West Britain, they said they couldn't do anything because of lack of funding. How were you able to conduct these critical activities when you did? Who funded that?

Mr LEVI MANO – I was going to go to funding a little bit later on but that's okay. The issue of funding, we know that Electoral Commission has been allocated funding but we as a provincial government, we went into the Provincial Executive Council and source funding to help the elections.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, you're saying that all of these critical activities, the awareness and everything else which you carried out was funded by the East New Britain Provincial Government?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes, we went into the communities but we didn't need to use a lot of funding because we've got our staff.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Well that's another interesting point. You didn't use a lot of funding.

Mr LEVI MANO – We never use a lot of funding. We use government system too and we use the radio station. It was one of our members of the steering committee and as per our assistance to them also they keep doing what we think is right for information sharing into our communities and that's exactly what happened.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Do you have a written report for the committee?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes, certainly we will provide you a detailed report of everything I'm just talking overview general in executive summary on what you should be getting from us.

Mr CHAIRMAN – It's just that we've come across a couple of provinces now who took the initiative on their own and went out and started a lot of these activities without waiting for the National Government so I'm just interested in that particular aspect of your success. Please continue.

Mr LEVI MANO – So one of those critical things is that educational awareness program also involved training right down to our people. There are a number categories of people that we trained; one of which is of course the scrutineer that we are referring to. We also had returning offices, assistant returning offices across the board and we train them in preparation for the actual election.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – How about candidates?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes, candidates and part of the steering committee's role is to make sure that everybody that is involved in an election must know the roles and responsibility that is expected from each and every one of them. Certainly, the scrutiny role is different from others but they all put together made sure that we have a successful or failed election.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So we want to get into some of the finer details and we appreciate the broader outline. In East New Britain, at what point between say 2022 and 2019 did you

begin to educate all of these different people? At what point? Was it a year before? Six months before three months before what was it?

Mr LEVI MANO – Normally it's a year before.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So you started 12 months out?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes suddenly we had to do it.

Mr CHAIRMAN – And that was just the initiative of the provincial administration in East New Britain?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes, the Provincial Steering Committee and the Electoral Office is a member of that. In fact, the Steering Committee and the executive officer headed by the administrator was the team that kept advising the steering committee and making decisions.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So the Election Manager was giving you that advice?

Mr LEVI MANO – They are part of us and they were, but it was actually the initiative of this Provincial Government that we made sure that everybody knew their roles and responsibility when election time comes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Mr Mano, in terms of the human resource requirements to carry out those activities, those structures are entrenched in your provincial administration linking the election manager's office. You have dedicated trained teams in your overall provincial administration so when it came to elections, you called upon them to work with the election manager and as you said, a year before you send out all those people for awareness. Is that right?

Mr LEVI MANO – Correct. The first training was actually run by the Papua New Electoral Commission to the rest of Papua New Guinea and from there we cascaded it right down to the districts.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – How far did you go?

Mr LEVI MANO – To the LLG –

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – To the LLG and the wards?

Mr LEVI MANO – To the LLG and wards, now we are still going into the wards as you can see from all social media around. We are going into the wards now right down to the LLG at the moment. For the election we stopped at the LLG. We identified those people from the LLG identified by their own candidates and we made sure that the list from candidates come into the steering committee so that we knew exactly the kind of people that we are dealing with when it comes election time. That's probably what has what happened.

That doesn't mean that we didn't have problems. We also had problems and the report will detail some of those issues that we encountered along the way. Some of the people which got some training kept turning up with different views also. About twice we had to stop counting. And the case is similar to what West New Britain has reported.

I know none of us has got the right to stop any counting but we thought that was necessary given the situation that we were in. If we had forced people out, it could have resulted in other problems outside or in the community and on the streets. That's why we just negotiated and in order to create understanding and then we would proceed on.

For those issues that we thought needed some court decision, we kindly asked them to take to court and sort out.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay fair enough, now obviously we are impressed with all of the pre-election work that you did and you've just touched on some of the challenges you faced. We know you have a detailed report for us. Could you jump to the part where you tell us about some of the challenges you faced despite the good work that went in prior to the elections?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes, we had our challenges too. One thing that we also did which we didn't do in the past in other elections was to get all the candidates. We had a total of 96 candidates all together; out of which there were seven female and the difference is all males.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So as soon as they nominated.

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes as soon as they nominated, that's the number.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Advise us, how you processed the candidates? How did you manage it? They all nominated then you got their names and what happened? You announced in the radio what process did you use; or you just asked them, kam yumi wokim workshop. Did they pay for their own attendance or what happened?

Mr LEVI MANO – Later on, how they nominate and how they got registered in Port Moresby and their name comes back here, Electoral Office will say part of that. But what we were interested in was the total number of candidates which we tried to mobilized. We ran forums for all the candidates to talk to the public, that's a candidate's forum.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN –What was the attendance rate?

Mr LEVI MANO – It was at 90 percent. There were one or two candidates who didn't turn up but the majority turned up and all of them spoke even if the whole –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What were the main messages you were passing around to candidates?

Mr LEVI MANO – We told them to talk about their platform so that it gave the opportunity for everyone in the province to listen to their ideas, what they expected to do when they won. And so, all of them had a chance to talk to the public. We used mainstreaming and the local radio station to get people to listen to all their candidates.

I think that's basically the kind of things that we did and maybe it also helped so that ol man i save long husat man ol i bai votim or ol i laikim em bai kamap lida bilong ol so we thought that generally, the people did speak.

We had one open electorate that declared from the primary count and then of course the other two and then the last one was the regional. It is always last because we normally get all the boxes from all the other districts coming back here into the main centre.

But, going back to the Chairman's comment on issues and challenges, the first issue was funding. I just brought it up again now that there were a lot of funding going around and up until now we still have one or two service provider that we still need to pay but they are faithful partners lo dispela wokabaut na ol i stap. But, surely we should be able to honor those commitments.

We still think that the funding should have gone into where it was supposed to go. I will

–

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Tell us your budget? How much did you submit and how much did you receive, actual receipt of funding? And, how much did Provincial Government help?

Mr LEVI MANO – We planned and our budget was K3 million which we submitted to Electoral Commission. Our Electoral Officer will report the figure we received on that but the K1 million I was referring to is actually from this Provincial Government, from our own source and I think that's what the Provincial Steering Committee will always be referring to.

So, everything that we did was actually based on that, because that was basically from the Provincial Executive Council that we sourced the money from and olsem em signature blong Siaman lo dispela K1 million. The other funding that was coming in igo yet long Electoral Office yet. But, mipela iwok bung wantaim ol so sampela claim ol i setlim lo hap na sampela mipela i setlim lo hia. Mipela woklo setlim ol allowances na ol logistics sapot blong ol assistant returning officers long LLG, ol LLG managers, ol kiap.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So, you are saying that that fund from the Provincial Government was not parked in the provincial election trust account? You were managing it separately from the trust account?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes, we have an accounting system. You may also realize that during the time the IFMS system collapsed and so all the money was going into COVID and then from there we all were drawing out from there. So, we had actually got the approval from the Provincial Executive Council to draw out the entire money for Provincial Government from the provincial government operating account into the COVID Account and then from there we withdrew it out. My goodness! It's just a massive thing.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But, those were instructions from Finance?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You establish Provincial Covid Accounts which were manual accounts and you were raising cheques?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes, and then the Treasury would tell us the details of how we did those work. So, I think that's the challenge, and that's number one.

Secondly, is the common roll. Like West New Britain, mipela i sori olsem mipela i tanim sampela man i go back long taim bilong vote, and we were very sorry.

Mr CHAIRMAN – What was the proportion do you think got turned away? What's the proportion of the population that didn't get to vote in East New Britain?

Mr LEVI MANO – Generally, from the voting population maybe 57 percent in the report so 57 percent so over half of it –

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, 57 percent of the registered voters voted?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes. The others either they did not turn up and I think it's here in the report, either they didn't turn up or they were not on the roll.

Mr CHAIRMAN – But, for those that were on the roll, you only had a 57 percent turnout? That would probably be the lowest in the country.

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes, you will have our reports and that is why it is a real issue for us.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Okay, let's clarify it properly. I understand your common roll enrollment, I am just asking the question in a different way around, how many of the voting population enrolled in your 2022 common roll? What was your estimated voting population in the province and how many of that percent was enrolled and of those enrolled, you are saying that only 50 came and voted?

I don't think that's right.

Mr LEVI MANO – I think we almost registered the entire voting population. We were also requesting for the Form 11 at the last minute when we thought that some people were not included in the common roll but we never got those forms.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, your estimate of your total enrollment would have been, of the voting population, what 80 or 90 percent?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes, around there and then when it came to voting.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Did you, reconcile that with your ward record books, did you do that?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So yupela reconsailim electoral roll bilong yupela wantaim ol wod rekot buk?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes,

Mr CHAIRMAN – And, you think that most of your people were registered?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes, they were registered

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, around 90 percent were registered? So, that means that your level of, if you are correct then your level of registered voters would probably be the highest in the country as well?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes, and that is why we we are saying what we're saying.

Mr CHAIRMAN – How come you are able to get up to 90 percent when most provinces are saying that they could only register up to, some of them 60 percent of their voters and you are up to 90 percent approximately?

Mr LEVI MANO – As I said earlier on, we've got a network right down to the LLG about what recording book is this on track.

Mr CHAIRMAN – The Electoral Commission allocated a 35 percent, or was it 19 percent, of the voting population. They calculated it and then they gave you the Form 11.

Now, if you received 19 percent of the Form 11 just like every other province did, how were you able to get almost an accurate roll?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – With all the forms filled up?

Mr CHAIRMAN – Ol narapela provins ol i kisim dispela 19 percent ol i pulumapim na ol i tok ol i run aut; they tried to get more but they couldn't. In your case, you got to your 19 percent which was commensurate to your population na you hitim 90 percent of your registrations. How is your roll more accurate than your neighbors in West New Britain, we bilong ol i no ekureit? I'm trying to understand that. I see something good here but I'm trying to understand. What did you guys do differently?

Mr LEVI MANO – Our ward recording system is okay although there are some discrepancy and we try to reconcile that with what goes to the electoral roll and we thought that it should be the same

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, the electoral commission i exseptim rikosiliesen bilong yupela wantaim ward roll, they accepted that?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Did you use that as an argument with them and they accepted it?

Mr LEVI MANO – When it came back and that's why the next recommendation is that, the electoral role preparation for the future election must be decentralized to us in the provinces so that we connect those figures and if there are any discrepancy, it must be a recommendation from here to the Electoral Commission to do those work.

At the moment, it's from here right down to there and they expect one of us to be there to reconcile everything and then it comes back here. There are certain villagers that nem bilong

ol wankain but those people in Port Moresby, don't even know this so we are the only people that know this and then there are people who have namesakes and the computer system probably can delete one of them but those are realities that we also saw in the preparation for 2022 Election.

There is a lot of work that we should be doing around this common roll establishment so that it corresponds with other systems from the National Statistical Office in which we are also doing. But that, when it goes to Electoral Commission, there are also another system that they do and they also do Form 11 that is not part of the ward recording that comes from National Statistical Office and we are having trouble in doing that but we can easily do it successfully if it is decentralized to provinces and districts.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You advised the committee that your ward recording system is well established. How long have you been working on this to say that our ward recorders and the ward record book is credible and in other provinces it's all over the place?

Mr LEVI MANO – We are not saying we are 101 percent correct. Taim bilong kiap em 100 percent spot on because kiap save stap long ples na raun na kolektim. We dropped back in New Britain like the entire country but we are trying to just re-establish it. In fact, while we speak there are some training going around in the wards in our LLGs at the moment on this ward recording thing and and so we feel that there should be some recognition on that ward recording system so that it also informs other systems which now one of them is actually the common roll.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – One issue that came up very clearly was the various data systems, the Electoral Commission, National Statistics Office and the Provincial Affairs and NID were not communicating with each other.

Mr LEVI MANO – Correct!

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – How are you managing it in the province so that we can transfer these powers to you. How will you help coordinate these different data entry points at the provincial level, so that you set the phase and the country follows you? You recommend to us how you are going to do it so we can say yes provinces you can take over.

Mr LEVI MANO –Yes, it’s tough. NID and those others have got their structure and they report straight to Waigani but we do our own techniques of negotiating with them on the ground but it doesn’t work all the time. It depends on the officers that are being recruited by national agencies who are here. So, we try our best and we have done it through the PCMC, the Committee under provincial affairs. We try to do that by getting everybody together; national agencies under the chairmanship of the administrator and we are doing it.

However, we are just beginning to re-establish it back now. As we speak that’s the exercise we are doing as a provincial government. My outmost recommendation relating to that is for those functions to be delegated to us so that we have control. And if there is a mistake, they account to the administration here. And if there is any policy then yes, we can refer back to Port Moresby but any little detail on how we deal with every day activity and issues must be addressed at the provincial level so that yumi sotim out hariap nogut em i kisim longpla taim.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You mean establish East New Britain Provincial Data Management Office to coordinate everybody?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes. At the moment we have as a province but those informations that belong to national agencies sometimes ol save tok nogat mipela bai salim igo long bosman long Mosbi and that’s when the limitations come and then the data doesn’t synchronise.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That’s very good. You were going to talk about other challenges as well, finance, common roll and what others?

Mr LEVI MANO – Common roll, no. I think there are two major ones and they relate to operations that we are managing, and we feel that its very interesting to do these sorts of work when you deal with people.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Can I direct you to one of my favourite part of this inquiry on candiates, voters and scrutineers’ behavior? I note that our good Governor is sitting at the back. What was that like? Noken wari lo gavana blo yu. You toktok. Mipla tu istap.

Mr LEVI MANO – Generally there's some understanding here. They met themselves; ol ibung yet lo taim blo forum blo lo.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Ol kendideit?

Mr LEVI MANO – Mipla karim ol go antap lo stage na ol yet sindaun antap na toktok. So that was the starting point, and then it went on. Of course, there were one or two bighet lain we oli stap lo ples. We stopped the Kokopo and the Gazelle one in the middle. But because we've got a strong relationship. By the way, in the past, there was also a church representative in the steering committee. So, they did their own bits too. Come Sunday, mipla pasim ol box na ol man go lotu lo ol kaunting eria blo ol. Mipla invaitim ol pastor tu na priest tu igo insait tu na ol toktok long ol.

So generally, we see comments going on in social media where candidate talk about each other. They got all kinds of politics. But I think generally in New Britain, we were able to calm people down because of the preparation activities. I think ol man ol isave, they say the way they say things is when they are not advised correctly, or informed properly. I think majority of our candidates knew exactly what needs to be done and the kind of behavior that is expected of them. And let me say this, you may find one or two candidates who were competing at the time in the same restaurant. I think there are two cases here in New Britain, I don't want to talk about that, but that indicates that there are still some issues and I think those issues I raised earlier on which has resulted in the things that we are seeing today. I think if we correct those, yumi bai gat safe and peaceful election.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Mr Voivoi, you are the Election Manager of this beautiful province. How long have you been the Election Manager here in East New Britain?

Election Manager East New Britain

Mr JOAP VOIVOI (Election Manager - ENB) – Thank you, Deputy Chairman. I transferred down from West New Britain in 2013, there were two general elections I conducted in East New Briatin so far.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What has been your experience here in East New Britain with regards to the securities, you can later I'll ask the PPC. We were told that 2027 elections will be worse than the 2022 elections in the country because of candidates and supporters' behavior. In your service here in New Britain representing the Electoral Commission, share with us your views on the overall behavior of the people, because they seem to listen here.

Others ol bai pait hia o bai burukim box, ol bai kukim ballot pepa. Tasol for you it makes your job a lot easier. Why? Tell the Committee.

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – It's the general awareness to the people, and on top of that is the public relations on how you react to each individual face to face. It's just the public relation that overcomes whatever problem. You can have your elections but the general awareness and public relations from the offices down to the ward level is one thing that I see that is creating a good understanding. For bigger operation like election time, that's the main thing now to cooperate or assist eligible voters whether it's a small kid or an elderly man or just public relations that you can give out with them. You can convince them that this is right and that is wrong and then they'll follow on from there.

Otherwise, there are issues that go beyond but according to what the Acting PA has mentioned, it's just the general understanding of the people towards this because we'll have to tell them that during election, everybody will have to take ownership. The election is everybody's business so yu bagarapim election, em yu yet nau. So, we'll have to make sure that you take ownership, election bai go gud na everybody will be happy with the result.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Very good. Your counterpart, Ms Kelton complained about poor response from the Electoral Commission headquarters. Your experience with the headquarters with regards to your requests, had it not been good and had it been that you did not have a good provincial government and understanding the provincial administration? You probably would be having difficulty like other provinces.

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – Yes, that's true. In working with headquarters, sometimes we get into a bit of problem from the feedback from them. But then when it is out from the headquarters, I go back to the provincial administration and I discuss the problem with them and they come in.

Mr CHAIRMAN – How long have you been with the Electoral Commission?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – About 45 years now.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So you are close to retirement.

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – Yes, I'm retiring this year.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, you have nothing to lose and I'm glad to hear that and thank you for your fine service over many years on behalf of the government and the people. You both indicated that its very difficult getting funds down and I'm sure you got some recommendations there for us. You obviously got a good working relationship with the provincial administration and of course, the provincial election steering committee.

Now, given all of that, what sort of recommendations can you make to us? I've heard the recommendation that your colleague had made, and you've heard some of my comments on the K311 million gone to your head office. I'm not sure how much you received because your deputy administrator is not aware so, perhaps give us an outline of that.

1. Yupela kisim amas moni long het opis long helpim yupela long dispela ileksen?

2. Your recommendations, how can we make things better so that elections ino long East New Britain tasol, olgeta narapela provinces bai i ron gut, given some of the experiences that we've seen now, particularly long yupela long team East New Britain?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – We've actually budgeted for K6.5 million (K6,599,773) and K900 769 for the enrolment period update of the electoral roll for the four open electorates in the East New Britain and the actual K5,699,044 was for the election operations. Apart from the roll update total, we went into the elections with K5,699,004.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, what did you receive in cash?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – Actually, we were given a monthly or quarterly or something; the funding doesn't come in on time.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, total funding yu kisim em amas stret?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – Total mi kisim em K1,986,560 from that K5.6 million.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, you have requested K5.6 million and you received K1.9 million.

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – But on top of that K1.9 million, the other half (K3.7 million) was held back at the headquarter for ROs, vehicle hires, roll update and allowances.

Mr CHAIRMAN – That was made from Port Moresby?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, the allowance that the provincial administration paid, what was that for?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – That was only a counterpart funding allowances, especially on the enrolment period, because we didn't get money quickly.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, what you are saying is not just for you but you know, but perhaps even for West New Britain and other provinces, all of the election allowances were paid from Moresby you never saw that?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – Yes

Mr CHAIRMAN – So are there any outstanding allowances still to be paid?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – We still have K250,000 outstanding to be paid out. Plus, on top of that, we we're just negotiated with the administration again, only K440,000 that PNGEC did not give us for the counterpart funding for the counting period allowances. There's K440,016 still outstanding.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Em still outstanding? So, lo fes hap blo toktok blo yu, yu tok osem olgeta allowances ol ipeim lo Mosbi. Nau u tok osem ol i peim hap blo em tasol.

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – Disla lo wanem, the payment of counting allowances as far as the counting allowances is concerned. Because we employed too many counting officials and we went over the time limit of the counting. Yupla save osem counting period was extended so we have to extend our counting too, so that's why the counting allowance igo antap liklik. So when we submit the counting officials and the number of hours they worked, they only paid us half and the other half they told us to go to the provincial administration and negotiate again for the other half to be completed.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you sir. So, in your recommendations in future, wankain olsem yumi harim lo wanwok blo yu lo West New Britain na bifo lo mi askim, Chair emi luksave lo Member blo Kokopo emi kam na joinim mipla lo disla sindaun. Welkam Mamba blo Kokopo.

So back to you sir, what are your thoughts now, given your many years in the Electoral Commission and elections, and you know they've been getting progressively worse as we are learning. In terms of administration and funding, nau tasol mipla harim lo yupla East New Britain, there were two separate lots obviously with all of the difficulties associated with it.

In future should that money go directly to the Provincial Government na yupla yet workim out lo hia, or are you still happy with the age-old system where they're handling some stuff in Moresby which you have difficulty with and it's late and all of these sorts of issues. What is your opinion, sir?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – My opinion is that when the money goes to the provincial administration, they'll have to look after it and they'll have to control it from their end

Mr CHAIRMAN – Na sapos emi stap aninit lo Provincial Election Steering Committee em bai olsem wanem? Because you are part of that Committee too, are you not? So when I refer to that one, what I'm saying is; are you happy that you have to try and access funds in Waigani or would you prefer that the funds are actually sitting here in Bank South Pacific na yupla lo Provincial Election Steering Committee yupla i lukautim hau yupla i spendim? Because we already got a suggestion now to decentralize the update of the electoral roll so what should we do with the funding, should that still stay in Port Moresby?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – This funding, because through our submission to Port Moresby is always cut, hap oli holim bek na hap oli salim kam. We are suggesting that because the enrolment update will go back to the provincial administration to take ownership of it, then I recommend that the funding too should come and we look after it in the province and manage it.

Mr CHAIRMAN – The principle of funding follows function?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – Yeah.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, continue.

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – That's the recommendation that we put forward. On the funding that we were given that is monthly or quarterly, sometimes we'll have to wait for two or three months and then it's coming. During the counting and the polling, we had a really hard time getting the teams out, that's the only problem that we had. The other activity that they did not give us too is the request for a chopper. We gave them the itinerary for 21 teams to use in Pomio and while we were waiting, no chopper arrived so we had to equip all the 22 teams with extra man power to carry cargoes to the remote areas, that's including additional advance on top.

If they had given us the chopper it will cut down on the expenses and the 22 teams would have moved to the remote areas at the start of polling. So the problem was that, the chopper did not come but we were lucky that the provincial administration came in to extract all those teams back before counting commenced.

I went back to the provincial steering committee and told them that we had encountered a problem so they assist with the chopper from their own funding. We sent all the teams back to the station and the district to be prepared for the counting period.

In 2017, the election awareness was fully funded by a local commission through the electoral support program (ESP). For the 2022 National Election, we did not get any support especially on awareness. That is why the provincial administration came in again and assist with all the awareness materials, the funding and send out the through the LLG managers into the wards.

We formed small groups and establish CSOs in the province through the provincial administration and through the district DDAs and they funded the awareness. That is why they keep the pressure down, especially on the awareness to the voting population on how to vote and the names of the candidate and even the the forum that was establish in the four electorates plus the provincial electorate. That was handy and a very good example of candidates and the scrutineers and everybody to listen to all the candidates. Social media was also used as an awareness tool for this election that's why we do not have much problem during the polling apart from the people missing out on the electoral roll.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Let’s get back to the roll; we heard one thing from the acting provincial administrator, in your opinion how accurate was your roll for East New Britain Province?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – The accuracy of the electoral roll for East New Britain is about 70 to 75 per cent. Because of the extra Form 11 and that you requested in the second phrase, update did not come so we only worked with the first lot of Form 11.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So you also received 19 per cent like the other provinces of what you requested?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – That is correct but the other percent did not come in to top up those voters that we collected from the votes. We enrolled about 174,000,258 voters for 2022 National Elections but according to our census record because there’s no census done for the last 10 years, East New Britain should have about 500,000 voters. We were expecting 250,000 eligible voters for the 2022 National Election.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So how many voted?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – The census was done 10 years ago so we were expecting around 500,000 populations.

Mr CHAIRMAN – That is fair enough but of the 174,000 that you registered, how many actually voted?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – Of the 174,000 eligible voters only 104,013 voted.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So around 70,000 people who were on the roll did not vote.

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – That is correct. The 104,000 voters are collected from the provincial tally that voted in the election but from the provincial, it’s just one or two less of this figure. So the actual population that voted was about 104,000.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Did you have a look at the ward rolls that the provincial administration had? What sort of numbers were there on the ward roll compared to the electoral roll? Did you take a look at all?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – What we are suggesting now is for the provincial administration to take ownership of the enrolment because they have to work closely with the rolls. The Electoral Commission will come in only during the election time and collect the data that means Electoral Commission will only come in at 6 months' period before the election or one month to collect the data from the ward recorders book registry updated that time.

Now they are working on it now so that will minimise the enrolment total line to the Electoral Roll. So, everybody must be on the electoral roll to vote in the election.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you. Anything else you would like to add, sir?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – I got two recommendations only that's on funding. How many funding that we actually submit, they'll have to make sure that they send it to the province. And this Form 11, whatever we request, they should submit that number to that province. And the electoral roll should be mandate of the provincial administration to take ownership of it. That's probably a few recommendations that you will put. I got a copy of the report and will send it later.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Provincial Police Commissioner Mr Vosivai; with security issues in East New Britain, you know one of the problems in our country with 2022 election was the issue of security cost and we just heard from West New Britain that the police funding that was given directly to the headquarters was not received so they had to come to the provincial government for help. That's one of the issues that I want you to raise. What happened in East New Britain?

Secondly, from your own personal experience in East New Britain, you have seen a lot on Facebook about problems around the country particularly in the Highlands region. Share your experience in East New Britain in 2022 with in regards to security issues. How did you organise yourself? Did you actually identify red spots through your surveillance intelligence system? Do you have an effective intelligence system to inform you well beforehand? There are areas or candidates or supporters that you listed as someone that would provide security issues? Share with the Committee.

Provincial Police Commander East New Britain

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI (PPC - ENB) – Thank you Deputy Chairman and Honourable Kapavore. With regard to the security operations for the National General Elections in East New Britain, preparations for the elections started around 25th October, 2021.

So that was following the issue of the general order. The Commissioner issued a general order for the election around that time so after the issue of the order, each divisional and provincial command started doing preparations for the election operations.

So, for East New Britain, I was actually one of those three officers that got transferred during the period of the elections so I took post in East New Britain around late April, just before the issue of writs. So, the election preparations were done, according to the Commissioner's orders. There were four phases of the elections which he wanted all divisional and provincial command to prepare their operations. There was the pre-election phase, election-proper phase and the post-election phase. So, these were four phase of the election operations that were undertaken.

So, for East New Britain, regarding your question about funding; East New Britain provincial command had its allocations, just like all other provincial commands, they had fundings that were allocated. We got allocated about K119, 000 from Police Headquarters.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Sir, just one clarification; that funding you received, is that inclusive of allowances?

Mr JANURIUS VOSIVAI – No, it was separate from allowances.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So allowances were paid directly from Port Moresby?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Yeah, so K190,000 was basically for any operational expenses that we had. So, from this funding and the funding that we got from allowances there were no other funding requirements, other funding needs that came up during the election so we didn't get any other additional funding from the provincial government or any other agencies.

But yes, we had some support from provincial government, East New Britain provincial government especially with extraction. Extraction of our team that went to Pomio and there was one support assistance that we got from the East New Britain Provincial Government.

That's what on the issue of funding with regard to the general conduct of the election security wise. We didn't encounter any major issues, the election went very well.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – At the polling and counting sites, no issues came to your notice?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – There were a few issues but not major issues. I think one of the issues that we encountered was in one of the wards in Kokopo District. The people who were not on the roll and were disappointed because their names were not on and they decided to abandon, boycott polling in a particular polling location so they had the presiding officer to cancel polling in the area and deferred. That was one of the challenges.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN- What particular ward did not vote?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – They did not vote on that day.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But they came back again.

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – They came back the following Monday.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Everybody turn up or only half of them turned up therefore giving a low voting rate that the election manager and acting PA have disclosed?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Yeah, I think most of them turned up and they cast their votes. That's during polling and during counting there were also a few issues encountered. One interesting thing about serving East New Britain during the election was their cultural beliefs, for instance witchcraft. There was one of the two incidents where supporters of certain candidates were accusing others for using witchcraft that was especially in the Gazelle Electorate.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – For what?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Witchcraft for manipulating voters; well I don't know what it was about.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Or changing the vote one to vote three? Did they take them to court or how did you manage?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – They manhandled them; one person was manhandled by voters of other candidates so the police had to intervene. They wanted that person arrested and charge for sorcery. The police intervened and took the person but eventually they had to be released because nobody wanted to deal with that.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So well behaved people; I can see the amusement on the faces of the people of East New Britain who are seated here. A highly literate society, very well cultured tasol kambang na kawar imekim nau yumi gat problem. Sir, I wanted to ask you how long have you served in the Force?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – 24 years.

Mr CHAIRMAN – I assume you served in some other provinces during elections prior to your deployment here?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Most of my time I served and observed elections in Bougainville.

Mr CHAIRMAN – That's interesting; I think we'll come to AROB tomorrow and that's one particular area I'm interested in; its good we've got you here. Comparing the conduct of the elections and the behavior of the population in AROB and here in East New Britain, what would you say?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Sir, I think the behavior is also more similar, people are quite civilized and they understand the importance of the elections and they don't interfere with the elections like maybe other places. I've been to the highlands.

I was one of the officers deployed during the 2012 Election in the Highlands and I compared Highlands, Bougainville and East New Britain, there was a big difference which East New Britain and Bougainville are quite similar in the way they do the elections.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay there is one difference that I would like you to sort of give your personal opinion on.

We just noted from both the Administrator and the Election Manager that around 60 percent of the population here who were on the common roll actually voted. Now I note that the turnout in Bougainville will probably be a little bit higher. How would you explain that given your, I know you came in recently but you would have had men stationed around the different polling sites, and you would have obviously had your security apparatus operating so you would have some insight into that. Could you share with us?

What you might have picked up as to why because this would probably be one of the lowest turnouts in the country? I'm interested to understand again how high literate society with good culture but the actual turnout of the voters was very low and reasonably good logistics. What's your opinion sir?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – I wouldn't know why there would be a low turnout but from what I was hearing during the election time, from the general population was, they go to the elections, get people voted in and then there's a lack of service delivery or something like that; something along that line that's why they lost their interest in participating in election.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, people are feeling disenfranchised and not wanting to participate?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Sort of.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, continue sir.

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Just on the total manpower that was deployed during the election year; we had about 396 personnel deployed during the election and we had support from the PNG Defence Forces; about 60 members of the PNGDF and 33 CS personnel; that made up a total of about 500 security personnel's during the election.

During the pre-election phase, we had awareness's conducted in communities by respective field commanders. We have four districts here so we had field commanders responsible for each of the districts. So, these field commanders were tasked with the responsibility to carry out a proactive programs and awareness because considering the number of personnel's we had and the population that number was just not enough.

So, that was the strategy we had because we had a big population so we thought that we needed to empower the people and the people needed to take ownership of the election. That's why we had teams going out and conducting awareness on the elections therefore maybe that was one thing that contributed to maybe a quiet election year. A few awareness that was conducted same as what the electoral officers were doing.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Your awareness was separate from the one's that the acting Provincial Administrator Mr Mano, was talking about? You had your specific security awareness apart from the normal administration once?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – We had our own awarenesses. Yeah, so that was basically the intention and the aim of the awareness. To create awarenesses and make sure people understood the elections so that they could take ownership of the security of the elections.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – PPC, did you say that you also served in the Highland's during any of the elections?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Yes, I was involved in the 2012 General Elections in the Highlands.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Not, in 2017?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Not in the 2017.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You have been in the Force for over 20 years?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Yes, 24 years.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – The issues of high cost of security that I'm sure you are aware of and the security of handling paper ballot papers and ballot boxes movement from the polling sites to the areas for counting; their security and police personnel are heavily involved in accompanying the boxes to the police stations or wherever they are. The high numbers of personal involved in looking after this paper origin and ballot boxes at high-cost options. How

can we minimize the security cost of our elections in our country? Options to the normal voting and common roll, we're talking about ward record books, how about using IT so we don't have to have ballot papers and ballot boxes, we don't have to have security running around to the storage areas?

What is your view because we don't want a high cost security election in 2027?

JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Thank you, Deputy Chairman. I think in our report, our recommendations on the elections, in order to improve the elections maybe in the future to avoid issues of election fraud or illegal activities during the election, maybe if there was a system of voting, the biometric system of voting can be introduced that would address all these issues.

Mr CHAIRMAN – I wanted to come in on that point, from your 24 years of experience in the force, have you come across any instances of election fraud now that you've mentioned it? I'm interested to know from officials who have been involved in the elections. Have you come across any instances of election fraud yourself?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Yes, during the 2012 Election in the Highlands.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, you've come across it in the Highlands?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Yes, and it was very prevalent.

Mr CHAIRMAN – On the coast you haven't come across any instances of fraud?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – No. Not in Bougainville and here in the last election.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Could you just, for the interest of the Committee, tell us about the election fraud that you witnessed in the highlands? Could you describe some of that just broadly because, obviously that's 2012 and we are not the Court of Law? We are just interested in what those things look like.

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Double voting - people voting twice. There was this incident where there are two or even three polling booths in the same location, people walked

into the first polling booth casted their votes, then they go out and into the second polling booth cast their votes again and then into the third polling booth to cast again.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, there was three polling booths in one location?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Yes, I've never seen that in my 24 years of serving in the Force and that was the only time I saw that.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Well, I've never heard of that in my entire life to be honest with you and I'm sure most of the audience sitting here including perhaps my two colleagues, we've never heard of that. So, three polling booths, side by side?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Yes, side by side. We were also caught off guard, we were not aware that there were three polling booths.

Mr CHAIRMAN – And, security personnel were there?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – All security personnel were there.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You just allowed it?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – Well there was no choice because –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Why no choice but you are the law, you had your uniform?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – That's right, sir.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Describe that situation.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Tell us what happened in that situation? Why did you just allow it to happen instead of going and telling them to set up one polling booth only?

Mr CHAIRMAN – The people of East New Britain are interested now.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Why did you just look at it when you had the power of the uniform?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – It was almost 9:00 a.m. already and people were ready to vote. We got deployed there and everyone was there then we were surprised that there were three polling booths in the same location.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Was that unusual? I mean have you seen that in other places?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – It was unusual, yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Mi askim tasol wanpela silly question; did they have like 20,000 voters there that they needed three polling places?

I'm just playing the devil side-rocket here to clear out the waters or what was it? Ol sem lain tasol ol i vote, vote, vote na public em sanap na lukluk tasol, how did it work?

Mr JANUARIUS VOSIVAI – I think that was how it was designed so that people would vote in all three locations but we tried our best to manage people moving from the other polling booths.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Is that documented anywhere or a report produced on that incident?

Mr JANUARIUS JOSAVI – I am not really sure, sir.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, well very interesting revelation; mipela laik stretim dispela election ya, all of you here plus us, we all are keen to fix it because we cannot pass this on to our children, em samting nogut na yumi just end off here so it's really interesting. We were up in the highlands two weeks ago and, they did admit that. A lot of admissions came from senior policemen which is interesting. So do you have any other recommendations for us? You were going through that and I interrupted you.

Mr JANUARIUS JOSAVI – Sir I think its just the few recomenations that we had in our report. Most recommendtions are for our own agency to deal with.

Mr CHAIRMAN – While you are looking through any recommendations, you could make to the committee about how we could make the security forces more effective out there in the field protecting the electoral process from your opinion?

Mr JANUARIUS JOSAVI – I think if we are pro-active in educating the people, we won't need more security personnel, if the population is educated and made aware of their responsibility. The people need to take ownership of the election; if the people are educated then I don't think we will need more security and funding for the security.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Long keis bilong East New Britain na yumi gat dispela isiu long saspektet sosari nabaut ya. How can we deal with that? Obviously in other parts of the country their suspects of sorcery, particulurly women, ol i kukim, kilim na kain olsem na. Should we worry that in a highly literate province like this one, that it might be a problem in the future, the issue of suspected sorcery? Apart from your other duties, are you receiving complains in relation to sorcery?

Mr JANUARIUS JOSAVI – Yes, we do have issues with sorcery related violence but its not common, although people do have their own cultural beliefs and practices in any provinces.

Mr CHAIRMAN – But taim bilong ileksen em saspek save go bikpela liklik?

Mr JANUARIUS JOSAVI – Yes! During the counting we had to seal the container at Kokopo police station every night after team arrives because there is belief that the spirit will go into the containers and manipulate the ballot papers or I don't know. That's one of the challenges that every night we have to allow people to come and seal the container.

Mr CHAIRMAN – But were they happy with you sealing the boxes and locking them up?

Mr JANUARIUS JOSAVI – Yes, that's what they demanded

Mr CHAIRMAN – Well it might remain a unique practice in East New Britain and perhaps its not infringing so much on.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Well I had six elections including my by-elections and this is my fifth term in Parliament. One reason why we send our security personnel, my own candidate security people to go and watch 24 hours in the container is because of our beliefs that some policemen might align with some candidates, and so ol bai wok long mid-night na opim box na senisim ballot boxes. These were some of the fears so everybody was there watching like an owl. Any of your experience candidates coming and saying four o'clock in the morning, this is the box I've marked, yu go senisim displa. Any experience of that sort?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – Not at all.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Mr Mano and Mr Voivoi, how many women candidates?

Mr CHAIRMAN – Seven, I think.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And none of them won?

Mr CHAIRMAN – Could you move the microphone closer to you please.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – In terms of women candidates and their chances of winning in the National Election for the open seats and provincial seats in East New Britain?

Mr JOAP VOIVOI – There were seven female candidates contesting in the five electorates in East New Britain but none of them won the election. They were eliminated during the fifth elimination.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So they really didn't do well at all?

Mr JOAB VOIVOI – No.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – One of the candidates in Lae, when we were there, last week said this and I quote, 'Man ya strong tumas ya mipla nonap winim ol ya. Oli gat moni

pawa tu ya' and she also said how can the government help women candidates with some funding so we can give them little bit of a chance to at least compete with the men candidates.

I would have thought that in East New Britain the level of education and the level of respect and it's a matrilineal society like Bougainville and Milline Bay that we would be having at least one or two women leaders on the Floor of Parliament from East New Britain.

What's the problem? How can we help our women to be on the Floor of Parliament? Is the election process the only way to do or so doing work, the Constitutional provisions for nominated women and increase that number so that we have at least 20 or 30 women on the Floor of Parliament? What's your views, Mr Mano and Mr Voivoi? Two of you are very experienced.

Mr LEVI MANO – It's a very strong and tough question. In fact, yes, we also thought that these three provinces should be having women on the Floor of Parliament. I guess it has a lot to do with our culture but when you talk about culture, we are a matrilineal and therefore we thought that they should be there at the forefront. They are the foundation of everything that we do –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Tell us Mr Mano, in East New Britain, why are they not voting for women? What's your observation? They don't cover that same areas or they don't dish out money, they don't host rice and ox and palm meetings in all their campaign areas. Is that why?

Mr LEVI MANO – Maybe. That's my personal observation; I think the dynamism in what we are doing today has shifted away from reality. That's my personal view as a citizen of Papua New Guinea. People today think that what matters is what we see but not what we think. Women are the power base; but a lot of things in them and what they think that should be done, but that's not what people want to see. Moni na kago emi save bikpla moa tete.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay going back, we've had elections since what 1964? Na inogat wanpla meri iwinim wanpla representative seat lo dispela provins so em olsem wanem? That erosion of perhaps culture em start long 1964 ikam yet, and noting that this particular province has produced some very fine leaders even pre-independence; noting that and not discounting that at all, but just trying to understand. Long province bilong mi, mipela em i patrilineal ya.

Em ples bilong ol man. So yupla em matrilineal and just trying to understand why that hasn't come through.

The women are leaders in the villages obviously, but when it comes through to say national representation em nogat. How can you explain the different dynamics and how can we help? Is there anything that you think we should do olsem mipela ol memba bilong Palamen mas putim ia na arim na karim igo na traim mekim sampela senis so that we can make it possible for provinces where traditionally women are the leaders to help them come through. What are your thoughts?

Mr LEVI MANO – Thank you. Yes, em difficult because nau ol meri tu istap but, you see they have the description of and the way we define leadership and also be a telling factor and the execution of leadership in different levels, whether in the family or clan or other levels leading up to the highest level which is where we're talking about today.

Maybe, a lot of time in the communities, we see that there are very strong women leaders but the execution of their leadership and authority is guided by some other things also and my personal view is the kind of leadership that we have even if it is a man there. The power base for him to execute that leadership at that level still lies with a woman at home and at the clan level. That's the kind of leadership that I struggle also to understand and lately as we move on aging, we tend to understand that. Although, people think that there should be gender equality but then the execution of that from us against the description of gender from other places that are impose on us is something that we have not really understood.

I think we should have some other forum on that. We really need women leaders to be up there, but at what point in that leadership structure should we make it whereby women bai stap leaders at that level.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Do you have any women leaders in the provincial assembly? Were they elected or appointed?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes, we have one appointed member representing women.

Mr CHAIRMAN – No elected women representatives?

Mr LEVI MANO – No elected women representative. We appoint because of their own capacity as a leader and their right in the community, there at that level, and it is properly executed at that level.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Should we provide more spaces for women at the provincial assembly and legislative level so that at least we introduce them at the provincial assembly and, if they do move up naturally afterwards, would that be an option?

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes, that can be an option. There are people in the community that think that they should be put on the same playing field with men also and that's the kind of argument we are also having.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, rather than lukluk long antap, yumi lukluk long tamblo pastaim long provincial assembly.

Mr LEVI MANO – Yes, yumi lusim long hap na bihain yumi go antap isi isi. When we give it a big bang, then there are conflicting arguments because of diverse cultures in Papua New Guinea and also against the foreign one that is coming into Papua New Guinea.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Mr Mano, just a stone's throw away from here is Bougainville; why are we talking too much. They have done it by law. They've created 3 reserved seats for women in Bougainville. You tell this Committee why can't we do that? What is stopping us? A region in our country has done it by law. Yumi toktok tumas, women are waiting. They can't win in elections. The provinces that I expect that there should be some women politicians on the Floor of Parliament are from East New Britain and Bougainville.

They are not there so we have to legislate and create women positions so that they compete. We need to look at options we cannot accept the status quo. Bougainville has done it, it's not far away. What's your view if you –

Mr LEVI MANO – Currently we are talking about legislative power of this provincial government underneath the reform that was done in 1995. Before 1995, you can create a legislation and I think this is the way forward; if that can be seen from another forums, we should be given the power to legislate for it and we want our women in this provincial government.

First of all, we are talking about something else that's why I'm reserving that but if we are given the power to do it, we can do it and we should do it here for our women folks to be in our own provincial government.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you for that contribution and you're quite right, perhaps that's a discussion that we can take up specifically and have a look at. I wear another hat as the Deputy Chairman of the Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment Committee and perhaps we've already made an undertaking to go to Morobe to listen to the women there and perhaps we might extend and look at coming to other provinces including East New Britain.

Before I excuse the panel, I'd like to ask Miss Sam who is the Assistant Election Manager for East New Britain; if there's anything you would like to add to the discussion. Please press the green button and bring the microphone down towards you.

Assistant Election Manager East New Britain

Ms THERESA SAM (Assistant Election Manager - ENB) – Thank you, Chair. I think most of the recommendations and everything has been said by my Election Manager and the Chairman. I have only one recommendation and that is to do with the roll.

If the government can fund the province to come up with a fresh new roll because we've been updating but we keep on facing the same issues with them. If the provincial administration can maintain the ward recorders books and give us the data of how many the population of the eligible voters and then Electoral Commission to supply Form 11 based on the request from the awards. That is one recommendation I wish to to make; for a fresh new roll.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you ma'am. Alright with that, I'm going to excuse you and thank those who gave their evidence today; the Election Manager from West New Britain and our team from East New Britain. Thank you all for your contributions to this subject that we are all interested in and are looking for solutions too.

I will now suspend for 10 minutes so those of you who want to stand up and can have a coffee or something and then we'll reconvene. In the meantime, we've got New Ireland to come up and, if we've got some community reps who are here, who want to speak to the committee, we will get a front setup. The hearings are now suspended for 10 minutes; we will reconvene at 15:40 PM. Thank you all very much.

Orait yumi ran sot long taim so I am going to be a little bit harsh and ask all of you to take your seats. If I can ask New Ireland Province to come forward. Could the participants come up to the front please?

We will now start off the afternoon session with the Election Manager for New Ireland Province, Ms Annette Bais, the Mayor for Rabaul Urban, Mr Manoai, and Mr Emmanuel Melchior from Callan Services based in East New Britain. We will start off with Ms Bais.

First of all, let me thank you for a very comprehensive report that you have provided for us and I want to also note for the record that this same report was given to me last year. In fact, New Ireland was the first province to provide a written report and I want to thank you for that. Let me allow you to state your name for the record and to give us a brief rundown on your report.

NEW IRELAND PROVINCE

Election Manager New Ireland Province

Ms ANNETTE BAIS (Election Manager - NIPS) – Thank you, Mr Chairman, firstly, thank you to the Committee for the opportunity given to us the provinces. I will briefly go through the elections in New Ireland.

The 2022 National Elections in New Ireland Province was conducted generally well with all the parties involved. New Ireland has two districts; Namatanai and Kavieng. For the election we had three seats contesting. We have 10 LLGs and 142 wards.

We greatly appreciate the support given to us by the PESC. It was not really active pre-election but leading towards the election, we had frequent meetings led by the former PA Mr Paot. As usual, all public servants always take lead in the elections come election time. However, I see that not all PESC's are the same throughout the country.

One of my concerns or recommendations as per my report, if the PSC should be revised individually or like different provinces they differ. We have new PAs appointed and then they take on the leaders being the PESC Chairman. So, if it will be revised, it should be revised individually per province and not to be seen or treated the same across the country. I should say we had a tough time with the PESC but we had good support from them in terms of their assistance with regards to basically supplying manpower.

They gave all their approval to release all their public servants in the province to concentrate on taking part in the elections and assist us in the province. However, we did not receive any funding assistance from provincial government or the provincial administration going to the roll updates activity.

In New Ireland, we had about three to four months doing the roll update activity. The issues that we faced was limited time, funding and limited enrolment forms like most of my colleagues from the other provinces. For the roll activities, we faced the same situation.

One other thing was the movement of voters within the province, within the LLG and the districts. That we cannot control, they can move freely but come enrolment time, its one of the areas that we had difficulties in enrolling them.

The other thing is the ignorance of voters. We had cases where when enrolment agents went out to enrol voters, there were people that were ignorant but come polling time, they were there to vote. And that happened, in the previous elections and it happened again this election.

So, I'm seeing the importance of being enrolled even though by law you have to enrol and voting is non-compulsory. People tend to have it the other way. They don't or ignore enrolment and then they turn up during polling time and then they can always say why my name is not there. So that's one of the other areas we also faced.

In addition, like for missing names and the other areas that my other colleagues had mentioned already. For New Ireland, we had two cases during enrolment time, we also had other groups claiming to be enrolment agents and also enrolling. Now we received reports from the enrolment agents in one of the wards claiming that they were confronted by another group also saying that they were enrolling and that caused confusion within the ward or the village level in that particular area. So, we raised that with the PESC and the report was given to the PESC as well so from that I'm not sure how they took it on board and we did not get feedback from that. That's what we realised as well.

Mr CHAIRMAN – How is it possible that you have two competing enrolment teams? How did that come about? Did you guys investigate it to try and find out?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – Like I said, we knew that we had agents from the PNG EC, which I knew that were on ground to do enrolment with the limited supply of Form 11. However, they were also confronted by one other group at the same place. So those are some concerns that I would like to raise for the committee to know.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay you can raise it with us but we still need to understand how is it possible that you have two different groups doing enrolment. Shouldn't that be managed either at your level or the Provincial Election Steering Committee? How did it happen? I mean

we have not heard this from other places and we are hearing about it in your report from New Island; okay it was an additional team sent in by someone else for some, I guess fraudulent purposes, or were both teams from your office and they just decided to go and fight over a small operating space; what was it?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – No, for us we didn't have two teams.

Mr CHAIRMAN – You had one team?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – We had one team.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So where did the other team come from?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – From that time, I wouldn't really know because we did receive a report after the enrollment and we managed to give the report to the committee.

Mr CHAIRMAN – And did you try to verify or even maybe perhaps arrest those people who were doing these sorts of things?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – We gave the report to the committee so that was where we needed the assistance of the Committee to step in and intervene, because we had limited time to complete our task.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Just out of curiosity; did the other team do any enrollments and did those enrollments find their way onto the Electoral roll or not?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – I don't think so, no.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, fair enough, proceed.

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – That was something that we faced. On the other hand, another issue that we faced was tribal fighting and ethnic clashes within ward areas or villages and the villages or voters in those particular area were no longer living in those places because they were scared for their lives and they had dispersed somewhere else.

So, when the agents were there to do enrollment, they were practically nobody at the ward and maybe at two or three houses surrounding that they could. So those are some of the things that we faced but that was not across New Ireland. We only indicated or marked those areas as one of the hot spot areas for the police to look into that during the rest of the election activities.

New Ireland has the ward recorders and the village record system in place and well established across the province. For the enrollment, we did not use the ward recorders to do ours but we saw that we could verify against their ward recording book or their data collection information to verify against the enrollment or the roll basis that we had to do enrollment with.

So that was where we requested to verify only against, because for the commission or for our enrollment activity we had the Form 11. In order to be in the roll, you had to go through a Form 11. I mean complete the Form 11 and then get into the roll. Even though we had limited supply of Form 11 like my other colleagues have said earlier on.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Ms Bais, who did you give the Form 11 to at the ward level to fill because the instruction was for the ward members to take charge.

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – The LLG managers were the ones assisting us in appointing key people in their wards, whom they know with respect to do awareness and all that. So, they knew the people within the ward area, so we gave the honors to the LLG managers to appoint two agents per ward to assist us. With the help of the ward recorders, we assumed they were equipped with the village record data and they could verify and assist us to do enrollment throughout.

Some of my recommendations for the roll update as we would suggest would be that we want more time to do a proper roll not to be 100 per cent but at least we have more time and we want to verify against the village record book.

Full funding and the funding to be given straight to the provinces all at once in one time rather than activity by activity, the supply of the full requested Form 11, enrollment forms; we want the full supply so we could have the opportunity to enroll almost everyone; verified against the village record book and also the police to be part of the enrollment team or the enrollment exercise update.

For enrollments, we have we only have elections after every five years while the remaining years we suggest the funding can be given so we can do ongoing updates, maybe

every six months and then come towards election we can already know how much work we need to do for updating purposes so it goes back to time and funding.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – In this election, you are reporting that you had three and a half months to update a common role throughout the province?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But, for New Ireland, you want to double that to amount of three months to six months? How much time would be sufficient? You said three and a half months is not enough.

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – No, with the enrollment phase or the process, I gather that one year should be okay because we will have field work where we have to send out and we'll have the roll display again. So, all in all one year should be okay also bearing in mind the geographical locations of wards and logistics arrangements as well.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So, in reality, what I'm trying to perceive here is that you and also other provinces are recommending that the ward recorder and the ward record book must be family institutionalized and that that's the way to go in the country.

So, there should be, as the acting PA from East New Britain was saying, that they've already got structures to go and update on a frequent basis that is the ward record book and the work of the ward recorder.

Then, when it comes to the election what your recommending is that for those 18-year-olds, and for those who have died, and come and go; that process must be at least 12 months before the so-called update of the common role?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – Yes, that should be sufficient enough.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And, so we use the ward recorder as the basis but then your data has to come from your process at least 12 months before and then you present an updated common roll but you need all those five recommendations of time, funding etcetera. Nomination?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – For nomination, we had three venues for the nominations; the Regional Seat was received at the provincial electoral office headquarter, the Kavieng open Seat was received at the provincial headquarters while the Namatanai seat was received at the Namatanai district headquarters.

We had 46 candidates and seven of them were female candidates, there was only one who contested for regional seat. Nomination went well without any major disruptions for New Ireland. With polling we had 95 teams; 45 teams in Kavieng and 54 in Namatanai.

We had a one-day polling for Kavieng urban and the other LLGs we had five to seven days polling across. One of the major issues that we also faced was the missing names in the roll and that has been alluded by all my colleagues. The reaction from the scrutineers and the candidate's voters during polling, we advised them generally, if your name is not on the roll you don't get to vote. Yes, they were quite upset but –

Mr CHAIRMAN – Can I intervene there? Obviously they would be upset. During that time, if I recall, I'm not sure if it was the Governor then or was it the provincial government that made a request to use the ward record books or the village record books to allow their people to vote. You recall that there was a call made, and I think the Electoral Commissioner refused to entertain that. What is your opinion on that? You've mentioned to some extent the use of the village record book in your report to us and obviously there's nobody from the provincial administration here that we could speak to so I want to ask your opinion on that.

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – Okay thank you Chair. With regard to the Village record book for enrollment purpose that would be a better tool for us to verify with but for polling I believe I am guided by law to use the Electoral roll and no other tool.

Mr CHAIRMAN – I understand that. My question was, given that they felt they had a more accurate record of the people in the province, they made that call. Obviously, the law is very clear, if you're not registered on the roll, you cannot vote, that we all understand.

Going forward, to fix future issues with the missing people on the electoral roll, obviously looking at your suggestions here, there's some good suggestions and from the other provinces as well. The teams that we've listened to including the two that were just here earlier on. They want to move towards this, the provincial governments taking over the update of the roll alright, which means that this particular document we're talking about which is the electoral roll, we've got to find a better way of updating it.

You've said yourself that many of the voters refuse to register and then when it came time for voting they couldn't vote because their names were not listed and so they were turned away, that was one of the reasons you gave early on in your testimony.

However, the argument by the provincial government is that the village record book is still a much more accurate record. Do you agree with that? Is it a much more accurate record of the people that live in those areas?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – I would say yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN – You would. So if we were to recommend, for instance that we find some way of making sure that the Electoral Roll matches the village record book to a large extent. Obviously, we're not going to get 100 per cent but let's just say it's better than now and if people turned up to vote and their names were on the roll, then the situation that you are just describing to us now, that would not occur right? If people were on the roll and they could vote, then you would not have too many disruptions during the polling or disagreements?

Tok yu tok em olsem, ol ikam na ol i painim olsem neim bilong ol ino stap long electoral roll so sampela disagrimen i kamap for obvious reasons, they were upset. If we were to find a way to make sure that dispela olgeta lain istap long electoral roll, do you think that in the future election, dispela kain ol arguments we ikamap lo las eleksen we neim bilong ol ino stap long electoral roll, do you think that would reduce the arguments and make the elections better?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – Yes, through the activity of enrollment, we can use the village record book to verify and in that way we can enroll most of our voters to be on the electoral roll so, we can use the village record books as our tool for verification with the ward recorders on the ground.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Fair enough continue.

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – Yes so with polling, that was one of the major issues that we faced but with the good behavior of our New Ireland citizens, they didn't cause any major disruptions during that period. Our logistics' was managed well; we made sure all polling teams had to return back on time as per our election polling scheduled time.

One of my other concerns would be the weather. During the time of elections, we had rainy seasons and strong winds especially for our Island LLGs and wards so it would go back

to my recommendations for full funding to be given so that we can be on standby for additional fuel or boats and also to communicate with the Island LLGs during polling especially because the weather during the polling time is quite rough at the sea. So, my recommendation would be timely funding and the review of the current DPM allowances rate.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Ms Bais, on the weather, we have the same problems in the Southern Region because the south-easterly winds that begins in May right through to June; very bad and I personally experienced it and the boat sunk in the sea twice because of bad weather. Why aren't you recommending the change of months of the national elections so that we have election during non-raining months, then having it during this rough period. You wouldn't be gaining enough to recommend to the committee a change of the timing of the National Elections, a weather-related change.

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – If that can be done than I also agree with the Committee on that and on the other hand if we can equip our emergency and disaster in each province to be on standby and be part of the elections team and they have to be more equip.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That will bring more expenses; I will support the change in time for the National Election, we don't have money you were complaining about money all the time and now you are asking for more money for emergency situation. Just recommend to change the month to a good weather month in the country so you don't have to worry about emergency responses. You got a committee member that is strongly supporting the change of time for the national election so make a recommendation and I will push it in Parliament.

Mr CHAIRMAN – You may continue, that was meant to be a light moment.

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – Thank you Chair, we had two counting venues for all the three seats; the provincial seat and the Kavieng open seat we were fortunate to be given the National Fisheries College in Kavieng which quickly assisted us in lending us the venue for free following the good relationship with our stakeholders in the province and they hosted the provincial seat as well as the Kavieng open seat but we had to built a temporary venue shelter for the Kavieng separately from the provincial seat.

For Namatanai, they had it at the Catholic Mission Hall so it was okay. Why we decided to have the counting at the National Fisheries College Hall was that the limited manpower as security and because the college was safer with security fence.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Ms Bais, given the key concern for us, was there any disagreements from the candidates and scrutineers about your location or your choice of location for counting?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS –No.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay fair enough, then you can skip that and continue. Perhaps you know since you've given us a comprehensive report; aside from the challenges you've already noted, are there any other significant challenges that you would have recommendations for the committee in terms of major issues encountered in New Island apart from weather and the Electoral roll.

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – One other recommendation that I would really stress on like my other colleagues is funding and time. If we are given the full funding on time, I'm sure from the experience that we had through the elections that we've done, we would deliver on time and manage what we have and then have a report and audit back to our responsible organizations and to whoever partner that assist us in funding, we can always report back to them with how we spend the money.

On that note, the full Treasury expense report has already been given along with the writs at the same time to my headquarters already and copies can be made available through my headquarters.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – How much outstanding do you have and for what?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – We have around K1 million outstanding. The counting process that we did across for this election required a lot of counting officials and to cater for them and the logistics to count within the time frame and return is costly.

Also, with the the distance of the province, like logistically it's quite expensive for our province which is far from many major suppliers that are in most other provinces in land. So, counting expenses, all allowance, has been paid. For those that have queries with their accounts

have been paid for; we only have the expenses for counting because we had to recruit a lot of people to complete the counting on time.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Why did Namatanai take twice the length to count compared to Kavieng and Regional seat on your report? What happened in Namatanai and you went for another five days extra?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – They had scrutineer disruptions.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What were key issues raised by the scrutineers?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – They wanted to know about the counting process and they also come with a lot of issues maybe to purposely disrupt the counting or delay accounting.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Could you describe that; so they were deliberately disrupting counting?

Ms ANNETTE BIAS – Yes. I mentioned that the counting process was slightly more detailed than the previous counting strategies which we took, which was what they wanted to know like what step was next and until we get to the declaration.

Mr CHAIRMAN – And therefore they disrupted the counting, you did not experience that in the other two counts, no?

Ms ANNETTE BAIS – We did have scrutineer training and awareness. One day each in both districts; one day in Kavieng and one day in Namatanai. We didn't have time to explain to them the counting process so they could have a fair idea of the counting process but with the roles and responsibilities yes, we did.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Was the disruption more related with specific candidates or general, like just scrutineers?

Ms ANETTE BAIS – It was general.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, thank you, Ms Bais for a very comprehensive report. Mr Manoai, would you like to present a report to the committee in terms of your own experiences of the 2022 elections? You have the floor, sir.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Mayor Rabaul Urban LLG East New Britain

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI (Mayor - Rabaul Urban LLG) – Thank you, long taim bilong you Hon Allan Bird. Firstly, mi laik komendim Marape-Rosso gavaman to come up with this committee because our National and LLG Elections come after every five years. We have had a lot of issues and problems so mi laik tenkim Hon Prime Minister long kamap wantaim dispela committee we you are chairing today.

Yumi save gat elections long olgeta 5 yias na problems save stap. Funding is one of the factor and common roll is another factor. What mi ken lukluk nau long helpim yupela committee is, yumi mas disentrolaisim dispela common roll ikam long province and make it a provincial government's business. Because when it is here at the province, we are going to work closely with the ward recorder up to the LLGs, provincial headquarters and the provincial election steering committee.

At the moment, in the last few elections in 2017 and 2022, we had a lot of problems in common roll issues. Neims bilong ol man na meri husait ibin dai pinis stap yet lo common roll, na neims bilong ol man na meri husait i stap laif yet, neims bilong ol ino stap long common roll.

In 2022, ibin igat problem long ol wods bikos taim ol i givim mipela awenes na updeitim common roll, dispela Form 11 ino bin inap. They kept it at the headquarters here. Ol i bin tok sapos mipela givim yupela planti foms nogut yupela infleitim common roll. Na mipela ol kaunsolas long wods panim hat. Why is that because sampela pikinini we ol i stap taim ol ikam lo 2022, ol i 18 yias na ova. Long 2017 na kam antap, em ol pikinini kamap bikpela pinis. So, mipela salim neim bilong olgeta igo but when it reaches the headquarters lo Port Moresby na kam bek, their names were not there. At the end of the day, taim voting laik kamap, their names were not there. They were turned away.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Yu tok olsem ol lain long Electoral Commission ol i saspek olsem yupela ol wod membas bai infleitim electoral roll. Long espiyens bilong yu, wanem samtin tru bai givim ol lain long electoral commission dispela tintin olsem yupela ol wod membas cannot be trusted na yupela laik infleitim electoral roll?

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – Long mi, mi no andasten bikos the people at the ward, the ward recorders, taim ol mekim dispela apdet, ibin igat tupela man. Wanpela man wod rekoda na wanpla oli kolim ol, I can't remember the other name for it but igat tupla isa kam na oli wok wantem.

So they double check each other. So bai ol save kam lo morning na planti taim olsem ol man iwok so mipla ikisim sampla ol disla istap lo haus na wetim avinun gen bai mipla kam.

Some of those times whether they come back or nogat, I don't know but taim ol salim fom ya igo, antap ol tok mipla igat planti mipla ino enrollim yet. Inap bai form ikam daun, ol tok nogat, wanem ol forms mipla igivim lo yupla em. So planti mipla mekim ol list tasol, for the sake of ol man ikam na tokim mipla hei, mi bai tanim 18 lo 2022 February 22 or kain olsem eksampol. So mekim gen list igo antap, na em liklik ap tok yah, nogut yupla infleitim common roll.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Mi laik askim yu narapla question gen; yu stap wod memba hamas yia nau?

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – Mi kam in lo 1995, taim Organic Law isenis.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So yu stap lo disla wok longpla taim.

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – Yes, longpla taim.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Lo ekspiriens blo yu long 1995 ikam nau, yu bin lukim olsem wanem taim yu stap lo Rabaul Urban LLG?

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Yu bin lukim sampla lain ibin traim lo infleitim roll lo Rabaul Urban LLG or nogat?

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – Nogat.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Na yet ol i stil saspect olsem yupla bai infleitim roll?

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – Em wantem. Mi tok yah ino mipla tasol long Rabaul Urban; em olgeta wod here lo East New Britain.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Em olsem mi andasten bat mi askim lo eria blo yu bikos u wan stap lo hia sapos ol narapla LLG istap lo hia em ating sem kwesten bai mipla askim ol. So, i gat bikpla level of suspicion namel long ol lain lo electoral office na yupla ol wod membasa, ol lain blong kolektim data

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – Wai mi tok olsem em ol wod rekodas ya displa taim ol no save kisim pei. Na ol wod rekodas oli kam insait taim kaunsola iwin; kaunsola isa makim wod rekoda blo em yet. I gat sampla kain dispela tu em bai stap bikos em bai putim ol lain we bai votim em. Bihain bai mi kam lo rekomendesin. So it could be why or not, tasol lo mi tasol mi ting osem emi no turu. Bikos wod blo mi i gat 600 people na sapos edisinol i kam em mi save, so that's wai na mi tok narapla 18 bai go lo common roll, wai bai mi infleitim gen. So disla emi bin kamap lo las yia. Planti blo wod blo mipla ino bin vot, like I had 500 people in my ward and only 161 voted.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – In Rabaul Urban LLG you have 500 eligible voters, and how many enrolled?

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – There were 600 enrolled, eligible voters were about 500 because some may have died.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And then how many came and voted?

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – 161.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Oh that's a small number. Why out 600, only 100 came and voted?

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – Sampla ol ino bin stap lo taim blo vote. Laik they are working outside na ol igo aut.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Was it a one-day voting?

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – One-day voting.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Because of one day, if there was two days they would have come and voted.

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – I would recommend that imas gat tripla dei blo vot, bikos planti bilong ol wok na sampela taim kampani nonap larim ol ikam vot, oli sa pinis wok lo faiv kilok. Taim oli laik kam lo hia lo vot em voting ipas. Olsem na planti blong ol ino vot. Even they turned up with koros like ol bai tok neim blo ol stap, ol gat rait lo koros but oli tokim ol taim pinis. Wan dei inonap, at least two days, three days so pipol imas castim vot. If they want to choose their leader, oli mas kam daun na kastim vot.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Em orait, kontiniu.

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – Mi kompe wantaim Sir Puka Temu lo ol meri long wai ol no go long Palamen.

Long mipela long LLG, planti meri bin winim ileksen. Long LLG bilong mi, wanpela o tupela save sanap long olgeta ileksen. Long yumi long provins, long 2017 wanpela meri ibin ron long regional seat na em bin kam namba seven. That is a very good record for a woman out of the many who contested.

Ol meri no save long giaman na ol inogat samting long go na kempen and they want to become a MP. Yupela ol pati lain tu save giaman tumas na save putim moni go long ol man tasol. Yupela save tok ol meri bilong haus. Mipela mas senisim lukluk bilong mipela long dispela. We need more women in Parliament. Mi hamams na laikim dispela long kamap.

Plantu ol meri ibin sanap pinis long ileksen long Rabaul na Kokopo, Pomio tasol inogat wanpla win yet. Long ritsinol sit isave gat wanwan tu save sanap long ileksen. The government should be serious and look at it if we want long putim ol long dispela fopla hap ya. Imas gat sampela we long lukluk long em.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Mayor Manoai, you raised your voice when you talked about the parties. Yu tok yupela pati ya na mi harim dispela nek kilia olgeta. Mi bilip olsem long kantri bilong mitupla, Pati as a political institution, em impoten. In the discussion of

women, would you suggest that by law, pati taim ol i sapotim kendidet, hap mas man na hap mas meri. Wanem tingting bilong yu long dispela sapos yumi wokim lo?

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – Mi wanbel stret.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Come with me to the Floor of Parliament and we make the change because pati emi impoten. In my personal view, institutions of State are very important. Mipela igat planti pati tumas. We can focus on party regulations etc. Maybe in this argument, we really need to look at how parties can promote women participation in the candidacy level. How they go and campaign em pasin istap.

But maybe that is one area during this discussion we could look at. Parties must look at having a certain percentage, I said 50 per cent but maybe a nominated percentage by law. I have my own party called Our Development Party and so, if I nominate 20, the law must say ten must be women and ten must be men. Maybe that could be one answer amongst many answers.

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – Yu toktok long pati ya, mi lukim olsem igat planti pati tumas. Ol pati igat wanpela o tupela man tasol and they don't even win a seat in Parliament. Ol save lus na wanpela tasol bai go. Em taim bilong rausim dispela kain ol pati. Senisim lo na putim olsem ol pati mas gat 15pla memba na mo sapos nogat rausim ol.

Yupela go long Palamen na apim han long sensim lo tasol pati bilong yu igat tupela memba tasol. Mipela ol lain long tamblo lukim olsem em ino stret.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – We will make a law that when a party brings less than three members of Parliament, that party automatically deregistered. We should have those type of thinking so in that way twenty years from now, we will have three or four major parties in this country, because too many parties are one of the problems in our country and so the discussion on this interview has to be party, party must come into the equation.

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – Chairman, ward recorder, disla buk ya. Gavaman I kamapim long ol wod long raitim nem bilong ol man ya orait mi laik givim wanpela luksave bilong mi igot olsem, disla wod rekoda, yumi mas putim olsem wanpla public servant. So, they stay there and na ol ba save aplai long em na stap lo disla. Na igat man lo disla tasol ba stap. Planti ol wod rekoda ya nogat turu ya but em boi blong kaunsola ya em putim long em. So

putim igo posisin nau lo mipla lo East New Britain, disla WDC mipla gat nine SRA istap long disla WDC.

Na taim yu putim olsem gavaman lo wod na hau ba iwok taim yu no wok lo lukautim ol wokman. So, wod rekoda imas stap long fotnait o istap long mun but at least ol mas kisim liklik bikos taim yu peim; em no wokim gutpla wok na mi ken tokim yu long experience, wod rekoda wanem blo mi, mi no karem kam. Yu bai baim rekoda ba mi karim kam bikos wod rekoda bai tok mi wokim wok na yu no baim mi yet. So turangu mi kaunsola mi yet mi wok long tait long kisim buk long em bat het ofis i laikim. These are things that sampla taim ba yu wok lo inkludim ol lo disla kain delays na common roll no stret bikos they just do things sapos ol i stap lo peirol, then ol wokman blo gavman and they don't do the job, we kick them out.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Ok sir, your point is taken. Yu gat sampla moa recommendations sapos nogat mi laik muv igo long poro blo yu lo hapsait.

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – Wanpla recommendation long funding ya, mi laikim funding blo dispela ileksen i mas kam stret long province na sapos i nonap mipla i ken halivim. Why mi tok olsem bikos taim senis i laik kamap, ol save askim mipla DDA Board long halivim pastaem. Na taim lo moni ikam long Electoral Commission ba kam daun, i save kam on the eve of the nomination o taim ol go lo kempein moni i pundaun. Em nogat bat mipla save tasol taim olsem ol boss blo mipla lo province i tok putim moni, bai mipla putim bikos em ol mipla elektim memba ya moni mas go na wok i stat.

Mr CHAIRMAN – That's a fair enough recommendation. Mi ting em planti ol provins tu ol i wokim wankain rekomendesin so em samting we yu edim antap na we will take that onboard.

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – Ok last long em; yumi wok long toktok long Neisinol Eleksin, mi no wok lo harim disla Lokol Level Gavaman ileksin liklik bikos i gat sampla isiu tu mi toromoi tasol na –

Mr CHAIRMAN – No, let me put it this way. Taim mipla i stretim process bilong National Election, em bai dil wantaim Local Level Government Election wantaim. So its not that we are going to use two different systems, em ba sem sistem lo dil wantaim but at the moment because em yu tingim, mipla nau tasol kam insait long Palamen na I think this is the

first committee working very hard because we recognise the importance of democratically sanctioned elections so mipla i laik fiksim hariap.

So that's why we are moving a little bit quickly on this one with the support of the Prime Minister so wanem recommendation yu mekim em bai affectim local level government tu because its elections in general and they're all conducted by the Electoral Commission. Em orait ah?

Mr CHANGOL MANOAI – Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you, sir. Mi kisim last participant blo mipla, Mr Emmanuel Melchior, Callan Services. Sir, you have the floor.

Callan Services for People With Disabilities for East New Britain

Mr EMMANUEL MELCHIOR – Thank you very much. Firstly, on behalf of the people with disabilities in the province, thank you for this opportunity given to present a brief on the PLWDS especially with election in the province, that is the 2022 General Election.

I will just give a brief on what I've seen and what I've heard especially with the organisation.

Callen Services is an organisation that looks after people with disabilities and also for general disabilities promoting inclusive education.

Just a few comparisons to 2012, well this is my 15th year with the organization; three years as the Program Coordinator for the province. In 2012 we were involved in the election and we were used as a driving force behind the four people with disabilities especially in awareness, data collection, assisting with transporting people from the homes to polling booth and also assisting them in the polling areas that was in 2012.

Comparing the 2012 to 2022, there was nothing like what I've mentioned that took place. Our involvement as a service provider to the people with disabilities, while we were not involved in the awareness, if there was awareness taking place.

Maybe our recommendation would be that the province to involve more of our staff representative from the organization, especially NGOs dealing with disabilities to be part of the team conducting awareness. Because in the communities there are deaf people with disabilities who cannot hear and we are the only organization that deals with sign language and for some of them who have been through our programs with sign language, we can use the sign language and bring the awareness to them rather than just talking plainly.

Most people with special hearing problems would not understand the message of this, so we would be happy if we will be included in our awareness team. For 2022, we have not been included in any of the awareness in the province.

Also, on that note, the polling booth is hearing from officers and other stakeholders. Polling booth can be made accessible especially when there is a blind person going into the polling booth and somebody is there to assist and whatever choice he or she wants and I mean you cannot see the person writing down so maybe the polling should consider one of our recommendations on the use of the brail.

Also in polling places, polling teams should have people with special skills of dealing with disabilities at least to be there to assist them in casting their votes. I would also like to mention a couple of the NGOs that we have, the Callan Services, and the Organizations for Persons with Disabilities (OPD). We need to be represented maybe in the provincial election steering committee; to be there at least for decision. This group of people should have a voice in the committee.

Also, that we have people which are wheelchair users in the polling booth to cast their votes. Currently speaking, I don't have data of how many people with disability casted their votes during this election because we are not partnering with these ward recorders, and its a major problem to have this data in place.

We have our own data but it's mainly children with disabilities but for adults with disabilities, that is the main area which maybe the provincial government can assist in working closely with us and engage us in some of the activities so we have some data in place. So when election comes, we know exactly how many people come whichever wards with disabilities so assistance can be provided.

In 2012 one of the NGOs assisted us in providing a vehicle which we used to run around and pick up people with disabilities and bring them to the polling area. However, compared to 2022, there was nothing like that. I think that's briefly what I can report for people with disabilities in this province.

Hon ELIAS KAPAVORE – Emmanuel, that's a very important point to have inclusive population to participate in voting; the disability, gender equity and social inclusion for everybody. Its important to know how many of our population actually live with disability in our respective wards.

So, a couple of points yu mekim tudei, there were the development committees we yupela mas wok wantaim, na yupela save long hamas ol komuniti bilong yumi igat ol disebol man meri istap.

So, I think generally, Chairman I would like to say that the recommendations made by Emmanuel is very important when you take that on board and include some of those very important recommendations so we have an inclusive population that take part during the polling.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you Emmanuel; we highly commend the work that Callan Services is doing particularly with our people living with disabilities and thank you for coming in to represent this people. I am just going to ask one or two questions.

At the East New Britain Provincial Assembly, have you got a representative or nominated person at the provincial assembly?

Mr EMMAUNEL MELCHIOR – I think to have it at the provincial assembly, I think that is represented through the Community Development Division but just recently a desk has been created at the community development.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – I am asking about the provincial assembly.

Mr EMMAUNEL MELCHIOR – No we don't.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Nobody has been nominated to be a member of the provincial assembly.

Mr EMMAUNEL MELCHIOR – No and that would be a recommendation too.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – I would suggest that we look at us pushing for governors to recommend nominating persons living with disabilities as provincial assembly members too.

Mr Emmanuel, are you aware that the Constitution provides for nominated patients to be on the floor of the National Parliament?

Mr EMMAUNEL MELCHIOR – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You are aware of it, your views on how long are you going to wait for our government to invoke that provision; when are we going to allow a disabled person to be a member of the National Parliament through that constitutional provision so we have a voice on the National Parliament?

Should we recommend to the committee that this Parliament or next Parliament must have a nominated person with disabilities on the floor of Parliament to air the voice of the PWDs in the country?

Mr EMMAUNEL MELCHIOR – Thank you, Deputy Chairman, I think that would be a recommendation I would support. I think it is about time we have somebody, especially a person with disability standing for the rights of all PWDs throughout the country for an election.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Put it down as one of your recommendations and submit it.

Mr EMMAUNEL MELCHIOR – Thank you.

Closing Remarks

Mr CHAIRMAN – Well it has been a productive day and I don't have any more questions. I'm pretty happy with the recommendations that we've received today and the contributions from the different groups.

On behalf of the Committee, I'd like to thank East New Britain and West New Britain, New Ireland teams and our two community participants. Thank you for your contributions to the committee.

Tomorrow morning, we will convene at 10 o'clock. We have Manus Provincial Election Steering Committee and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville Steering Committee who will be participating in the morning session.

For the afternoon session, we are supposed to have the women, churches and youth representatives around East New Britain; or if there are others from within the region who might be in East New Britain for this purpose, you are welcome to turn up.

If you are watching our program live or if you are in the room and you'll be participating tomorrow, please see the Secretariat so that we can have your proper name and title organized for tomorrow.

With that, let me once again thank all the participants and the wonderful people of East New Britain for their hospitality. On behalf of the committee, I now suspend the Hearings until tomorrow morning 10.00 a.m., thank you all very much.

.....//Ends.....

DAY TWO

12th May 2023

Transcript

Time: 10am

Venue: Gazelle International Hotel

In Attendance

Committee Members

Honourable Allan Bird – Chairman

Sir Puka Temu – Deputy Chairman

Honourable Elias Kapavore

Witnesses

Mr Justin Pantumari (Election Manager-AROB)

Mr Oka Nungu (Acting Provincial Administrator-Manus)

Mr Poyap Ponau (Deputy Chairman -Provincial Election Steering Committee-Manus)

Ms Terry Yohang (Returning Officer-Manus)

Ms Beverly Aquila (Women’s Rep-Provincial Assembly-East New Britain)

Ms Laniette Aua (Regional Candidate-ENB)

Ms Kathleen Midal Kunai (Candidate-Gazelle)

Ms Margaret Sova (Regional Candidate-ENB)

Ms. Theonila Wat (Gazelle Open candidate)

Ms Rosemary Sovek - Regional Candidate - ENB

Ms Anazin Zao (Vunairoto Ward Member)

Mr Arthur Luluai (Private Citizen -ENB)

Mr Tiolam Wawaga (LLG President-Raluana)

Mr Boniface Gerep (Deputy Governor-ENB)

Opening Remarks

Mr CHAIRMAN – In this organised session, we have the Autonomous Region of Bougainville and Manus Province. Let me remind the participants that this is a properly constituted parliamentary hearing which means you're protected by the privileges of Parliament, so please feel free.

We are not a court of justice so we won't be able to decide in anyone's favor if someone is wrong, there are proper avenues for that. We are a Parliamentary Committee, we work on behalf of the Parliament and the people of Papua New Guinea. Our job is to understand what has gone wrong in the last election and previous ones and to figure out how we can fix the processes going forward so we can preserve our democracy, so that all our people can participate meaningfully in future elections.

With that I understand you've all been observing the format so I will waste no further the time, we'll start with AROB perhaps because you're there's only one of you and then we will come to Manus afterwards and perhaps spend a bit of time there, Mr Justin Pantumari, you are the Election Manager for AROB, all right please provide us your report if you can press the green button and pull the microphone towards you, Sir.

AUTONOMOUS REGION OF BOUGAINVILLE (AROB)

Election Manager-AROB

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI (Election Manager-AROB) – As the Provincial Returning Officer for the 2022 National General Elections in AROB, it is my pleasure to be part of this very special meeting which is the Special Parliamentary Committee on the General Elections hosted by the National Government. I would like to acknowledge the Chairman, Honorable Allan Bird and his team members.

I will be giving an overview of the 2022 National General Elections conducted in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville with challenges faced and recommendations, as for some of the stakeholders are within the vicinity of this meeting arena they need to know the functions of the Electoral commission and the mission and the vision.

It is the prime function of Electoral Commission to organise and conduct all elections for the Parliament and the Legislative Arms of the Local Level Governments. Our vision is to be a vibrant leading and credible Electoral Commission that has the ability to innovate and change the better delivery of a transparent free, fair, safe and inclusive elections.

Our mission is to plan and conduct free, fair, transparent and democratic elections by providing quality electoral services in accordance with the relevant laws and by providing

greater voter education to enhance public and stakeholder participation and confidence in the electoral process.

Overview of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville Provincial Level Government context: AROB consist of three open electorates; South Bougainville; Central Bougainville, North Bougainville; and the Regional seat. AROB consist of 13 LLGs and 442 wards, with a population of approximately 400,000.

Security operations during the election, we didn't experience much election violence and the entire election operations was quite minimum normalcy.

The 2022 National Election service providers outstanding for polling vehicles and boats for the three electorates stands at K1.3 million which is yet to be paid. Other payments for the service providers for AROB for the 2022 National General Elections were paid last year December 2022.

The Provincial Election Administration Planning Budget 2022, the National Election budget request was K8.7 million but only K1 million was allocated to PNGEC Buka to conduct the General Election, no assistance or funding from the Election Steering Committee during the elections.

Issues encountered, Bougainville land geography settings are huge compared to other NGI Province with the budget cut it was a big challenge to coordinate the 128 polling teams during the polling with logistics and other administration. But we managed to coordinate the multiple days of polling.

Electoral roll, PNGEC has an MOU with the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner (OBEC), Mr George Manu, and we use its base roll to do the update enrollment. Data entry was done in the provincial level and updated roll sent to HQ approved by the Electoral Commissioner, Mr Simon Sinai as a certified roll to be used during polling. The totally eligible voters for the region stands at 216,000 on the electoral roll

Elections Operations, nomination process. The 2022 National Elections nomination day in AROB was peacefully conducted and candidates and supporters maintained peace in the three electorates.

Issues encountered; all gazetted returning officers or assistant returning officers must be released by the Electoral Commissioner before the issue of writs for planning and administrative purposes within the province.

A total of 55 candidates in AROB contested the 2022 National Elections. Out of the 55 candidates, four were female nominated candidates.

Issues encountered; candidates endorsed by political parties need to provide all necessary documents in a timely manner for the provincial returning officer to accept his/her nomination. For example; endorsement letter from the party leader, secretary of the political party.

During the campaign period, candidates and supports performed very well in maintaining an orderly manner and conduct during campaigning. Candidate campaign posters were respected by other candidates by no vandalism and promoting respect in the region.

Polling period, AROB had multiple polling days during the 2022 Elections with a total of five polling days. Polling went well despite the usual issue of names not being on the roll.

Counting period for the three Open electorates and the regional seat was well managed. The writs were returned on the 28th of July for the two electorates and the regional seat except for North Bougainville Open, due to the passing of Late William Nakin. The North Bougainville Open will go for a by-election as soon as the National Government releases funding.

Issues encountered; issues from scrutineers and candidate were well managed by returning officers and electoral process was understood well up till the declarations were made.

Recommendations for PNG Electoral Commission into the future; based on the challenges and issues, some of the recommendations are listed below.

(1) Funding for the electoral roll must be seen as an ongoing activity until the issue of writs.

(2) PNGEC must adopt the old ward village recorder system by allowing ward members or the committee to update daily and PNGEC will have to retrieve the data to merge with the base roll for the districts, LLGs and wards. This will assist to minimise duplication of names and other issues on the roll.

(3) Funding for the general elections must be given in a timely manner before the issue of writs in order to manage well the election cycle, as well as to the service providers who are to be engaged to provide services to the PNGEC in the provinces. Funding must be released to the province.

(4) Appointment and gazettal of returning officers and assistant returning officers must be released by the Electoral Commissioner before the issue of writs for planning and administrative purposes in the province.

(5) Budget must be given according to the requested budget submission and must be sent to the provincial treasury office and managed at the provincial level by the election manager and be overseen by the provincial electoral steering committee for acquittal purposes. This will help to manage the elections without any outstanding that might arise.

(6) Electoral roll assessment must be seen as the main objective of the PNG Electoral Commission and must be funded by the Government and must be seen as an ongoing activity for the next four years until the issue of writs for another general election.

(7) Enrolment by law is compulsory.

(8) Voting is not compulsory, therefore, I suggest if the Organic Law can be amended so that all voters must vote at the ward, LLG and district levels. I suggest that there be a penalty fee of K20 for the voter whose name is on the electoral roll but did not take part in the voting. On the other hand, the voter process justifies the voter turnout.

Conclusion; on behalf of my Bougainville Regional Election Steering Committee, especially my Chairman, Chief Secretary to the ABG Government Mr Shadrach Imata and Deputy Chairman, and OBEC Commissioner Mr George Manu, I am happy to present to this committee the issues encountered during the elections and the recommendations that can be approved by the National Government to assist and fund the PNG Electoral Commission to better manage its election cycle going into the future.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you Mr Pantumari, during the course of the elections did you or your returning officers encounter any incidence of disaffection from the candidates, their scrutineers or supporters in Bougainville?

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – In Autonomous Region of Bougainville the election fever there is not the same as other provinces because we have two electoral commissions; the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission which I am managing it and the Office of the Bougainville Electoral commissioner.

They, normally have their by-elections for the constituencies so elections is an ongoing activity there. The scrutineers and people there understood well the process so inogat ol dispela issues ikamap long election time.

Mr CHAIRMAN– Okay, since you are being streamed live, I think it's an important thing that all Papua New Guineans need to learn from Bougainville given the crisis that we had for two decades. Of course, we know there are still perhaps weapons on the island and there may still be disaffected the people there.

How is it with all of that and with that history of serious violence in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville that your people are able to conduct such a peaceful election compared

to other parts of the country which perhaps none of us have had the experience that Bougainville has had?

What would you say to us in terms of learning and doing better so that the other Papua New Guineans that are watching can listen and hear.

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – Thank you, Chairman. The Autonomous Region of Bougainville is a bit challenging. It is a very challenging region to work and to manage elections, but my office and George Manu’s office have an MOU in place and we normally assist each other in working and conducting elections so the main thing is communication. We communicate with the service providers and we talk to them well and they understood and whatever election activities that arises, they respect the process.

MrCHAIRMAN – Thank you, I have no questions.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you, Mr Pautumari for coming and represent the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

All presenters from the rest of the country have said that the common roll was not prepared on time, funds were not provided and many people were missed out on voting. That was the chief complaint. For Bougainville with regard to the common roll, what impact did the preparation of your common roll for the referendum have on the elections because I was a Minister for Bougainville Affairs during that time and the appointment of a separate organ to support the OBEC was something that I have valued and therefore complimenting that local electoral commission on the ground.

It was good to hear that you had an agreement with the Office of the Electoral Commission of Bougainville. But, I think the question is the timeliness and the proper planning of preparing the common roll throughout the country. So, I want to hear your comment on when you were updating the common roll and you had an agreement with the office of Bougainville Electoral Commission. Were you well prepared in terms of the common roll?

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – Yes, in regards to the planning and the timeframe or the timeline of the enrolment update and data entry which is the main agenda for the Electoral Commission of Papua New Guinea. I have seen that as for me, I will not meet the target and also by looking at the report the reports on the 2017 National Elections, I wasn't there during 2017 National Elections but through the reports I've read, they used the roll for PNGEC

So I requested through my boss the Electoral Commissioner if he could give me an approval so I can ask Mr George Manu, Electoral Commissioner OBEC so we can use their base roll to update it. So that's what we did, because they have the base roll there.

The Autonomous Region of Bougainville Electoral Roll through the Office of the Bougainville Commissioner OBEC, I can say that its 80 per cent accurate. Because they normally have the Constituency by-elections there. So I asked them and we just used that base roll and we did the update.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So the lesson is basically a continuous work on upgrading the Common Roll not just one month, two months before the National Elections that's a lesson that the country must learn. Provincial Governments must take responsibility; Electoral Commission must partner, that's a lesson that Bougainville is showing now.

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – That's correct. That's why on one of my recommendations I mentioned that the Electoral Roll must be an ongoing activity. It must be updated until the issue of writs. For example, before the issue of writs, let's say two or three months prior to the issue of writs. Then we should have the cleansing and the roll display. Yumi go displayim lo ward na yumi checkim na ol pipol ikam checkim neim blong ol. And then the returning officer that is appointed to do the common roll update can do the alteration and then from there igo bek ken na do the final data entry and that roll must be certified by the Electoral Commissioner of Papua New Guinea to be printed and used during polling.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – On your request of K8.7 million, you told us that you were only given K1 million but you said that you actually managed. How did you do that?

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – Oh well, it was a very big challenge

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What was the reason for Electoral Commission saying sorry we can't give you your request but we only can give you one twelfth of your request which is K1 million

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – On my report I've stated that in NGI in the four provinces of NGI, Autonomous Region of Bougainville with the number of wards and the geographical

setting its bigger than the other four provinces. So by looking at the budget, AROB must be seen as a bigger province so it must be given a timely budget.

So you can see I had 120 polling teams and to manage the teams. We had to capture everything on the budget but when they gave, that why you can see I have a K1.2 million outstanding to pay.

These are for polling vehicles only and you know the Autonomous Region of Bougainville is a maritime province too so we have atolls there and Carteret's and these are some of the challenges that are faced but we managed.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Did you go to the ABG to ask for their support as well like other Electoral managers through their Provincial Election Steering Committee they managed to request their provincial government?

Mr. JUSTIN PANTUMARI – Yes, I did because I have my election steering and my Chairman is the Chief Secretary of the ABG government. I did request but funding was not enough to assist us.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN –So you just had to do with what you had.

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – That is correct

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Does that include your security forces. Were they supported out of that or they had their own funding?

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – No, security forces were under Mr Tokura, he's my member of the Election Steering Committee. They did their own budget upon my advice and send it through their HQ. They were funded through their HQ.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – They were okay?

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI –Yes they were okay.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Security issues, you did say that things were done peacefully. Tell us why in Bougainville as the Chairman was saying despite many many issues

that we know of, why is it that your security not a concern so far as you have reported and what can other provinces learn from Bougainville?

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – One of the planning tool that we used was through awareness. We went on to the NBC local radio station ‘San Kamap’ and we did awareness there. We also engaged other stakeholders to do awareness as well. I have also advised my three returning offices for North, South and Central Bougainville to do some little bit of awareness for the people to take ownership of the election.

So these are some of the strategies that we used, overall, there is no report for hijacking of ballot boxes or other illegal activities or behaviour during the elections. They understood the process because of the continuous cycle of elections and by-elections. For the National Elections, they have it after five years.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What was the voter turnout percentage of registered voters? During the referendum, there was close to 80 per cent turnout compared to the 2022 National Elections?

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – For the 2022 National Elections, we use the updated base roll for ABG which stands at 216,000.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – How many voted?

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – Between 76 per cent to 80 per cent.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So that is very good. Yesterday East New Britain said they only had 57 to 60 per cent that turned up to vote. The people are willing to turn up and vote. In one of your recommendations I read, you recommend that we should penalize those who enroll and never turn up to vote with a fine of K20. Can you elaborate on that to the country?

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – In terms of enrolment, by law it is compulsory and by voting, sampela igat nem long rol na taim bilong vot na yumi toksave igo, sampela ol bisi lo wok gaden na pulim pis so ol ino save kam na vot. Na taim gavman i fom nau ol bai kam toktok lo sevis ino go kamap long ol.

We need to come up with some penalty for these people.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But they will complain and say that because of the one-day voting, they were not given enough time to vote.

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – Because of that, I recommend multiple days of voting, maybe five days.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – My last question to you is, you had 55 candidates and out of that you had four women candidates but none of them won. I asked the same question yesterday to East New Britain. Yours is a matrilineal society –

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – That is correct.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So why na yupela ol lain long Bougainville no save luksave long ol meri na votim ol? Why?

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – Like what I always say, I do my part and you do your part. I cannot justify more on that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Would you offer any solutions on how we can help women to beat men in the election process? We have created the election system that disadvantages our mothers, daughters and sisters. Should we change? What's your view?

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – We need to respect our women folks in the country. Mothers are the backbone of this country so my thoughts only, if the government can see to this and maybe create four seats in the Parliament.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Well you've done it in Bougainville.

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – Why not? Why not our national government create four seats and that's it. It must be budgeted for and let the woman folk contest the election and they can enter the Parliament.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you.

Mr ELIAS KAPAVORE – Mr Pantumari, you said something about penalizing people who don't vote with K20, and there are some instances where people who deliberately do not want to get themselves registered on the common roll but to turn up on the polling day then start complaining about them not enrolled and that they want to vote, do you think a similar kind of penalty should be imposed? What do you think we should do in such situations where they deliberately do not want their names to be registered but when polling time comes around they force themselves to go?

This is how some of the people cause a lot of unnecessary delays when it comes to counting and all of those things.

Mr JUSTIN PANTUMARI – Thank you Sir, that was one of the common issue during polling. For example, when we're in the office, some people that tried to come and check their names on the roll. They normally come to the office but there's some that during polling, they don't have their names on the roll but they try to use other people's names. So, this by law is not correct.

I think we'll try to see that but what I'm interested in is the name on the roll. If that voter's name is on the roll na emi save olsem taim blo polling na emi no bin kam turn up, it must be a sort of like a penalty must be given to him. I believe that by that time our kantri bai yumi gat pinis disla NID system emi strong but now we are heading there but the data is still very inefficient yet, maybe in future I think ba disla kain system bai iken kamap olsem.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you Mr Pantumari and let me on behalf of the committee acknowledge the conduct of the people of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville in the previous election and to commend you for behaving in a way that is exemplary and is something that perhaps other Papua New Guineans can learn from.

Just on your comment to do with fining people who don't vote, I believe in the region in Australia, if you do not vote you are charged the fine of about \$500. So, there are jurisdictions that employ that kind of incentive. I think in many democratic countries, the turn out is quite low in elections and that's something that we are interested in because in Papua New Guinea most people tend to want to vote but then there are a few that perhaps do not do so.

Let me thank you for that and we now we move to Manus province. I will ask the Chairman of the Provincial Election Steering Committee, Mr Oka Nungu lo givim brief blo

yupla and you can bring your team. Alright, Mr Oka Nungu, the Acting Provincial Administrator, Manus.

MANUS PROVINCE

Acting Provincial Administrator-Manus

Mr OKA NUNGU (Acting Provincial Administrator-Manus) – Thank you na morning lo yumi olgeta listening and Chairman thank you you and your team, deputy chairman and the member. We are humbled today because we never found any time like that. The election has been a problem all tthrough and there was never a time where a high delegate team like you and your team have come and listened to your people. Sir, let me thank you and may I bring greetings from Manus Island to your team. Thank you.

Manus has one district, one province and we have 11 LLGs, and 131 Wards. The furthest island is almost two days by boat almost reaching East Sepik. Many people think that it's a small province and things are easy, but it is one of the biggest province in the country given the fact that we have seas that extend to almost 270 000 nautical miles.

Having said that, the General Election in 2022 was challenging, unlike the ones that we have conducted in the past, this election was a difficult one. But let me start with the support that we got from the Provincial Government and also from the Provincial Administration.

All the public service at that time, I was the provincial administrator then so I released all of them to support the provincial election and the officer beside me was the returning officer. Terry was the officer we released to go and support the election. So at this moment, all of us here are representing the administration and the government and there's no Electoral Commission team with us.

So, we started with a submission that went to PEC asking if they could give us some money and they agreed and on 7th April they released almost K800, 000 to use in the 2022 General Election. Most of this money was used to support the security cost.

The Police unfortunately are not here but we had no support from the Department of Police, if there were any, in terms of the funding, that went through accommodation, hires and probably the allowances but unfortunately there's no report.

PSC, I'm the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman is on my right. We provided a general visibility for all the elections in Manus in 2022. We had great partnership with the Electoral Commission, they had only one election manager who just went in and took over from the earlier one so we thought that he cannot run the election because he is new to the province so

the provincial election steering committee took full control of the election. We started with meeting once every week and then eventually every day before the election started.

So with the common roll update, we actually had to meet with them. I traveled twice to Electoral Commission to find if I could get Form 11 and all these. So we started from the early part of it, we released our officer to go and help them because she had run several elections, we asked her to be released and then she went and was attached with them.

We actually visited polling sites during the polling as an election steering committees and we sent other teams to other parts of the wards and we made sure that if there were any questions, we tried to answer.

Unfortunately, one thing we found difficult for us was when the team was questioned regarding the legal basis of the existence of a provincial election steering committee. How does the election steering committee exist to support because most of the electoral teams were gazetted and were they legally appointed to run the election? How does provincial election steering committee relate to the electoral commission. We couldn't find any answers to it because there were no provisions of law. We only have administrative arrangements where the provincial administrator is the chairman which makes it easy for the officers to respect him, otherwise there was no legal basis of our existence in running the elections and in terms of the functions we carried out, it probably had no basis of law for the provincial steering committee.

Mr CHAIRMAN – I can intervene, I find this, and some other provinces of raised the same issue. It's quite surprising that in government you will find that people want to protect their turf by requiring a certain position in law that gives you the opportunity to do the right thing.

So, I find that quite surprising because you know my background is in the private sector, and we don't need rules, laws, and regulations to guide our conduct, it's all by consensus, agreement, and proper practice. *Dispela kain pasin blo okay mi gat gazette so who are you? I mean where does this come from? Is it just the public servants?*

I find that sometimes when public servants have a little bit of power or you know Papua New Guineans generally *yumi gat liklik pawa yu mi sa feel powerful na yumi like exercisim dispela pawa but we exercise it to the detriment of others.*

And I'm surprised that in Manus, you have this similar situation where certain people are questioning because *mipela long East Sepik, mipela gat provincial election committee istap wankain olsem yupela. It's a way bigger province, maybe 20 times the size of Manus but nogat*

man iquestionim legitimacy bilong provincial steering committee, olgeta man i wanbel na wok wantem na traim lo painim sampela outcome.

Is this just certain public servants who are misbehaving because they're trying to be perhaps, normally if they're insubordinate to you then you can discipline them but now that they are gazetted, they have the right to become insubordinate.

How is this and are these the same people from the previous elections and did they also behave in the same manner? I'm just trying to understand here because it's been raised a couple of times and I've decided to ask that question of you, sir.

Mr OKA NUNGU – Thank you, Chairman. We actually scrutinize all the teams that were brought in; if you are bringing families, wantoks or if you were going to a place where you know that there will be a problem where we do not want this person to come in, we want you to remove him because that made it possible and this has raised questions like what authority do you have to ask me to remove this person, because we are bringing them in and they're supposed to be part of the team? All the assistant retaining offices are allowed to select their polling teams. When they were doing that, we scrutinized we all the names so that we can see because it's such a small place and we know who's who so –

Mr CHAIRMAN – All right, forgive my ignorance and you know there are probably many Papua New Guineans listening in who have the same lack of knowledge that I do, so the process of selection is yupela inominatim ol returning officers, they go through that appointment process and after they are appointed, they get to choose their own teams? You guys don't do that? Is that what you're saying?

Mr OKA NUNGU – No, we are saying that they can select the teams but they bring it to the PESC to scrutinize them.

Mr CHAIRMAN – And, that's my question. Ol yet i selectim na karim kam lo yupela?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Yeah, ol yet i ken bringim ol lain blo ol but –

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, ol i ken bringim wantok blo ol, wan lotu, ankol or kandere em i laik bilong ol?

Mr OKA NUNGU – But, normally they apply to Electoral Commission to get them listed but some of them the Electoral Commission probably do not know their backgrounds so taim mipela i lukim, mipela bai tok no not this one and that person. So, that eventually ends up in them questioning our jurisdiction to scrutinize.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Then, I would respectfully submit that people like that yupela i makim ol na next time they shouldn't even be considered to be returning offices or whatever it is. Em dispela kain attitude save lead igo long suspicion na distrust long ol process bilong mipela long election because people are selecting their own wantoks and relatives and putting them into all these positions and so forth.

Anyway, thank you for the clarification, please continue.

Mr OKA NUNGU – Mr Chairman, just let me make a comment on this.

They don't select them and bring them but they apply through the normal process but they would be bringing people in to apply so eventually

Mr CHAIRMAN – But then, they are questioning your authority to ask them why they are bringing this person in and hence my interest in that situation.

Mr OKA NUNGU – Mr Chairman, you may think it's improper but unless the existence of the Provincial Election Steering Committee should have some provisions in the law that protects them or gives them the authority to act then –like we run the elections and some of the places I do not know –

Mr CHARIMAN – My issue is that candidates and maybe it's not the same in Manus but situation yu describim sapos em i exist long ol narapela province and if candidates and scrutineers come to the conclusion that em ol dispela lain ol i supporters bilong wanpela candidate or narapela candidate and if they have suspicions that there is no impartiality in the people conducting the process, then we have an issue.

So it's from that basis that mi askim yu dispela question. You see our struggle in Papua New Guinea, you know this is why listening to Bougainville is such a relief that ol lain long AROB, they've learned to be better than the rest of us. Ol no suspect nabaut and there's no mistrust, there's a lot of trust in that process, I like that.

And so, if you go around Papua New Guinea, candidates, supporters and everybody's being suspicious of everybody else. Sapos wanpela liklik mistake i kamap, quick taim tru ol i tok; em corruption, foul play, ol usim kawar, kabang, putim ol ballot paper na manipulativim. This is what we are trying to avoid; this high level of distrust na suspect. Yumi just suspect long olgeta samting but Bougainville tasol nogat, they are able to do it.

Olsem na kam back long yupela, mi interest long understandim dispela process because if there is any suspicion about the way officials are getting appointed, because long sampela hap mipela igo, ol i complain long ol returning officer and me personally, I had no idea that these returning officers could then propose who becomes part of the team.

I was always of that opinion until you mentioned it this morning that dispela olgeta lain ya em process i save selectim ino man ya yet i kam na proposim husait bai wok wantaim em long dispela particular polling booth na mi no save until nau yu toktok.

So that's why I'm trying to get to the bottom of it but I want you to understand that from the committee standpoint, we want to ensure that these processes were people are getting selected into these positions of trust long conductim election ya, that process must be above reproach. If there are questions on the process, then yumi can understand why ol candidate ol i suspect na sampela belhat kisim bush knife kilim wanpela narapela as we saw in Port Moresby. Sampela ol i go kukim ol ballot box as we saw in Morobe.

So, you have just given us I think a very important revelation so hence my line of questioning so I want you to understand that and I'm grateful that you have informed the committee and perhaps that's something that we may need to investigate how people get selected long kam insait na mekim ol dispela wok.

Because these are the things that candidates who have every right to stand for elections are going to be asking. How na yupela makim dispela man? Even myself as a sitting Governor, I asked my administrator who is the chairman of the provincial election steering committee taim mi lukim neim bilong wanpela man igo long provincial returning officer mi askim em. Hey, yu save long dispela man. What's he like? Is he a person of good character? I mean, I asked that question so if we are all doing that then, we've got to make sure that process is above reproach. So, everyone has confidence in it.

Em olsem na mi askim, sorry longpela explanation but I think the Papua New Guineans are looking in, I mean Papua New Guineans, some of them ol ino bilip olsem mipela bai mekim gutpela wok long dispela komiti tu. Ol i ting olsem mipela bai mekim wansait wok yu lukim. Things have gotten so skewed in our country that everyone is suspicious of everyone else and that's the reason why yupela lukim bikman sindaun beksait em Director bilong NRI (National

Research Institute). We are allowing NRI, Transparency International and you've probably seen Mr Paul Baker in the corner. He's in charge of the Institute of National Affairs. Mr Paul Baker is one of the biggest critics of government sitting over there. He is helping us to write this report and he will tell you, if you ask him during a coffee break that Allan Bird no save go na influencim em. I mean Paul is not someone you can influence put it that way, he's smiling. This is the reason why we have brought together highly credible people and institutions to look at this process.

So mi laikim yupela olgeta i understadim mipela why so yupela lain long Manus I bringim dispela important information that I think we are taking note of. Sori long longpela explanation but I want you to understand why we are asking this so please proceed.

Mr OKA NUNGU – Alright thank you Chairman, we will start with enrollment. Mipela i releasing 301 staff for two weeks, they were in the 131 wards and we conducted our enrollment. Electoral Commission gave us K36,000 and K3 000 to each LLGs and Manus Provincial Government gave K297 304 so that was for enrolment.

In the 2017 enrollment mipela i lukim we had 32, 375 enrolled but during the check, we found out that they eliminated almost 4 000 people; some died and some transferred. The final list had about 10 755 eligible voters that we needed to be enrolled so we enrolled all of them.

We went to the Electoral Commission and collected Form 11 and we brought them back and enrolled all of them. So in total was 39 279 was enrolled. During the election, 29 386 people voted, so its like almost 75 per cent of the people that enrolled participated.

In the enrollment part of it we didn't encounter any challenges our people were there to enroll with our wards development officers who live in the villages so it was easy but limited time and funding were not available because Electoral Commission didn't allocate adequate funds and only K36 000 and K3 000 to each ward is not enough and you can't run any common roll update in Manus. When you reach the furthest Island like Wuvulu, is K20 000 one trip and we couldn't do so the Provincial Government had to step in to commit K290 000 for us to do it.

Chairman we believe that common roll em responsibility bilong Electoral Commission, I heard yesterday that it will come under provincial government to take charge of it, that's for provinces who have lot of money as for Manus mipela no gat moni to give an extra –

Mr CHAIRMAN – Mi stopim yu pastaim, sapos Committee i recommending olsem Manus will be given certain amount of money directly from Treasury to update your electoral roll, would that change your position?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Yes, that would change my position.

Mr CHAIRMAN –ou are talking to the Parliament of PNG and we have the power to summon ministers and that's your power we are using to try and help you so that you can do your jobs better. We want the better system so talk to us like, givim wish list i kam na yu larim mipela i considerim na i no bilong yu long katim neck bilong yu yet bipo yu start, please continue.

Mr OKA NUNGU – Yes, Chairman I was just going to say that sapos igat moni olsem we will be okay so we provide adequate fundings to resource then we can actually continue with the common roll update. We can do it ourselves because its easy and also, those people who don't come and enroll and vote should be prosecuted because they are the ones provoking violence during voting time. And even during election time they want to enroll. There was one incident where these provokers ignore time for enrolling and when we finished, they fronted up and said they wanted to vote and the presiding officer told them that its their own ignorance so they wont vote.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Well this is why we are very keen to fix the electoral roll and by fixing it I mean, yumi kisim data stret lo ward record book. Which means that you don't have to enroll. We enroll you. Yu raun raun lo we stap, yu painim pis or wok gaden, it doesn't matter. We are the government. We register you and that should be our responsibility. At the moment we are putting the onus on the people. Na taim bilong registration, I mean even me, I didn't even know when people were registering and I'm the Governor of the province. So you know man lo ples tu em go wok saksak o wok kakau o mekim wanem stap yumi no save.

As Government, I think we've got to be a little bit more proactive and I think we are thinking as a committee that time mipela givim yupela dispela additional responsibility what we need, think about it like this, that census is not working, census is very expensive.

Olgeta dispela wok blo gavman yumi laik mekim ol tok NID wanem wanem they're talking hundreds of millions and we need to find a cheaper way to run the country. So if it means that we give the money to Manus province na yupla iwokim wanpla patrol na yupla

karim ol health officers na education officers hamaspela officers yupela bung lo wanpla speed boat na igo lo wanpela island na mekim olgeta wok same time then you do that. That's what we've got to look at. We are trying to look at how we can improve the entire process, but at the same time improving relationship namel long nesenel na provinsel gavman. So our people don't continue to miss out.

Forty-seven years of missing out so I want to make that clear to you guys. Planti taim yupla public servants mipla iwokim a train track and we just put you there and you just operate there. So you hardly go outside. But sometimes we are hearing from some provinces like East New Britain, they didn't stick with what they were given and East Sepik too.

There are a few provinces that actually decided to do something new and we are sort of keen about such approach so just to let you know also yupela em wanpela province na wanpela district na given your distances perhaps that's another issue and these are the things hopefully we can put it together. NRI is sitting at the back if there are things like that, you know some kind of formula that we need to use. I'm a big fan of formula or calculating or funding igo long ol different provinces.

I have one District that's 17, 000 square kilometers that district is bigger than the Autonomous Region of Bougainville one District. And we are struggling to provide services in that one district. Yupla ol Manus igat issue wantaim wanem distance then I want to say that I understand and I empathize. please proceed.

Mr OKA NUNGU – All right thank you Chairman. The funding for 2022 General Election First tranche come long around April it was K16,500, so election Electoral Commission was releasing funds in tranches. And the second one was K760,000 in June the third was K200,000 in October.

A total of K976,000. Manus Provincial Government released almost K800,000 too. And they were kept in the trust account that was created by Electrical Commission, signatory was the Provincial Finance Manager and the Electoral manager.

Mr CHAIRMAN – All the funds were put into one account?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Yes

Mr CHAIRMAN – Well done.

Mr OKA NUNGU – They were put into one account. But during the early part of a common of roll update, they had no funds, so we were using our own funds. But the other funds were all put into one account and they were managed by the finance and the Electoral manager. It's a total of K1,483,800 was used for the General Election in 2022.

Polling period, we had 38 teams and deployed almost 304 staff and they went into 131 wards. The furthest island we used the PNG Defense Force boat that costed us about K300 000 to the north and southwestern part of the province.

Our election period was one week, we had no problem. There was a little bit of problem, but our ARO's were able to control. One of the big issue we saw from during the polling period was the scrutineers complaining about the serial number of the ballot box. When they were supplied, they were inconsistent. if you supply 0 to 50 and then you don't even Supply 51 to 100, you supply another number so scrutineers and the candidates thought that there was something missing and where are the other ones. So that was the biggest part of our problem during the Election.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Who numbered those ballot boxes?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Not the box but ballot papers.

Mr CHAIRMAN (Chairman) – So, taim ol i kam, there was a series missing?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Yes, when they were supplied, there were series missing. Like if you are supplying book that contents 50.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Every book is 50?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Some, I think it's less but if you are like supplying 50 books, in a sense that is, first is 1-50 and if you are supplying the second, then it should be from 51-100 but when they only supplied 1-50 and then they probably give you like 101- 150 so in the middle there is a gap missing so people were thinking that who is hiding these ballot papers.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Was the issue resolved?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Yes, we have resolved it. We took the scrutineer to actually watch the team so that they can see the serial number and collect all the serial numbers for all the ballot papers that went to the wards. So, that was sorted out but otherwise, they thought we were hiding some ballot papers because the serial numbers were missing. There were like 51-100 was missing in the sequence so they said you are supplying 1-50 and you are not supplying 51-100. But, it was not our problem. It was something that was supplied from the Electoral Commission. But that was the only issue that we saw in the polling.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Was the missing series ever found? Ol painim tu o nogat?

Mr POYAP PONAUA – No, because ol ino supplym.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Sounds interesting, because we would have thought that if you start at zero-one and you know, there's 10,000 ballot papers for one district which is Manus province essentially that you would have zero-one to 10,000 wouldn't you or 20,000 or whatever the number is?

Mr POYAP PONAUA – I think 44,000.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, sampela missing long namel?

Mr POYAP PONAUA – Yes, they may be supplied to other places or yumi ino save.

Mr CHAIRMAN – But that serials for Manus province are specific for Manus. They cannot be used in other places say, East Sepik.

Mr OKA NUNGU – Sorry, that's not what I mean.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, that's a strange anomaly that we haven't encountered before.

Chairman-PESC-Manus

Mr POYAP PONAUA (Deputy Chairman –Provincial Election Steering Committee-Manus) – What happens is that when they supply 01-50 in polling team number one and then

51-100 to another team. So scrutineers and candidates and supporters ol i kam na tok where's 51-100? It should be in this team.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So it was the distribution?

Mr POYAP PONA – Yes, distributions were done by the PNGEC and when it comes to us we just went ahead and conduct the election as they have provided us with the ballot papers. But after that, we came to resolve this issue that the ballot papers didn't go missing but it was found in another polling team.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, thank you. That's what I was trying to establish earlier.

Mr OKA NUNGU – Chairman, in the 2022 election, we had six women who contested in the open seat and one in the regional seat. The six was out of 35 candidates that contested for the open seat and one out of 19 candidates who contested for the regional seat.

All the women that contested were never eliminated from the primary account. They went through until the elimination process and that was good. The only one in the open count actually was at the final three eliminations and she could have won the open seat.

By looking at the woman candidate we were thinking like why can't yumi creatim wanpela party bilong ol meri in Papua New Guinea if it is possible. Woman at the moment, I think in our Papua New Guinea society, we don't recognize woman and it may come after maybe 50 years or so, they will have this respect but otherwise, we were thinking that there should be a women's party where all the women can mobilise themselves and then we see something happen and maybe get a lot of women elected. And we should have parties in the region to mobilize to support women in the provinces.

Chairman, about the scrutineers, during the election we provided a lot of opportunities for scrutineers to make sure that they have the benefits of observing the process so as not to have doubts on what we do. So we allowed them into the counting so they could also check the ballot serial numbers. They got to meet all our teams and we made sure we gave them some confidence because we did not conduct any training then.

They were provided total visibility, when we went to counting and gave them enough space to sit and despite doing that we still had a lot of problem with the scrutineers. But like they discussed yesterday, scrutineers should be gazzetted.

As you said, they should be gazzetted straight after nomination. All the candidates' scrutineers should be gazzetted so that they have this, and anyone who is found guilty as a scrutineers should also be charged. If we find out that they are acting out of their responsibility and jurisdictions, then yumi mas chargin ol.

For the counting, we used the public market to count, it's an open but gated building. So we had all the counting in the public market and provided opportunity for everyone to come and sit around. First time in Manus we counted for two weeks, it's always like a week and we declare, and we are usually the first to declare in all the elections. But that time mipela last. We almost declared at the time when the writs were just about to be returned.

Mr ELIAS KAPAVORE – Sorry administrator, you said you started the count and then you were the last to make declarations. What was the reason of late declarations in Manus?

Mr POYAP PONAUAU – Simply because the candidates were coming to us and scrutineers were voicing their concerns, that delayed the process of counting. And we had to stop several times in a day

Mr CHAIRMAN – What were their concerns? This is the reason why we are here to do this. Why were the scrutineers and candidates disrupting the process?

Mr POYAP PONAUAU – That is something that I wouldn't know.

Mr CHAIRMAN – What were their main complaints. Let's deal with that, what was their main concerns. Ol concern lo wanem samting?

Mr POYAP PONAUAU – One particular candidate was concerned that his ballot papers were not distributed on the tray that was counted for but was given to other candidates. So they had to sort out those ballot boxes again.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So did that actually happen.

Mr POYAP PONAUAU – No, it was just suspicions.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So the scrutineer made a mistake

Mr POYAP PONAUA – Yes

Mr CHAIRMAN – What can we do to provide greater transparency over the process so that dispel kain confusion namel long ol scrutineers em bai nonap kamap

Mr POYAP PONAUA – I would suggest Chairman that in trainings the polling officials, selected scrutineers must also attend the training.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So did Manus conduct training of the scrutineers prior lo dispela election or nogat?

Mr POYAP PONAUA – We did not

Mr CHAIRMAN – So that added to the confusion

Mr POYAP PONAUA – Maybe

Mr CHAIRMAN – Because we heard in Eastern Highlands where they provided training of the scrutineers. They had no issues and they used their own funding. They actually got the candidates to pay for the training, that's what Eastern highlands did and the candidates happily paid.

Ol baim tea, coffee, sugar wanem samting na bungim olgeta ol scrutineers lo wanpela hap na they trained them. And they thought they had a better outcome in Eastern Highlands. So just so yupela ol lain lo Manus iken lainim.

And that is what I mean by public servants becoming innovative and trying to solve problems instead of saying, Port Moresby no givim moni. It is interesting that long yupela, you confirmed that there was no training so hevi kamap. Anyways do continue.

Mr OKA NUNGU – As you have mentioned, during the counting there were other issues as well. For instance, someone believed that their grandmother or father comes from a particular place and they expected to get higher votes than the other candidates. During the counting they stopped us and we had to sort them out but it never escalated to anything else.

The candidates did some petitions and demanded response from the Electoral Commission immediately and if we do not provide the response they want, then they want the people from the Electoral Commission to come down. We just suspended the count and then we asked the Electoral Commission team long kam long Manus. They sent someone there but the candidates wanted to see the Commissioner himself.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Em kendidet long wanpela ples ah?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Nogat. There were a group of candidates that were together.

Mr CHAIRMAN – And their complaint was, ples bilong ol yet no givim vot long ol?

Mr OKA NUNGU – – Nogat. They were complaining about the general part of what you and my deputy had said. One complaint was about the serial number including others and they wanted the Electoral Commission to give them answers. That was a part of it but towards the end of the counting ol stopim mipela.

So we have to go to the police station to sort it out because there were candidates everywhere.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So it was a range of complaints, ino wanpela tasol?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Yes. There were a lot of complaints because the people were not happy. Anyways we got it sorted out.

Mr CHAIRMAN – But Manus is one of our most literate provinces similar to East New Britain. Em tupela highly literate provinces ya. East New Britain igat problem long kawar na kambang. Na yupela long Manus, what is your excuse?

Mr OKA NUNGU – I really don't know. It was a time. I participated in the last three or four elections and we have never seen anything like that. That was the first time and they even demanded the election manager and my officer to stand down.

Mr CHAIRMAN – In your suggestions to us, what can we do to improve that situation in Manus, given again I repeat myself, one of our two highly literate provinces? What can we

do as a government and as an election team over time to improve that situation where ol man na meri bai gat trust long integrity bilong dispela process we yupela bin wokim.

How can we do that? Because obviously we don't want a repeat of this process in 2027 or even in the local level government elections. Mipela laik improvim so we can avoid such situations in the future. What do you suggest?

Mr POYAP PONAU – Mr Chairman, I would suggest that every candidate who is nominated to contest the election, they must also be inducted in the process of election.

Mr CHAIRMAN – That is not a bad suggestion. So perhaps, wanpela yia bipo long ol man na meri resis long ileksen, yumi putim ol go long skul pastaim.

Mr POYAP PONAU – So ol bai save long proses bilong ileksen na wanem samting bai kamap.

Mr CHAIRMAN – That is not a bad suggestion.

Mr POYAP PONAU – When the candidates go out, ol lain long ples tu ol lain bilong giaman. Ol bai tok olsem dispela hauslain ya bai givim yu 500 votes.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Em kain bilong yupela ol Manus long tok pisin ya.

Mr POYAP PONAU – When election comes, the candidate found out that he did not receive that 500 votes. He then asks why he did not receive those votes. Yu save man ol longlong man, ol bai faulim yu.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So ol lain long ples giamanim kendidet. Well you see, there's a difference, in Sepik they'll tell you, sorry one vote em nogat, mipla givim pinis. Two na three istap, sapos yu laik okay kam. So, I think it's a different cultural context again. They will not lie to you but you kam lo Moresby em bikpela problem ya, ol tu sa laik giamanim ol lain lo Moresby. But orait, Manus em hap kain pasin blo yupela long tok pilai, tok pilai ya em extend go lo election tu na.

Mr POYAP PONAU – Yu yet save nau Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Yeah, you guys are too close to my province for comfort. So, the candidates actually, most of your candidates would come from POM, wouldn't they?

Mr POYAP PONAU – Oh they're Port Moresby candidates but because of election they come back. They will never make it.

Mr CHAIRMAN – And many are highly educated?

Mr POYAP PONAU – Yes that's correct. In the history of election in Manus, those coming in from outside will never win the election. Yu man lo ples ya yu growim roots blo yu pinis ya. When you come you spend so much money they will eat your rice, but when it comes to casting their vote, they'll walk away from you, the K500 yu givim ya em bai nogat.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Em kain blo ol Sepik ya, ol ba tok kaikai lo olgeta hap but yu yet save where lo putim. Em same sick yupla gat, mipla gat.

Mr POYAP PONAU – Chairman because Wara Sepik save end up lo mipela, so it starts from there.

Mr CHAIRMAN – olgeta dirty yupla kisim.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Chairman I was going to ask the acting Provincial Administrator, Deputy Chair can also come in, you got one district, one province. Tell us any problems with mixing ballot papers, provincial candidate come, open candidate, any experience of that as one province, one district, any problems with that?

Mr OKA NUNGU – No, because this is like one district, they're the same people who have come in all the elections so we never had any problems like getting the ballot papers mixed.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Yeah, apart from being literate. If for example the committee looks at the structure of one district, one province by reviewing the formulas, if we give you two districts, what’s your view?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Thank you. I actually presented in the Provincial Administrators’ Conference and we wanted two districts because we think Manus is the only province that needs a district unlike the other ones but yes, if you recommend Manus to have another district, that will sort out a lot of things for us.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You will support it. And general feeling around the province?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Yes, they will support it.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What’s the reason? Why? Why are you supporting this?

Mr OKA NUNGU – The reason being, people call us a small province but it is very difficult to provide services. We actually rely on money that is provided by the national government. And having one district is a disadvantage to us. If we have two districts, we think this is an opportunity for us to extend our services to our people well.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – How many members are in the provincial assembly?

Mr OKA NUNGU – We have 12 members in the provincial assembly.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – How many?

Mr OKA NUNGU – 12 LLG members, 2 nominated members, the Open Member and Governor so that’s the total.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So if you have two districts, there will be six LLGs per district. I’ve got three LLGs in my district. So, ok that’s interesting.

My second question is counting through the LPV system, it takes a long time etcetera, share with the committee would you think that we could look at how we count under the LPV system? What options would you tell the committee?

Mr OKA NUNGU – When you have a lot of open candidates, like we had less than 35, it takes a long time to count and one of the processes that we went through that took long.

In Manus, we usually have a few candidates but this time we had a lot of candidates so LPV takes a lot of time and the counting periods extended to two weeks but we would support if you can look at like, we have no problem why can't we go back to First Past the Post. It's easy, and with the other experience when we count with LPV we had a lot of interruption between all the others telling us, because the length of counting has gone too long. The scrutineers were asking us to count again, mi no hamamas, so we had to remove the ballot paper and do recount again for just one candidate. If it's First Past the Post we could have done it a long time.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – At the moment we've LPV so we'd rather look at LPV and my question was, is there space for us to review the accounting process in LPV. For example, some people are saying we count everything, who go for vote one putim vote one, vote two putim vote two and vote three putim vote three and count everybody and whoever wins the most in first preference plus second preference plus or third preference bai win.

But we are working on 50 per cent plus one. Once somebody hits 50 per cent plus one yumi stop nau na yumi declare. How about the total wish of the people in the second and third preferences, should we recommend that we get a team to relook the way we count in the LPV system?

We won't go back to the First Past the Post yet and LPV counting have we made a legal mistake by saying 50 per cent plus one and then we allow one person to vote for three choices but we are not counting the others because somebody has reached 50 per cent plus one is that fair?

I'm raising this question so throughout the country those of you who have some smart ideas to give to the committee please let us know. Those of you who are in and those who are experienced, my personal view on LPV counting is, em lonpela taim na i expensive. You will have to go to quality check, long time candidate's spending money on feeding their scrutineers and their supporters.

On the other hand, you are tired and you have not received your allowances or you are protesting and delays are coming and others have been declared throughout the country and you are waiting and everything has come to a stop for some provinces or some districts.

Mr OKA NUNGU – Thank you. LPV is actually counting everyone that has voted and then the exhausted ballots are the ones that have been already counted so they would not have left out anyone who voted. The length of time for counting is too long but otherwise I don't know if there's any other way if you use LPV to make sure that you get all the names who have voted because in the process they are actually counting everyone that has voted.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – How about the issue of scrutineer complaints and candidates' complaints in the counting room? Because the process is of official's istap, scrutineers are bit faraway some are very close and your officials are counting and scrutineers are complaining. They then SMS, and the candidate comes and breaks a security gate.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Sorry Sir Puka. Could you put your phone on silent please ma'am and anyone else if you have a phone put it on silent or we understand if you need to take a call thank you. Sorry Sir Puka You may continue.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – There is a lot stoppage of counting by the scrutineers and the candidates and it's nationwide because everybody wants to win but our problem is the way we are counting in the counting room. It's like secret counting. Why don't we hold up ballot paper, everybody sees it, scrutineer line up there, this is the vote, everybody agree, number one went to that candidate, number two went to that candidate so that ballot paper goes to that candidate because all of them agreed at that wan yah

Mr POYAP PONAUA – Okay in Manus the experience last year was, we were counting in one central venue at the market and then we found out that time was catching up with us so we called the scrutineers together with their candidates and we told them that we wanted to establish two other counting centers for the regional seat; so one was out one way and the other in the other way and we were in the central venue.

After they completed all the primary counts, they transferred all the ballot papers back to the main counting venue and that's when the scrutineers came back.

The candidates also spread their scrutineers; one goes there, the other one goes here, and one remains, that was what we did?

Mr CHAIRMAN – What was the effect of the stoppages? Sapos yupela i addim olgeta taim we ol scrutineers intervene na stopim counting, em yu ting bai hamaspla deis olgeta ol i bin stopim counting?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Mr Chairman, that was our mistake because we wanted to provide visibility so we allowed them to dictate like if they wanted to see it, we allow them.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, how many days altogether, what was your total counting period? Two weeks?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Two weeks.

Mr CHAIRMAN – And in the two weeks, how many days were you actually did you actually count and how many days did you stop?

Mr OKA NUNGU – We never stopped, we just suspended the counting for a few hours.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Every day?

Mr OKA NUNGA – Every day. No, not every day, we never stopped every day.

Mr CHIARMAN – Okay.

Mr POYAP PONAUA – When we had issues with the candidates', the members of the provincial election steering committee met with them and the counting officials continued counting. We did not stop counting.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay.

Mr POYAP PONAUA – We did not stop the counting. Whenever issues arise, we attend to them with the security personnel whilst the counting continues.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, coming back to what Sir Puka, was asking; what if there's a big TV screen up there, na olgeta vote yah yupela sowim na olgeta man ken lukim na save em wan blo em, I mean if we had more transparency in the counting rooms would that help?

Mr POYAP PONAU – Mr Chairman, I would recommend that. We will have to establish CCTV in the counting venue –

Mr CHAIRMAN – Wankain olsem yumi watchim rugby league yah.

Mr POYAP PONAU – Yes, so ol lain autsait ken gat screen autsait na ol i ken watch what's happening in here, every ballot paper that comes out and if they have a query we will put it out so they can see it outside. So that we're all on the same track.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And we all agree on informal votes, formal votes or the same transparency process rather than hidim na yupela officials bai boundim into tens and then throw them. And then, in quality check some problems come up. You've thrown too much in one box and another less and then you try to do that and there is a suspicion you know everybody is upset with it. That is why we need to find a more transparent, visible, easy to manage way, and then we finish in no time.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Take a better look at the actual counting process. Anything else?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Yes, Chairman. I think wanpela tingting tasol but I don't know how close we are to a biometric sort of system but if we do it that will probably solve a lot of our issues and counting as well.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Well the Committee is thinking and the technology is available. So, we would like to deploy; we already know the issues with the current software provider in Port Moresby. We are aware of that but you know, we are not here to cater to friends or relatives or whoever, we are here to protect the interests of the people of Papua New Guinea.

Mr OKA NUNGU – Okay

Mr CHAIRMAN – So currently in East Sepik, there is a group that was brought in by the Central Bank. They use a telephone like this with a special attachment at the back. They take your picture, they take your two thumbprints, they enter your details and within five minutes they print a card. We are using that for financial literacy and it's got the endorsement of the Central Bank and we're piloting it for financial literacy.

But, I was just discussing with my colleague members here that this could easily be deployed, in my view, for something like elections

So, that's the first thing we want to do is fix the electrical roll, and if we can have an electronic roll. We want to start work on that next year not 2026, we want to do it next year

One of the reasons why we are doing this process is to complete them quickly and take the recommendations to go to Parliament in the next Sitting which is in June.

So next mun tasol. We want to get it endorsed and we want to get it into the budget. So, we start with sorting out by having an electronic roll. Olgeta man i gat wanpela record, you don't have two records. So olgeta pik, dog, kakaruk na leaf bilong diwai ino inap kam na vote. We have actual human beings no kawar, no kambang em stret. That's what we're thinking.

But electronic voting perhaps down the track because we don't want to complicate things and we don't want to get things that are difficult to implement. But we think the technology is there and we think that at some point we can go to electronic voting as well. But these are things that we've got to develop but even then, we've got to make sure that all of our processes are above reproach. Because we know now for example that people are manipulating the common roll in the Electoral office in Moresby, we know that already. So, the integrity of the data and the integrity of the electoral roll needs to be protected so maybe block chain technology or something like that.

And that's what we are working on and we believe as a committee that technology is there to allow us to do those things. We already know that there's a photo roll that was trialed in Kupiano and it worked really well but for some reason it was never fully deployed.

So, there's been some work already by the Electoral Commission and it's perhaps up to us as a committee now to make sure that we roll out all of those good initiatives and make it standard practice.

So, if we fix the electoral roll that's the first thing and then we've got to figure out how to give one person one vote and then obviously now we've got an issue with the counting. How do we speed up that process? I mean do we have special ballot papers where you mark it with a special link so the computer can read it and we put it through that way, we don't know.

I was watching the bank people the other day when I was in Moresby doing banking and they have an electronic machine where they put the papers through and the machine actually reads the numbers. I was surprised and when the lady ran the cheque and it didn't work, she pulled it back and she got a paper clip and she rubbed it on the numbers and I asked her 'why yu rabim paper clip antap long namba? Em tok this thing is magnetic so, mi rabim na em bai readim ol namba gut.' I was quite surprised so she put it through a second time and it read it, so the bank is using that kind of technology. So, we know the technology is there in bits and pieces. I'm not a technology expert but you see these things happening and you think well perhaps there are possibilities.

We are an open-minded committee, we're not here to say to you, this is how we want to do it but we are here to learn and try to understand the problems and to say to you that we will leave no stone unturned in finding a solution. Because I think our people deserve that so just to let you know. So biometric, yes, but perhaps in stages. Yumi fixim common roll and then we look at other things and if it's possible for us to do it in 2027 by all means we will do it in 2027. And that's the commitment of your Parliament to you, continue Sir.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Mr Nungu. How long have you been in the public service?

Mr OKA NUNGU – I have been in the public service for 36 years.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Long time and you've also conducted or oversaw many elections over that time. As Chairman was saying Manus is a well-educated community, I want to seek your views on one of the big issues.

We are a diverse country, they say over 850 tribes and therefore, the behaviour during the election depicts that diversity. In the islands region you have a certain behaviour pattern, likewise the momase, southern and highlands regions, they have a certain behaviour pattern.

In the 2022 elections, there was more problems in the highland region in terms of election issues, we saw ballot boxes being burnt and also in momase as well. Despite of behavioural issues but our laws are universal. So, for example, if ol tribe bai vote, yu know, ino wan wan bai vote, lida lo tribe bai vote lo sampela hap bilong kantri – or split votes.

So the issue of wan wan votes some provinces is thrown out of the window and it doesn't happen like that. So women don't vote by themselves because somebody marks all the ballot

papers and some of them had admitted that em i orait mipela wokim olsem ya but the law says no its illegal and so my question is, should we relook at the law to accommodate the differences in behavior? Should we say by law that in the Highlands Region, yupela tribe ya go long polling area na polling officials i stap na scrutineers tu i stap, but you tell the polling officials who will mark the ballot papers for your tribe and then you mark it in front of every body and put a seal around it, everybody accepts that because em pasin ya, Melanesia culture.

But in fact in Manus if a candidate is from a village then they all agree to vote for their son or daughter, am I telling lies, no, it happens and so the law which is the role of Parliament as the legislator must look at it again.

As someone who has served for 36 years, well educated managing the elections, upon reading from *Facebook* and the social media on what had happened in 2022 election, that's why we were appointed to look at the issues.

This one issue of style of voting, how are we going to address it in the country with our diversity. Should we just say law enough, one person one vote is enough. If there is no one vote and one person, that the election in that electorate is null and void and should be declared failed, should we go that tough, what's your view?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Deputy Chairman, thank you em i hatpela question long mi but I am an Highlander, I lived in Manus Island for 36 years. I have seen a lot of elections and during campaigning period candidates would go out and campaign together. They will even share their drinks and campaign but it's the story of the past now.

This election they campaigned individually probably they copied the ideas or concept from other provinces. And they even complained and threatened me and mentioned, em Highlands ya karim pasin bilong highlands i kam.

So I was like of the view that people have changed, not the culture and it's because of the environment. Today they see that politics is about making money that when you enter politics your life style becomes better.

In those days they were service driven people; they wanted aid-post, health centres and schools but today, they think about what they can get. So in my view, if we do tribal vote then we will create more enemies whereby one tribe is going to fight with the other.

For Manus, I wouldn't encourage that and I don't like our community to go into that sort of voting. We want one person to vote once.

We must also screen all the applications before allowing nomination like their education qualification and all this information.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So you are saying we must take a look at the qualification of candidates?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Yes that's what I am saying. Check the qualification of candidates, not only that but raise the nomination fees.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Yes some provinces have already recommended that we increase the nomination fee

Mr OKA NUNGU – Yes. So otherwise for us, to change the type of voting by allowing people to vote by groups or by ethnical tribes, I think that will create more problem than allowing people to go into a ballot booth and voting individually.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Well it's interesting to hear you say that and I'm glad Sir Puka asked you that question. One of our committee members who's not here, Honourable Maki, he apparently spent 30 years in Madang as a policeman and he went and contested, he is from the Highlands as well. He was saying, he said mi kam lo Madang na mi save lo ol pasin blo ol Madang na mi kam ron lo ap blo mi yet na it's so different. He was surprised at the way his people behaved but he managed to win an election up in the Highlands.

But I wish he was here because his contributions I thought were and like yours, very similar, you've spent 30 years in Manus and you can see and that's one of the things, I think Sir Puka is coming from.

We want to understand what we need to protect. What should we protect? Should we protect the right of the tribe or the right of the individual in the process? And you know we spoke to the people in Morobe and they're saying that the behavior they had with the burning of the ballot boxes em satp lo Highalnds na kam down. Em Highway yah so mipla ikisim nau.

So we are concerned as a committee and you know as parliamentarians, what should we be protecting? And you should tell us, we are here to make laws on your behalf. Mipla bai igat tingting blo mipla yet but we are inclined.

Like for me personally, I want to protect the way the Sepik people do things because I feel it's important because that's my cultural background. I feel that every Sepik men, women, disabled, able-bodied should be able to go and cast their vote. They should go and find themselves on the Electoral roll. That's what I feel. Because I know that's what the Sepik people want.

But you know, Sir Puka raises an interesting point. Antap long Highlands oli tok nogat mipla em tribe save vote. Mipla passim tok pinis. So what do we do? You know what do we do? This is the first time in 47 years we are reviewing our electoral process. And the electoral process is fundamental to our democratic institutions, the underlying, lowest common denominator is the elections. And we want to understand, if you are saying that the people of Manus have now changed the way they're doing this. Mipla lo Sepik oli still holim han yet. But then some candidates in some places they get a bit hot-headed and they no longer work together. You do get that where olgeta candidate bai by gang up lo sitting member na traim lo rausim ol sitting member. I suppose that's expected. I mean I had that experience in my election, all the candidates wanted to get rid of me. So nobody worked with me.

But in the previous election 2017 when I wasn't a member, I was working with other candidates and in even elections going back. But taim mi kamap Member olgeta candidate laik rausim mi. So there are those sorts of sentiments and perhaps that's not just a cultural thing, you know that's just a reality of politics.

But coming back, should we protect the right of the individual to vote? I think so. What do you think? Manus yupla ting wanem? The right of the individual to make a choice. Or as Sir Puka asked, should we allow the tribe to do that by law. I see the East New Britain people are uncomfortable in their seats.

Mr POYAP PNAU– I would recommend that we should respect every individual to cast their votes. Rather than the tribes. We should have one person individually to go and cast his or her vote.

Mr CHAIRMAN –And we'll protect them.

Mr POYAP PNAU– Yes

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – I have a second question to the Acting PA Mr Nungo, in your current statement one of the issues that you raised was all politicians are everybody's rushing to become a politician because there are better conditions, they will become rich quickly etcetera.

That raises an issue of our national structure. We need to look at that. We mustn't hide it under the carpet. So my question is, our public service is now politically influenced so public

servants in the district; for example, are waiting for their open Member to take the lead long go painim moni na kam long DDA miting long ol wokim projects.

So, in the process of service delivery, the politicians are taking over. How do we respond to that issue as a nation? For example, should we say politician's salary must go down. By law, politicians must not to interfere with the public service.

By law we must make the public service independent so the service delivery arm must be the machinery called the public service and not the politicians. The politicians' roles must be clearly defined. They are policy developers and legislators – em tasol. Stop them from ground-breaking ceremonies and stop them from distributing cheques. Should we go that way as a nation?

Three years' time, we will be 50 years old as a nation. The machinery arm in my view and as a former public servant has been severely politicised. In this review, should we now relook at the role of politicians and their limits because some of the processes of electing them is badly corrupted. You look at the election petitions. Many of them are on bribery charges. So this whole scenario of a structural rearrangement in that country has to part of the conversation in the country beginning with our committee. So, Mr Nungu, you made a comment and I picked it up. What is your recommendation?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Thank you, Deputy Chairman. I think the provisions of laws are there already. There is clear demarcation of where your responsibility is as a politician. I think the onus is now with the politician and maybe the public servants.

Mr CHAIRMAN– Do you think we politicians have too much power and exercise too much discretion over the public service?

Mr OKA NUNGU – I don't know about other places. I don't see that in the place where I work because I am the only authority in doing what the politicians want for their funds. They don't carry cheques around. I make sure it's for the delivery of services so my experience would not be the same.

Mr CHAIRMAN – I'm happy to hear that. I assume you speak to other provincial administrators because yupela save wok wantaim. What is the sense that you get from some of your colleagues?

Mr OKA NUNGU – I have not talked to them in regards to this but generally, I think some politicians seem to have the power over the administration but otherwise in my experience I have not seen that.

Mr ELIAS KAPAVORE – Administrator, you've been there for some time now, the other thing about the candidate's eligibility, do you think that it's time we review, make some adjustments on who should contest the elections, candidate's requirements of eligibility in contesting elections?

Mr OKA NUNGU – I think that's what our recommendation was because we saw people who actually took election as a fun activity. We have seen some nominate because they are able to pay K1000 nomination fee so they can go for election and when you see it, they are eliminated first

They maybe score only one vote or nothing at all. So yes, there is a need in the country to really review the eligibility of the candidates who want to come and nominate.

Mr ELIAS KAPAVORE –Should there be a screening process. For example, for my province or a district for people who want to contest the elections, they can do a pre-trial of election first and then screen out and remove some.

Some kind of pre-trial process elections for elections. So that they can screen out who shouldn't nominate. So we can get the best people on board. I'm just asking if there should be screening process to allow for that so that we tighten up the candidates the ones who who meet the requirements to contest the elections not only by qualifications but other requirements as well.

It's a constitutional right for people to contest the elections. We said to further look into that and make some further adjustments so we can get people who can really contribute to the country and who are serious about contesting the elections, not just somebody who is just here for the money and for their own benefit.

Returning Officer-Manus

Ms TERRY YOHANG (Returning Officer-Manus) – Thank you. We recommend that if we increase nomination fees this will sort out many things. When we increase it will sort out nominations and counting process will be sorted out. When we increase nomination fees all intending candidates contesting em numba blong ol bai kam daun na counting process em bai

I count down and when our nomination fees remain K1000 there are more intending candidates contesting resulting in longer counting process. Thank you

Mr CHAIRMAN – What’s your recommendation on what the nomination fee should be?

Ms TERRY YOHANG – I suggest from K1,000 to K5,000.

Mr CHAIRMAN – We have some recommendations for the amount to go up to K10,000 from some places. I see nodding heads in the back. Maybe that’s something we’ll consider as part of increasing the fee because I think that’s a general consensus. What number we arrive at will probably be something that needs further consultation once we finalize the document but I thank you for that contribution. Sir Puka

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – I just have two more questions left. Can you advise the committee on the process of how you handled the nomination fee? Where did you deposit it? Did you get something back in the province to help you with the outstanding’s? I just want to focus on the nomination fee. You had 35 open candidates and 19 regional candidates. So that’s K54,000 collected with K1,000 nomination fee. Where did you deposit that?

Ms TERRY YOHANG – Thank you Deputy Chair. Nomination fees were paid through nominating account through the Electoral Commission and then the intending candidates produce their receipts to the Returning Officer or the Provincial Returning Officer for nomination

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So what would you suggest because you got outstanding’s everywhere. Shouldn’t you have a say in how to use that nomination fee money at the provincial level. Would you recommend that you hold that K45,000 back rather than get it back to the Waigani Electoral Commission? What’s your view?

Mr POYAP PONAUA – Deputy Chair, I would recommend that every province that collects money from the candidates must be paid into a trust account for the province and to help settle the cost of running the election. When it goes to the electoral account, we don’t know happens to it.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Also, the Electoral Commission doesn't tell you how much they have received and when they allocate, they only give you a very small amount and we don't know where the others go to.

Mr OKA NUNGU – That is correct.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So you are recommending that the candidate fees should be retained in the provincial election trust account.

Mr OKA NUNGU – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Now to my second question, you may have experienced it in Manus also that every year it seems like the numbers of candidates are increasing. In Northern Province, there were over 100 candidates contesting for one seat. Now somehow we as a country, must not allow that to continue.

We must find a solution, our Committee will have to find solutions and therefore I want to bring this issue out. How do we handle the increasing number of candidates? One way as I alluded to, is tell them that the MPs pay is going to be lower than the provincial administrator and you are not going to be project managers. All the money will go through the provincial government for them to manage it, no more district and no more LLG.

So we will have two levels of legislature in the country, Parliament and province. We all go and build the provincial government and public service up. We have to re-look at those things. In this specific issue of increasing numbers, couldn't we look at something like rather than increasing the fee or increasing the qualification, couldn't we have a pre-election process.

One month before the writs are issued, whoever wants to stand for election you go through a prescribed pre-election race. The top five candidates will be the ones to contest in the election and everybody else is removed from this pre-election process.

All those 'giaman lain' can lose and the only real three or five candidates, we will vote for them. Wouldn't that be something that we should seriously look at? What's your views?

Mr OKA NUNGU – Mr Deputy Chairman, I think that is what we should progress into. Also there are so many candidates because of the many parties that we have. We should reduce to only few parties and ask them to endorse two or three candidates only, not everyone. Those

people who come and stand, they don't have money, they get it from somewhere. What we need to do is include this sort of recommendation but also make sure that we have only two or three parties.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Well, they have more candidates because our system requires that the more members of Parliament a party has, they get to form government and elect the prime minister. That is our law so parties make sure to have candidates in every seat. Those party with money fill every seat around the country so they will have more numbers to form the government so that is our dilemma.

Therefore, the question which our prime minister is asking today is, should we elect the prime minister on the Floor of Parliament or should people around the country elect the prime minister. But in the presence of very bad election processes, the result of a prime minister will also be worse than the result of members during the election because our election is a big mess. We can't allow a big mess to go as far as electing the prime minister in this country, that's a bigger mess.

Those are the real structural issues that we as a country must seriously look at and therefore, if you strongly support the suggestion that we should have a pre-election run and only the top three or five will contest the regional seat and the open seat, then the counting issues are addressed, because ballot papers are very expensive.

By doing that, we can just print only five ballot papers rather than hundreds so all the costs are coming down with that process. What do you think?

Mr OKO NUNGU – Thank you, I think that will be the way forward now if we want to eliminate the people who want to unnecessarily come and stand for election. And some of them you will see them that they don't have credential but they just want to come and stand for election. So, we go through that pre-screening process then that would probably cut down all the candidates who are not eligible and find the ones who are eligible.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And also, I have been in politics for 20 years. We spoil the LPV system. Some of us are campaigning and saying, 1 yu givim lo mi, 2,3 don't give it to the second best, 2,3 give it to the one that will be eliminated. And so, their second vote will come to us.

So, we have spoilt the spirit of LPV and so why don't we have a pre-select election and only 3 so people have just those 3 choices. So, nobody plays around with it. Other candidates

are working with other candidates to buy their second votes. Mipela buyim vote wan pinis, yu mas buyim two nau. So, it's all messed up. Corruption has come in etcetera so we must find a way out as a young democracy.

Mr CHAIRMAN – I think these are very important questions that we need to engage in. The other one I'm interested in and perhaps those academics that are listening in and we are nearing lunch time.

How do we clarify between, should we legislate that, should we spell it out clearly in the guidelines, what constitutes bribery? What constitutes legitimate election expenses? Because right now, yu lukim planti ol practices ya em ol tok bribery nau na petitions.

Mi yet, I was actually taken to court for bribery but mipla lo Sepik em ol save sanapim haus man ya. Mi no save yupla tu lo NGI imekim? Em yumi olgeta.

So, in the haus man that's your campaign area na bai ol e expectim yu lo putim tea, coffee, sugar na em wankain na yumi olgeta.

Sampla hap ol laikim yu kilim pig na mipla lo Sepik ol sa tok olsem, yu no inap kam go lo ples blo narapela man, yu mas stretim rot blong yu. So bai yu putim han buai o sampla hap ol save kolim 'kupa' roll brus or dispela kain, em kastom. Yu kilim pig o, so yu putim nau okay ol ito yu sanap antap lo dispela na yu toktok.

Orait antap lo Highlands em yumi lukim ol lainim pig na carton coca cola na olgeta samting na that's a whole different level to mipela lo nambis but you know, should we prescribe that. Should we clearly define it? So that everyone understands that orait sapso yu wokim kaikai na ol man kam na yu wokim campaign blo yu, well that's a campaign, you're not bribing people with wanpela hap abus na wanpla kaukau o taro o wanem samting.

So, it's just something for the general public to think about because we want to eliminate, I suppose, all grey areas. So that whatever is prescribed is prescribed for everybody. The limits are clearly set. That way we can eliminate all these court processes.

I mean, I went and gave campaign t-shirts in a particular place that I didn't campaign in na ol tok, nogat dispela ol campaign t-shirt em yu bribe-im man tu. So, you know, those sorts of issues and we want to be fair and even across the board.

If there is no clear prescription then perhaps, that leads to all kinds of suspicion, distrust and then that is translated through to the counting officials, yumi olgeta. You know, to me, its not one thing that is ruining our election, it's the whole collection of things that we need to address.

Things like Sir Puka is talking about. I mean, I had to educate my voters because the issue came up in Parliament in the last term. Should we throw out the Limited Preferential Voting and go to First Past the Post and some members were pushing for that but then I asked my people in East Sepik and they said no, mipela laikim dispela 1,2,3 because its working for us.

For us, some people do spoil the votes but it was interesting when I got a report from one of the academics and he said to me, we designed the LPV for one simple reason, number one em tribal vote bilong yu, give it to your tribe. Number two, you should give it to a party. Party that you like.

Mr CHAIRMAN –. Number three, give it to the most popular candidate so that was the way they designed it but nobody told us that, that in the design of the LPV, it was done in such a way to cater for the different interests

So yu meri yu stap lo ples na yu lukim olsem tribal group bilong yu strong okay first vote bilong yu givim long tribe. You still have a second and a third preference so if you prefer a certain political party then givim namba two vote bilong yu igo long candidate bilong ol and if there's a very popular candidate in the electorate then you givim namba tri vote bilong yu. So in all instances you are still catering for all the different interests, but then as Sir Puka has said, a lot of people want to waste the twos and the threes.

Mipela Papua New Guinea eh, we get smart and what's a good thing we decide to ruin it. These are the sorts of things that we the committee including all of you, need to sit down and think and talk openly about it.

We have a secretariat for those of you who are watching in from outside on the live stream the addresses are there for the academics the candidates who took part in the elections. We've had a few come and speak to us please provide a written submission. We are very keen to provide some resolutions going forward for our people as a committee.

Mi laik givim yupela dispela commitment, the Marape Government is strongly behind the committee. The Prime Minister himself is interested in the outcome of this, as Sir Puka said, he is personally pushing for the direct election of the Prime Minister and we can't do that if the election process is still all over the place so there are many things we have to fix.

This is your opportunity as Papua New Guineans to be heard and in saying that this afternoon, after lunch we've got some of the community members, women's groups youth groups from the New Guinea Islands who will be participating in the afternoon session.

Please have your say, these are the things we wanted to think about. Em chance bilong yupela long toktok i kam long mipela ol representatives bilong yupela. Yupela yet makim mipela kam na nau mipela luksave olsem, dispela samting i gat hevi long em na mipela i laik fixim. Tasol mipela ino laik long hait na mipela yet fixim long laik bilong mipela. Em i gutpela olsem mipela i kam aut na yupela pipol i tokim mipela.

Mipela i stap pinis wantem ol lain long Southern Region, ol lain long Highlands, Momase na nau mipela stap long NGI. Em opportunity bilong yupela tasol ino pinis yet. Ol lain long NRI i stap. Please those of you who are here speak to them. Don't just speak to us the Members of the Parliament, mipela em yupela payim mipela long toktok tasol, ol lain bilong mekim wok em ol i stap baksait. So utilize them, we also got workers from the Parliament with us you can see them in their uniforms, please utilize them while they are here. So with that unless there are no further questions.

Alright I want to thank, our Special Autonomous Region of Bougainville, thank you for your fine example, I must say and Papua New Guineans sitting everywhere, you know Bougainville is showing us the way we should be conducting our elections so I want to congratulate all of our people on Bougainville for the fine example that you are setting for the rest of us.

Our people of Manus, mi lusim yupela last because yupela tok pinis yah wara ems save flow kam go long yupela. I'm a little bit disappointed that some of your processes na ol behaviour bilong ol pipol bilong Manus i wok long go aut liklik but you know these are things that we can fix.

Let me just say that it's really interesting to hear those perspectives and certainly from the provincial administrator, yu blo Higlands na yu sindaun long Manus and you've watched the degeneration of the behavior of the people of Manus and I think that's a strong disincentive there and yupela ol pipol bilong Manus I think you need to pay a little bit more attention.

We are take into account all of those recommendations from all of the different groups that have participated particularly in how we can go about fixing the processes that lead up to the elections. You know there's a lot of stuff that goes on prior to elections that we perhaps have not paid enough attention to in terms of the whole process of government.

So we will certainly put the process into some kind of format that will compel public servants to take note and to ensure that this sufficient funding on-time funding so that we can improve all of these processes going forward. With that our time is now 12 past 12.

I will suspend the hearings for lunch and we will reconvene at 1. 30 pm., in this room.

Thank you all very much.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Good afternoon and welcome to our final session in the East New Britain Province. This is the Special Committee on the 2022 Parliamentary Elections and this afternoon we are speaking to a group of very powerful women's leaders and they would like to make their contribution to the committee.

What I will do just as a matter of a simple process, I'll start on my right you can introduce yourself and make your contribution and then we move to the next lady and so on until we come to the end.

Introduce yourself, make the contribution that you would like and then we move on and then afterwards we can have an interactive session where perhaps you could ask us questions and the committee can also ask questions at end the session. Okay, so I will start with you Miss Beverly Aquila, please press the green button in front of you and you can manipulate the microphone closer if you need to.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Women's Rep-ENB Provincial Assembly

Ms BEVERLY AQUILA (Women's Rep-Provincial Assembly-East New Britain) – Good afternoon, firstly I'd like to acknowledge the presence of our honourable members here the Parliamentary Committee Members.

Thank you, my name is Beverly Aquila, I am the, women's rep from the provincial assembly and basically my contribution towards this forum will be a couple of things, I would like to bring forward in relation to the 2022 General Election.

I was part of the observer's team under the Australia National University and there was a lot of things seen but just a few things that I think I should bring forward.

Firstly, in relation to the common roll, there was a lot of issue with the common roll and that has been an ongoing issue.

I would like to recommend that the common roll updates should be done at the provinces. Census at the LLG level should be done at the wards and the provinces should own the common roll. I would also like to recommend here that if we have the NID system was fully implemented, it should solve a lot of the issues with names not present in the common roll.

We have had this process going on for a very long time now and if we can give the provinces the power to do their own NID in their provinces maybe we will have a more updated and correct common roll.

So, maybe a bio metric voting system should solve some of these issues, now I would like to see that maybe happening. It has started but we should complete it and it must work.

There has been a lot of money pumped into that work to be done and we haven't seen the result and if we have that up and going maybe some of the electoral issues will be solved. For example, we have our old people in the communities that are unable to read and write but with a central electronic system maybe using a biometric system, we can have everyone and they can vote from homes if we have that up and going.

The other issue we also encounter during the elections was the women were kind of intimidated a few of our women leaders here who contested didn't go up the ladder. Why was that, probably we should really look at that

Mr CHAIRMAN – If I may Madam, could you explain to the Committee what you mean by the women leaders were intimidated, be specific if you could, thankyou?

Ms BEVERLY AQUILA – Thank you, intimidated in a sense where a lot of women here and I think they will speak on their own experiences on what they went through.

In East New Britain we value and respect women but it came to politics, women were not supporting our women candidates, for whatever reason I don't know.

And even women were told, 'if I am voting for these candidates then you too must vote too'. So women didn't have the power and authority for herself to make their own decision. So that's one issue that I have noticed and it's the perception that politics is not a woman's game.

I don't know, probably the mindset of the people has changed over time. We have made progress when you look at the ward development at the ward level, we already have women leaders there who are actually ward members.

But when it comes to LLGs then it's the men's game again so East New Britain for instances, we have a PESK which is made up of men only so I don't know where is the balance there.

The other issue when we are talking about women in politics is having a reserve seat. We should not be a scapegoat; women should be playing in the same playing field. But we should may be come up with strategies.

What I see when sitting in the provincial assembly is I don't have a connection. The system in the provincial system from the province down to the wards, women are all represented in those decision making spaces but where do I link when it comes to the national level? There is a missing link there and I am a political representative at the provincial assembly

so how do I connect if I don't have a connection at the national level? For example, we have a Youth Commission but do we have a women commission, we have an Act of Parliament that says that every province should have a council of women but there is no policy bai givim dispela Act i gat teeth bilong em.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Can I just intervene just to help with the thinking?

Ms BEVERLY AQUILA – Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN – First of all, you are not in support of reserve seats for women and I take this point.

Secondly you want to figure out how you can connect to the national level, you say that there are no linkages to the national level.

Ms BEVERLY AQUILA – Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN – And your third point which you just made now again is what sort of policy would you like and who should be writing that policy?

I am asking because shouldn't it be something that the women should be proposing? I am just asking as someone who represents women as well and I would like to understand as the Chairman of the Committee and I am sure my colleagues would like to understand what it is you mean.

Ms BEVERLY AQUILA – Thank you, I am sitting in the provincial assembly and I am trying to connect and in the other provinces, we have a structure and its complete down to the ward level and we have women representatives sitting there but when it comes to national issues, I need to connect with other women in other provinces but who do I connect to at that level.

For now, we have the National Council of Women but I don't know whether its functioning or not I am not sure. But when you see it, the council of women was established as an association and when I come in as a political representative, how do I connect politically.

For now, maybe woman is being parked under the Social Development sector under Community Development but I feel that we are being overshadowed. Mipela ino sanap stret mipela yet na mipela ino sindaun stret mipela yet.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Can I ask another question, there are two women who have been elected through the normal process that are now in Parliament, what are your thoughts about that and as women leaders in this province are you in contact with those two women leaders?

Ms BEVERLY AQUILA – Thank you, I am in contact with one and I've been discussing a few things, for us to connect, one of the thinking that I had was why can't we have a womens ministry whether it be a male or a woman or a female Minister. The women at the moment who are sitting in there they represent the districts, they don't represent the women's so most times they won't be speaking about the issues of the women, they will be speaking on the issues of their districts so it would be good if they connect with the women networks and so they can speak as the voice of the women.

Mr CHAIRMAN – If you read and through the literature on the proposed reserve seats for women it's suggesting exactly what you're saying now and yet you disagree with it. Would you care to elaborate why you disagree with that?

Ms BEVERLY AQUILA – I feel that as a woman I have a right to contest equally and when we're talking about gender inequality and equity, I don't know if having a reserve seat will address that because gender equality now is a problem with us and if yumi putim tasol wanpela seat bilong ol meri, you are giving that seat on a golden plate to someone feel that I will not be valued. Sapos mi ronim same race, I feel that I am empowered.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Are you aware that there are some countries who have given a certain quota for women countries like Rwanda for instance. What are your thoughts on that?

Ms BEVERLY AQUILA – Yes that would be a really good way forward for women. You just disagreed with it

Mr CHAIRMAN – Rwanda has reserved seats for women and some of the countries around the world have reserved seats for women Bougainville as well

Ms BEVERLY AQUILA – Culture bilong yumi tasol em bai speakim dispeal. We have a very unique culture here and I know that men in this country have respect for women and

although I don't agree with it but if it's working in other countries why not try it and how it works. I don't know, we've been talking about this for a very long time now.

Mr CHAIRMAN – I see the other women leaders are agitating the other women leaders so perhaps I'll move along, one of you want to come in.

Miss Lanietta Aua. you seem to be wanting to say something, could I ask your opinion maybe just generally and then we can come back to you Miss Aquila

Regional Candidate -ENB

Ms LANIETTE AUA (Regional Candidate-ENB) – Thank you for giving giving us the opportunity in East New Britain and thank you to your three honorable members of Parliament.

We we are so privileged to be here today because we have a lot to say but we cannot speak here, we speak it here there is an open line with RENB that still is not good enough. We we want to speak to people who can bring it and take action on it.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Could you explain for the committee what you mean by RENB.

Ms LANIETTE AUA – It's our radio station. They are doing they're doing a fine job, they have an open line for us to bring issues online and they are aired on radio and that's a good opportunity for us but still we need to have people who are in the right chair like you honorable members that are here.

Mr CHAIRMAN – You have the floor.

Ms LANIETTE AUA –

Thank you. I am Lanietta Aua, I stood for the regional seat in East New Britain for three consecutive elections; 2012, 2017 and 2022. For me I I feel that three years is enough for me so I went on air there and told the public that I would phase out that does not mean that I will stop speaking in forums like this.

So, some of the issues that I'd like to speak on today are as follows:

The party support during the elections. According to the Registrar of political party, they were given quotas for woman and that did not happen. So, I would like to bring to your attention that the office of the registrar needs to check the parties again to make sure that the quotas are practiced and at least parties should sponsor woman who are intending to stand for elections.

This is because one of the main challenges for women candidates is financial constraints and that deters us from competing aggressively like the men do. The men are very aggressive during election and we cannot compare with them because we don't have the financial support.

While still on the issues of parties, there were some new parties that came forward at the very last minute when they saw female candidates intending to stand but did not have support, they came forward and tried to support us. But, it's all false, they don't come good and we don't get supported.

So, please there must be a period or duration in which parties should get themselves prepared, registered and ready to sponsor people during election. That goes back to the registrar of political parties. If you hear the women, one of our biggest issue is financial constraints. That's why we don't win the elections, we cannot compete.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, can I ask you to spell out what sort of financial support you would be expecting? I was a member of one of the major parties, the National Alliance Party in the last election and the only support I received from my party was, they paid my nomination fee. I was given posters and the rest of it, I had to do it myself.

So, and I think that some of my colleagues might have had similar experiences, perhaps from the big parties, you get the significant cash support.

So what kind of financial support do you need? Is it just posters and nomination fees or is it anything in addition to that? Spell it out clearly. There are other women leaders watching from around the country who would be interested to know what it is that you are contributing here.

Ms LANIETTE AUA – Okay, thank you. Besides the nomination and the posters, we women would like to be supported. I think that the parties should support us 50 per cent financially, especially for resources like transport.

I think transport is a main thing because of the length and breadth of our provinces, we need transport. Especially for me, I contested on the regional seat and I had to cross seas and go over mountains. I cannot get there because I didn't have the funds.

Obviously, for me, by the third election, I did not have much money. All the money was dug out from my family's pockets and especially for us who haven't been contesting and we have not won or have anything.

For mothers, we have many commitments and we cannot fork out that amount of money when you want equality because we still have family commitments. When men want to contest,

they will talk to the family and inform them that they are contesting and the family finance is at their discretion. I cannot do that to my husband, he will say no, this is family money, you can only have that much.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Ms Laniette, I will make a proposal to you because it's the same issue, we had with our women candidate in Morobe saying that funds mipela no accessim.

In fact, she actually asked whether the Government could create a Women in Politics Fund, but perhaps in terms of going forward, would it be possible for us to legislate a limit of party fund raising, a limit of funding use in elections through the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties so no one is disadvantaged.

What if we say that when you do your returns after the returns to the Registrar of Political Parties, we will have to monitor that no party uses more than this set amount or at your fund raising no private business, no donations go past this amount. I understand New Zealand does that.

So in terms of overwriting policy and law, perhaps we could look at limiting the party donations, limiting the level of individual candidates and this is why we submit our acquittals at the end of every election. How much did you use in logistics, campaigning, posters, et cetera, et cetera. Because money seems to be an issue to not only women, I think your male counterparts too, when they don't have the right amount of money they also lose candidates too. Because money seems to be a factor, because you see people running around with the candidate that has hosted bigger rallies, has more trucks running around, having a feast for everybody and you are just walking around by yourself because you can't afford to have 10 PMV's to go around town et cetera.

And so perhaps a way out would be having to relook at a ceiling of political party donations as well as usage of level of funds during elections. So that there is a fair play. What do you think? Because you have gone through three big elections vying for the regional seat three times and you haven't won, despite being in a matrilineal society, you still lost.

So you are saying that apart from political parties, funds is the second limiting cause of your inability to win an election. So we have to think big now. How do we address this issue of money as an advantage to winning seats in the country? So if you think about it, and those of you who are listening think about it and come forward with some practical realistic ways and going forward so we can legislate and we can do other things. What's your view on that?

Ms LANIETTE AUA – I think the Constitution has clearly spelt out equality for women in Parliament. And so the Government should come up with something like a trust fund like the Morobe Women have suggested. I think I connect with them and that's one of the ideas, we should maybe establish a trust fund for women who intend to stand. And we could apply for it as a loan to help us contest.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Could I ask your opinion on reserved seats for women? What are your views on that?

Ms LANIETTE AUA – After the election, I went on air on NBC, and I said that the Constitution needs to be checked again. I think our Constitution states that women should not have reserve seats but be nominated. And that is the hindrance to the reserved seats. That's why you people did not give us the reserved seats on a golden plate because the Constitution needs to be checked again.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Before I became a member of Parliament, I was a member of the task force that developed Vision 2050 before I became a member of Parliament. We were the first ones under the then Deputy Prime Minister Sir Puka Temu at the time to propose the idea of reserved seats which Dame Carol Kidu took to Parliament and it failed.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – We brought it late. Election was closed and all male politicians rushed and they never supported myself and Dame Carol Kidu.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Fast forward and when three women got elected to the Parliament from 2012 to 2017. The three women MPs who got elected had the same views as expressed by Ms Aquila. They said, nogat mipela ol meri mas kam in wantaim ol man. So from 2017 to 2022 nogat meri lo Parliament. Tingting ya em kirap ken taim nogat meri long Parliament. Mipela ken kirap na stat ken long toktok, the Prime Minister took the idea and was trying to push for six reserve seats to create six regional seats but it never made it to the Floor of Parliament.

I would have supported it had it come to the Floor simply because you are suggesting the idea of getting additional money long yupela ol meri long ron long ileksen. There might be genuine women and they might be those who aren't. I'm just giving you a hypothetical

situation. What if yupela olgeta kisim mani na yupela olgeta ron nobody wins again? I'm just posing you a question because I think you've got to look at the other side.

My view is that we need a guaranteed pathway and with a sunset clause. Papua New Guinea inogat sans long lukim ol meri I perform lo ol dispela leadership roles. Ol meri kam insait na go outsait ken long narapela ileksen. Ol kam insait ken na olgeta man tok it's all fine and well, nau mipela igat tupela meri so let's just wash our hands.

Nogut 2027 ileksen kam na bai nogat meri ken. I mean that is the PNG way so we need to be a little bit proactive and have a guaranteed pathway. This is the reason why I am a strong supporter of reserve seats because Papua New Guineans are always quoting Rwanda. Rwanda's women are guaranteed seats because of clear pathways so ol no save bisi long mani na ol narapela samting, rot stap pinis.

Just an idea for all of you women not just here, but in other parts of the country to think about it. Whilst we are the election committee, em bai gutpela long yupela sindaun na toktok long yupela yet long ol grup bilong yupela and come with a proposal but not to knock the other proposals that are there without seeing the merits of them.

For myself, I've run six elections and I've only won two. They're very costly exercises and from my own experience with political parties is that I've never been given any funds by a political party. I've had to fund it myself with my own friends and family. Other people might have a different experience but I also know that money alone will not get you elected.

I had a sitting member in my province who I'm aware spent close to K5 million in a very small seat logistically and he still lost and the person who won probably spent about aK100,000. I'm not going to sit here and act like I'm an expert except this is my experience that I'm sharing with you. Just so we don't close off one doorway because we think this one is the right one for women. We have to have an open mind and yumi noken paitim boros na tok olsem tupela meri win pinis na stap. Kain bilong yumi ol PNG, ol meri tu save laik kamap olsem man sampela taim.

PNG needs women at those decision making levels and we need a guaranteed way to get women there. Olsem yu yet tok pinis, yupela em matrilineal society but yet you're having difficulties. I come from a patrilineal society and women do have difficulties

Mr CHAIRMAN – And that's understandable but then kam lo hia, Milne Bay mipela lukim olsem yupela i struggle. Bougainville, matrilineal societies. So, if we have this struggle in a matrilineal society, can you imagine how much more difficult it is in other parts? So, just to help the thinking and to allow you to, let's not get stuck on the discussion, so maybe we

move it along a little bit, at least you know where the discussion is going. Ma'am, you want to say some more?

Gazelle Open candidate

Ms KATHLEEN MIDAL KUNAI (Candidate-Gazelle) – Yes please. Thank you. I support reserve seats, I do. My intention of my support is to make sure that there is a voice of women in Parliament. That's the only and that's one of the reasons why I decided to stand. I wanted to have a voice and I gave myself to stand but I support the reserve seat. If there were five seats in Parliament, then maybe the women will be more comfortable but there's still this other venue to contest, and I do support that.

Preparing for election, I think we women are still mobilising to set up foundations for us to try and so that we can support each other. But like I said in the beginning, we are family women. So many commitments. Sometimes we stand behind our men and we carry the load more than men. With that, thank you very much.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you, madam. I'll come back to our original process. Ms Margaret Sova, would you like to say something to the committee, madam?

Regional Candidate-ENB

Ms MARGARET SOVA (Regional Candidate-ENB)– Good afternoon. Once again, good afternoon to all of us and here I'd like to say thank you to the honourable members, ministers. I will say that the coming of you to this place East New Britain and when I heard the call last night for this coming here, I was much happy.

So today, there's a lot of things that have been said by Beverly, Ms Aquila and my sister over there, Laniette Aua, Mrs Aua. I would like to say the task that I went through about the decision I made to stand as a woman, Laniette and I we went to the same party and it was a new party. The struggle that she has said, I won't repeat. It fell to two of us the same, we were walking in the same pathway and campaigning. Walking together.

I'm a widow and she's still Mrs Aua, I'm the wife of late Sowa and I made my decision I couldn't cancel my decision when I stood up, planning with my husband that I will stand when he was still alive in 2020. So, he left in late 2020 so I still push onto carry out the mission of the dreams that I have to implement for my women.

Before I stood, I was the President of the Gazelle District Council of Women. And there was a lot of things seen at the level of the women leaders like the council of women as Beverly

has spoken about. There were good things and there were things that I can't mention. There was good side, downfall, and upgoing with the women. There was no good support from the government and I am not ashamed to say. I stayed with the council women for full solid six years from 2016 up to 2022, in May I left for the campaign.

With that I feel that, what I saw and the vision that pushed me to come in to run for the women's seat, I planned for what I was going to do for my women but it didn't come out right because as Mrs Aua already said, we had to struggle with finance. The little Finance for family is not enough to push us, like the transport and everything like this to move us.

My area was the very mass populated, the Gazelle District. So I feel that I did my part, I went to some of the LLGs but not too far because I went on PMVs. Sometimes its the two of us working together but seeing things like Beverly already said about the culture of East New Britain, yes, we can say that in matrilineal society, we women, mipela ol boss. But I say it's a lie and it's a true lie.

I am the mother and the spokeswoman of my clan, I'm talking right now and I can say yes we are saying that the women em i boss and on the other side men always take sides to do everything, so that's why I stood up to do something for my small women down there. I had a plan for my women as a women leader and that was my aim to start small from the doorstep up. I would like to do things for the families and then it comes like men thinks about big things but a mother will go down to the level of where problems comes and that's where I'm sitting right here to give out what I felt in my heart and what a big los –

Mr CHAIRMAN – Sorry madam, I'll interrupt you there. During the election Miss Aquila mentioned that there was some intimidation of the women candidates. Did you experience any of that, if so could you share with the committee?

Ms MARGARET SOVA – Yes what she said is true but I for one can take critics because I'm strong. Whatever I heard and like that the word intimidated, I went through it but I don't talk about it. You know it's me and him. I will say, I can't say much about that. I take that as a cross for me and when I walked through that something will change along the line. Now I say thank you Mr chairman and I believe that as we are going along like this we women sitting here we can see what is going on but thank you very much that you came this far and to get our opinion.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you Miss Sova.

Ms KATHLEEN MIDAL KUNAI – (Former Candidate – Gazelle Open) – Yes good afternoon. My name is Kathleen Midal Kunai and I ran for the Gazelle seat. It was very challenging for me, as it my first time to stand and I took the challenge. I do believe in the reserve seat even if we women never made it but when we are given the opportunity through the reserve seat, we can speak and give the balance. I was supported

I was one of the pro candidates, I was given financial support from the party that stood me up. I budgeted well for it but the support was very limited because I ran for the Gazelle Seat and it is a pretty big electorate.

One of my recommendations lo yupela ken take note long em; planti lo ol woklain found it hard to leave their place of work to come and cast their votes. So, to you the Committee, if you can putim sumpela kain mark lo panelisim ol company wer ol ino releasim ol wokman blo ol lo go na castim vote bilong ol. Sapos wanpela subsistence farmer or man lo ples i ken lusim spade blo em or bus knife bol em na go castim vote blo em, ol wokman tu mas wokim olsem bikos taim memba i go insait na givim moni blo developement em same rot bai yumi olgeta bai travel wantaim.

So, em wanpela recommendation blo mi if sampela kain penalty fees can be applied to those companies who do not allow the employees or be lenient on them to go and cast their votes.

The other recommendation that I have is that as a woman candidate, I bowed out very low. I saw that in the province of East New Britain, we had a problem with our Council of Women which I believe it's been considered by Community Development.

I believe that each one of us women could just ride in the Council of Women, just mobilize through the Council of Women which we have a voice but I for one saw that if the Council of Women was functioning and not dormant in the province I believe we would make a fair go and not to bow out very low which I was one of them that bowed out very low.

Yes, I was one of the women that were asked to attend the Diagnostic Forum in Moresby and brought it out to the Government of the day lo stretim Women of Council through Community Development and I believe the general secretary is aware of that so I look forward in getting the Council of Women as a vehicle for us to perform very well because I know that

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Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Ms Kunai, can you please explain what you expect from the Council of Women and politics? Can you explain a little bit more clearly lo wanem wok

bai Council of Women wokim na i ken helpim ol meri lo go insait lo politics? What other specific areas that you are thinking of that the National Council of Women should do?

Ms KATHLEEN MIDAL KUNAI – Yeah, tingting bilong mi em sapos Council of Women em function normally because mipela insait lo East New Britain, I dai liklik or em i dormant. So, suppose Council of Women ol i steretim gut, kirapim ken na wokim ol ileksen blo ol president, I think they are given some terms but in our province it is dormant. So, suppose Council of Women em function then I as a candidate can come through the Council of Women lo mipela i ken go out into the electorate apart from me, myself going out and doing my own campaign and all that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – From a party or you will join another party?

Ms KATHLEEN MIDAL KUNAI – Yes, even though I'm in a party but that Council of Women can also help me to go out and reach out to the whole population as women because I for one believe in standing for the rights of women and speaking some things which I feel as a woman. Thank you.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Just one question. Ms Aquila, are you in the provincial assembly representing the women?

Ms BEVERLYN AQUILA – Thank you, I am supposed to be the voice of the women in the province.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But you are representing the Provincial Council of Women.

Ms BEVERLYN AQUILA – It's supposed to be the case basically, I'll just add back to what Miss Kunai just said, Council of Women is not functioning the way it's supposed to function.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Okay, we leave it at that because in 2013 the National Council of Women Act was passed by Parliament so there is a law, which legitimates the

establishment of the National Council of Women, then Provincial Council of women and District Council of Women.

So, in my province the chairperson of the Provincial Council of Women is a member of the provincial assembly and in my district the DDA member is a president of the district Women's Council, she's a member of the DDA board. Is it not working like that here?

Ms BEVERLYN AQUILA – It's supposed to be working that way and it has been working that way. For the last 10 years there were some infighting amongst the women leaders in the province and that's where it went wrong. I am in now and I recognize the issue and we have started the process to get the women back on track. I am sitting in the provincial assembly as an appointed representative.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Chosen by the Governor of the province.

Ms BEVERLYN AQUILA – Yes, it was hand picking which for me, I felt it was not the right way to do and the reason being because the Council of Women was not organized the previous government had to hand pick women leaders to sit on the provincial assembly.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – We understand the process; I mean one of the recommendations that you made was for a separate Ministry for women to be established so like Miss Kunai your intention to stand was to bring the voices of women. Whereas our belief is that anybody who stands must bring the voices of everybody not just women or disabled or men or church or whatever but there is this specific issue of women.

I think the suggestion of establishing a dedicated Ministry for Women and Home Affairs like before rather than General Community Development to broaden too many things so, we have a dedicated Ministry then that could form part of the recommendations.

Ms BEVERLYN AQUILA – Thank you!

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – I was just interested in trying to see how the structure of the Council of Women at the national and provincial level whether you are trying to bring that organization into politics whether that's a right way to go.

Ms BEVERLYN AQUILA – No!

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Because politics will not be the answer for all the women's issues in the country and therefore I think the discussion and Chairman brought out a dedicated pathway; Rwanda and Bougainville example maybe a way forward with a sunset. So, when we reach a level of maturity in politics then anybody can stand and women will stand and they'll still win.

Ms BEVERLYN AQUILA – Thank you

Mr CHAIRMAN – Just you know while we're talking to Ms Kunai and I'm sure, I'd like to move to Ms Wat shortly, I understand from the candidates that did speak, there was an intention to represent the women. And I'm just wondering to what extent did you try to appeal to the male voters, Ms Wat, and then perhaps the others can come in on that particular issue.

Gazelle Open Candidate

Ms. THEONILA WAT (Gazelle Open candidate) – Firstly, I'd like to make a comment here, to thank the office of the National Parliament to come to this level in the province to meet us for the first time and I'm really emotional because the way I see it, it was a bit overdue for a long time waiting and for your coming here is timely.

That is one of my distresses while I was contesting for the Election in 2022, I am a former nurse by profession in Nonga General Hospital. In my 35 years of service, I have seen the daily problems myself concerning the women folks in the community and with the service at the curative level for my people to come and look for the service and to be sent back to the small hospital or the clinics was the one that made me think a lot. Can I go home early and look after my people. I decided to retire at the age of 56 years in 2016 to go home. While I was in the village, I decided to stay home for four good years, to study my people and see the indicators that allow these problems to rise in my community.

I am a single mother and not a business oriented but my heart for my people was the one that forced me to contest. I contested as a single mother for this position like somebody mentioned to follow the step up but I didn't follow the step from the ward member up but instead I contested the Gazelle Open. It was a challenge and my interest was to study the environment and have a taste of politics and also my Constitution and democratic rights to be a woman and exercise my leadership skills.

With that I am not an expert in politics but because of the issues that arose in my community, this pushed me to stand. If I had struggle with my children alone by myself and I see how the suffering of the communities. So my standing was more to look at reducing suffering in women because beyond the millennium women are still suffering. We have facilities but why are they still suffering? These are some of the issues that pushed me to contest as a candidate and take the challenge but I am happy that I have had a taste and to be part of the exercise.

I am not giving up but waiting for another term to come and wilcontest. To be a leader you must have some good experience in leadership and that still rings in my ears and is telling me never give up. My goal stands and when will the women suffering stop. And just one of the portion of my coming in, is to look at where I stand and how will I be supported.

I was happy to come out but today I am the ward development committee member and I accepted it and am looking after health sector and disaster in my ward. I am happy to work along with anything like this with stakeholders to come and support me where I stand. I am looking forward to take up the challenge in the future to still focus on women suffering. Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you Ms Wat. We have got a person living with disability so mi go long yu pastaim. Turangu yu stap longpela taim. Yu former candidate bilong Rabaul Open Ms Sovek, I give you the Floor Madam. Press the green button.

Regional Candidate – ENB

Ms ROSEMARY SOVEK (Regional Candidate – ENB) – Okay thank you, firstly mi laik tok tenkyu long Committee, East Sepik Governor, Honourable Allan Bird na Sir Puka Temu, Member for Abau, na Honourable Ellias Kavapore, firstly mi laik tok tenkyu na bikpela hamamas bilong mipela ol meri and the people of East New Britain and New Guinea Islands.

Name bilong mi em Rosemary Vartuham Sovek, I am sitting here wearing two hats firstly I personally contested 2007 and 2012 in Rabaul. After the eruption, I made up my mind long sanap long election because we saw that we were in the disaster after the volcanic eruption.

I come from Malaguna, Rabaul urban ward 8, we are the very industrious LLG and there is really nothing happening when copra, cocoa, balsa, fisheries and everything else is running under our nose. That is why I thought of standing contesting in 2007. I think there were 16 candidates and I made it to the eighth position.

In 2012, there was over 15 candidates, I made it to sixth position and then maybe God had another plan for me, so it dawned on me that I was good at business. So, what I did, I continued in business buying copra, sea cucumber and I exported in 2019.

So, after seeing our people suffering after the eruption there was not much services. Rabaul, was the pearl of the Pacific and we had so much in tourism, business and so many other things that were happening but we have nothing, up till today.

Ino gat planti samting insait lo K10 million iwoklo kam, mipela ino sa lukim wanpela samting insait lo ward. There is nothing in our wards and I think that we need to educate people who are in the Ward Development Committees about proper governance inside the system and they can connect to the LLG's, to the districts and then to the provincial level. So, most of these people who are ward recorders must collect data correctly.

We heard so many complaints about people being turned away. So, lo 2022, mi bin warnim ol meri ol i wok lo collectim data; one of my aunties was in that group and I told her, 'if you don't update the common roll properly because our people are known for fighting in Rabaul town, they even go to the extend of closing down shops and causing the town to come to a standstill'. These are people in Malaguna number 1, where I come from. So, I did warn my aunty and it did happen. Taim ol i go long voting lo go insait, oli painim ol nem bilong ol. What happened?

So, we need to educate the ward recorders and give them sessions on collecting data so the will know how to fill the Form 11. You have to understand how to fill the form 11 in an honest, transparent and accountable manner. So, that come voting, they know what to do instead of picking any Tom, Dick and Harry from the village but they must be voted by the community or by ward to go and become a ward recorder or the ward development committee. They must be educated because this is where we are are finding so much difficulty. I have seen this and I'm talking from experience. I'm wearing two hats here, I'm also the coordinator of East New Britain People's Progress Party. I think since 1982, 1987, come 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007 up till 2022, the worst election of all was 2022. Why?

Na tu narapela sumtin em Common Roll. We were not given enough time for the ward rolls to be displayed and to go back to the ward and the ward counsellors and even myself have the right to know if my name is on the Common Roll because we are going to vote. So right blo mi em neim blo mi bai stap. But, we were not given enough time.

So, 2022 was the worse election of all my 27 years of politics and this is something that I learnt from the presentations from other provinces.

I think Bougainville was okay because I also voted in Bougainville on the Referendum, my name is also listed there because mi marit lo hap. –

So when I see this, mi lukim olsem Form-11, I think the challenge bai go back long ol lain long Electoral Commission. They need to decentralize the work of the common roll back into the communities. But as I said these people, ward recorders must be educated. Ol i just pickim Tom, Dick and Harry na ol i kam putim ol na time bilong go na wokim census, they don't come to the doors. Sometimes ol i kam, ol man i stap long bus o kain olsem. That I don't mind, but yu save you are in the ward and you know husait i stap long ward so you just traim na raitim husait i stap, get the information and put in the Form 11. What's the big issue, wanem samtin bin stopim ol? We were told that there was not enough Form 11.

There was so much money that mipela harim pinis long olgeta toktok that so much money in the Electoral Commission, so this money from nomination should go back into the provinces so taim oli abrusim budget bilong ol, they can take it out from this trust account.

There should be a trust accounts in all provinces and this should be a recommendation to the committee to take it up with our legislators. We hear that these legislators are becoming project officers and they shouldn't be doing ground breaking ceremonies and presenting cheques, this is a mockery.

Mi sindaun long here as a disabled mother just from 2020 I ran into my illness and I got amputated in PIH in Port Moresby during the Covid time in April. It's really costly in the Pacific International Hospital and income the second leg in Nonga, it's very cheap because it's a public hospital, K50 compared to K91,000 and I think this is just too much for health. I think we need to look at health for woman.

So me sindaun long hia bikos me harim olgeta presentations. I was first here yesterday because I wanted to know, It's all about taking ownership. We have to take ownership of anything that is going to happen in the ward, LLG and the district.

Mr ELIAS KAPAVORE – Ms Rosemary, you've said the 2022 Election was one of the most challenging one and one of the challenges that you've faced is the ward recorders not doing their jobs properly. What are the other challenges that you have faced?

Ms ROSEMARY SOVEK – Sorry, me tok olsem 2022 was the worst because when you go back I have my common rolls from the past elections and when I compare, ol ward recorder ino save rausim name bilong ol die man. Names bilong plenti ol die man too stap yet long ol common roll. This is one of the contributing factors na sampela ol i go inside bikos ol i tok

olsem name blo die man ya istap na bai me vote em. This is dishonesty so they need to remove or take off the names of people who have died. It hasn't been done.

Mr ELIAS KAPAVORE – Yu tok olsem ward recorders em wanpela challenges yu lukim. Apart from the ward recorders, common roll updates and others, you've said that 2022 General Election was most challenging from your observations, what are the other challenges that you have faced?

Ms ROSEMARY SOVEK – Narapela samtin em long campaign na ol scrutineers. We need to gazette people who are going to be scrutineers na lo runim ol pre- election traing bilong candidates like what was said earlier on because education, awareness and advocacy is very important and I sit here is an advocate. Olsem me save harim sampela radio, me singautim councillor bilong me o ol lain bilong mipela na tok, 'yupla harim too long radio long ol kain toktok osem'.

Like what happened yesterday and today because inogat information igo aut long ol komunities that's why most of my womenfolk's where oli bin run didn't turn up yesterday because there was not enough awareness. For me I was following up on all the regional forums and because I'm a party executive, I was informed that this meeting was going to come up that's why I was first here yesterday.

So I think dispela em bikpela challenge. We need to get people that are educated to read the forms and understand the forms that ikam in. because olgeta samting oli raitim lo English ino lo tok ples blo yumi. This is why I'm saying education awareness and advocacy is very important. So taim mi lukluk olsem mi tok olsem, candidates ikisim committee –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Ms Sovek, how about your views on the people living with disabilities. In terms of election systems, representations, what are your specific views on how should the country handle the persons living with disabilities.

Ms ROSEMANRY SOVEK – Okay I think disabilities mi lukim osem istap aninit lo health. I mean you are a former health secretary and I think the disabilities should go aninit lo Health not Community Development. Because me lukim olsem Community Development people they only sit in their offices and in the LLGs. They are called Community Development officers but they don't come down to visit the disabilities in their homes.

They should be running around like Australia, America, Singapore, ol hap where mi go, mi lukim ol disabilities yah ol wokman long Government oli sa kam na visitim ol lo ol homes because they cannot move out due to transportation. For me, mi orait, I can move around, how about ol narapla turangu.

My recommendation is for Health to take back disabilities to go aninit lo health sector so when they are sick or wanem em ol health people, not Community Development. Community Development are not health officers and they don't even know wanem samting irong wantem ol.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you Ms Sovek, I think the Committee takes note of your concern particularly for the issues around the electoral roll at the ward level and with the need for better support for people living with disabilities when it comes to elections but also generally, which you discussed.

I'm going to ask Ms Zao to make a comment and then after that I'm going to call for a short break because I think we still have members in the audience who want to take part so if there are other women leaders who would like to make a few concluding remarks I'll allow that. Ms Zao

Ward Member-Vunairoto

Ms ANAZIN ZAO (Vunairoto Ward Member) – Anazin Zao is my name I'm a ward member of ward Vunairoto, North Coast Road. There are three things I'd just like to mention. A lot of women did not vote in the last election and that is the 2022 Elections. Simply because their names were not on the Common Roll and Form 11 was not even available when we asked for them.

I'd like to appeal that the common roll update should be given back to the Community. Right now, the Provincial Government is working on update of the ward record book and my WDCs are working on ours at home. While they are working on that, they are doing a lot of work, but they are doing that voluntarily.

On top of that the WDCs the Ward Recorders are not even paid in our LLGs and in our district. While we are doing this, they are doing this freely and I want to ask if it is taken back to the LLGs to the provincial Government and especially to the community government to update the common roll, we need money to do that. That is my first point.

My second point is in regards to a lot of candidates contesting one particular seat. At times we asked why there were so many candidates and the answer we get back is, sampela

bilong ol mipela putim long burukim votes. So is there a law or are there regulations and cross-checks to see if those that are standing are genuine candidates that will work for their communities?

My third point is people do not take elections seriously. I was a teacher for a very long time but when I get home, I still work as a teacher. When the election is ongoing and I asked people if they are going to vote, they reply back with, mi makim na em bai wokim wanem bilong mi? Bai em givim mi sampela moni bilong em? I'd like to see prosecution takes place when people do not come for election and vote.

Those are my three points and thank you very much.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you. That was very articulated and thought-provoking suggestions that you have made. We got our head of NRI making notes at the back there.

Women leaders, do any of you have some final points before I call for a short break?

Ms THEONILA WAT – Upon what I just shared with us, firstly I'd like to propose before I make my closing for all of us, that the women should have a party.

Secondly, the reserve seats must not be removed but remains there to give opportunity for women to have a voice in the Parliament. And thirdly, to discourage the split voters. Those are the ones that bring big numbers of voters to stand in to any elections.

With that three points to support my women folks, I'd like to take this time on behalf of our women leaders sitting here, we are thankful, the torch is in the tunnel for us and you are ready to support us in times of difficulties when it comes to situation of elections. We will not fail ourselves that we don't have that potential but we are still striving and looking forward. We thank the National Parliament for bringing you down to us at this provincial level.

Thank you very much.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you, Ms Wat. With that let me thank the women leaders from Eastern Britain Province but representing NGI in general, and I must say it's been a very rich conversation and the committee thanks you for speaking up on behalf of women.

Before I let you all go, I want to just inform you that I am the Deputy Chairman of the Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment Committee. The Chairman is the Honourable Powes Parkop, the Governor of NCD.

When we were in Morobe Province, there was a request that the committee should listen to the women leaders in Morobe. There's already confirmation from Governor Parkop that

there will be a visit there. If there is an interest from the women leaders here in East New Britain, then I will also extend your invitation to Governor Parkop to consider making a visit here and I believe that that committee is interested in part of our proceedings as well.

So just to let you know that this committee is looking at elections and there's a specific committee looking at women's empowerment, but there are cross interests in some of the matters that concerns not just elections but empowerment of women in general.

So I just wanted to make that point clear to you. With that I thank you for your participation and your contribution in what you have just given to the committee this afternoon.

I will now suspend the hearings for 15 minutes. There's some coffee here and some biscuits and whatever. Please help yourselves and in 15 minutes time, we'll organise for the remaining participants to take their seats and we'll reconvene. Thank you all very much.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you everyone and welcome back to the final afternoon session of our Special Parliamentary Committee hearings into the conduct of the 2022 Elections and elections generally and looking at all of the issues associated with elections.

We now have a group from the East New Britain community, we have a youth rep, we have a private citizen which is good, and we have an LLG president and the Deputy Governor.

I will start with our private citizen because you seem to be ready Sir, so I will start with you To Luluai. Please make your contribution to the committee you have the floor.

Private Citizen -ENB

Mr ARTHUR LULUAI (Private Citizen-ENB) – Thank you Chairman and the Members of the committee. Mi gat bikpela tok tenkiu long dispela bikpela tingting i bin i kamap long yumi lukluk bek long ol hevi i bin ikamap long Nesinel eleksen. Ino last yia 2022 tasol also the previous years.

Planti toktok yumi tok pinis na bikpela failure bilong ol eleksen bilong yumi em ol pipol ino vot. Dispela em i go bek long update bilong common roll. Long mi yet, mi sawe lukim olsem, gavaman em ino fundim gut Electoral Commission. Sapos gavaman emi fundim gut electoral commission long olgeta yia, I believe olgeta yia within the five years bai oli sawe wok gut long updatim ol common roll bilong yumi. Na sapos gavaman em i fundim gut Electoral Commission long olgeta yia bai yumi lukim tu olsem planti hevi we yumi sawe bungim long ol nesinel general eleksen will be taken care of within that five years.

Bai ol i go wokim awareness long ol pipol na olsem mi tok pinis bai ol iken wok wantem ol ward records na updatim ol electoral roll. Na dispela mi lukim olsem Electoral

Commission em i wanpela constitutional office we gavaman em i lustingting long givim em gut gutpela kaikai, na gutpela mani long makim gut wok bilong em.

Mi bilip tu olsem sapos gavaman em i fundim gut Electoral Commission, yumi wok long toktok long decentralization of the printing, the updating of the rolls em bai ol i wokim tasol long ol Electoral Commission offices insait long provinces.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Alright Sir, mi stopim yu liklik. Olsem mipela komiti imekim sampela wok painim aut pinis na mi just givim yu sampela luksawe toktok. Electoral Commission long dispela eleksen ol i kisim K311 million. Aut long dispela K311 million ating K1 million tasol i kam long East New Britain, from the discussions that we had.

Ating Manus tu i kisim K1 million tasol, West New Britain em if yupela i stap long last couple of days bai yupela i harim. Orait mipela tu long komiti, mipela i gat bikpela interest long find out dispela olgeta mani i go we? Mi tu mi laik long understand, bikos mi man bilong push long understandim ol dispela samting insait long lukluk bilong ol sawe tok transparency na accountability. Mipela Sepik sawe tok olsem, pik mipela sawe katim long ples klia, mipela no sawe katim long ass bilong diwai long bus.

So, just to clarify that na yupela ol Tolai i smile because yupela i understand. But, just to make you aware, the police received about K150 million, the whole total of the last election, the national government i givim over lo K600 million, abrusim half a billion. So, em i wanpela wok painim aut wer Komiti tu laik understandim. That is why when we are talking to the provinces, we are asking them yupela kisim hamas moni na and the Secretariat is actually collating the numbers.

So far, I would say that the direct funding to the provinces out of this K311 million by my estimate comes to potentially around K30 million so far. That's my estimate now and as a person who has a financial background, I'm still curious as to what happened to the balance, the K280 odd million. So, mi just toksave tasol olsem taim yupela itoktok lo funding, we know that the funding was late but we also know that it was very significant funding.

We also know that because it's a Constitutional Office, the Ombudsman Commission, and other agencies like the Auditor General, the powers that they have over the checking of the accounts of all constitutional offices, those powers are a bit hazy at the moment.

There was a court case recently to try to define how we can hold constitutional offices accountable. So, this committee because it is a Parliamentary Committee, puts us slightly above constitutional offices and it gives us the right to question how they function.

So, mi just givim liklik clarity tasol lo guidim ol toktok na tingting going forward.

To Luluai.

Mr AUTHUR LULUAI – Thank you Chairman.

So, gavanam i save givim moni long Electoral Commission, em isave givim dispela kain moni tasol long taim lo General Eleksen. So long wan wan yia, gavaman i save allocatim hamas tru i go lon PNG Electoral Commission? Lon wanpela yia olsem 23, 24 na bihain nau 25 or bai waitim tasol taim blo Eleksen ikam na bai givim dispela K300 million? Na long wan wan yia bifo lon eleksen gavaman sa givim hamas?

Mr CHAIRMAN – Long dispela em yumi save olsem ol Annual Funding olgeta agency sa kisim but for specific event like the Electoral Update, em i gat special budget lo em. Ol narapela agencies olsem NSO when they want to do a Census they have a separate budget requirement, last taim ol i bin singaut lo K200 million plus.

Mipela lo Komiti i curious as to what are all these monies used for because the operational funds are given and that we know. Then, if you've been harim ol story blo ol provinces including your own, a lot of the provincial governments have been putting money in. Mi olsem mi stap Gavana mi save olsem East Sepik Province i spendim klostu K4 million lo dispela eleksen. So, I'm very close to that and I understand.

So, as a governor I'm curious as to how much money the electoral ofis i kisim, how much did they send to my province. The police, how much did they get. I understand that only K140,000 was sent for the police lo province blo mi and my province is about maybe five times the size of yours. Just to give you some perspective into the discussion.

So, all agencies save kisim monies na olgeta yia na wanem kain ol special wok yumi gat, yumi sa kisim. The issue that some of us have and if you've been following the discussion; for me personally from a provincial perspective, I want to know how much money the police are getting in my province. I don't know, I've been in Parliament six years and I still have no idea how much money comes down the police.

For Health, we have decentralized it to the provinces so we have control over health but when it comes to the Police, there is nothing. With the electoral functions same thing in fact, in East Sepik, if the provincial government did not intervene, the elections would have failed also so hence, interest bilong yumi

Long sait bilong moni, planti agencies i save kisim planti moni na mipela sampela i wok long askim question. What are they doing with the money? I still want to know what are they

doing with the money even if the money is late then they still spend K311 million? Where did they spend it?

Mipela i questenim Defesce. Defense Force i tokim mipela olsem olgeta helicopter hire ol i usim long election em Police Force paid for it. The Electoral Commission didn't pay for anything. So dispela kain ol samting mipela laik reconcilim na find out who paid for what. Because the national government is spending it on the same activity so this is part of the confusion that we are trying to dig through. So, I would ask you to steer clear of the financial question because dispela em part bilong terms of reference bilong mipela long komiti long lukluk long em. So, we will continue to dig into it to understand that so, mi toksave long yu long dispela. So, please focus on other issues.

Mr AUTHUR LULUAI – Tenkyu, bai mi givim taim long ol narapela long toktok.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Gutpela mi lukim olsem Mr Tiolam Wawaga, yu readi pinis so mi larim yu toktok nau na bihain Deputy Governor bai toktok, luk olsem ol politics toktok bai kamap. Mr Tiolam Wawaga, yes, em LLG president mi luksave, sapos yu laik toktok planti mi wornim yu bai mi intervene.

LLG President-Raluana

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA (LLG President-Raluana) – Tenk yu Governor bilong East Sepik na tu em Chairman bilong dispela komiti, Honourable Allan Bird, Deputy Chairman Sir Puka Temu, Mema bilong Abau.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Sir inap yu pulim microphone igo klostu long yu na toktok, nogut ol lain long beksait ino harim yu.

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – Tenkyu, Mema bilong Pomio husait tu em i memba bilong komiti, Honourable Elias Kapavore. Tenkyu long yupela i kam na harim sampela ol tingting blong mipela long postmortem bilong dispela 2022 General Elections.

Chairman planti toktok ol lain bilong mi ol i express pinis long experience bilong ol long 2022 Elections. Ol ward rolls em wanpela common problem. Long LLG bilong mi I think maybe just 60 per cent of the voting pollution ol i bin castim ol vots bilong ol. And the reason being their names were not on the roll. I guess it's probably common and I agree with the other

speakers who came and spoke that 2022 was the worst election ever that you know mainly to do with the common roll.

A lot of people spoke about Form 11 and for 2022 General Elections that Form 11 was never cited or even in my LLG, it was never used because maybe they didn't trust the ward recorder whose task was to verify and confirm voters in that particular community.

My suggestion and recommendation to assist with the committee is that we can possibly decentralize the common roll to be available in the province. Maybe a year or six months prior to any elections. And then, when it's available people can put it on the board and maybe verify and confirm if they are eligible to vote in that particular election. So that's my recommendation.

I'm not going to say much but I'd like to just speak on the case of the ward recorder whose tasked to carry out administrative role in the ward.

In my view the ward recorder should be an officer that is free of any political influence and currently he or she is appointed by the ward member when he gets in after ward elections or LLG elections and is there for the term of the ward member.

Taim ward memba i lus long election em tu i go aut. Now we need to have ward recorders who are permanent officers who should be for continuity purposes to make sure that programs in the ward must continue during and after the LLG election.

And also, they should be free of any political influence. Which means taim em i kam, poret long Electoral Commission long involim ol long dispela electoral roll na Form 11 it should be tasked with making sure that those people who come and cast their votes are genuine members of that particular community.

So em sampela toktok bihain long ol toktok ol i tokaut pinis. But bikipela toktok bai yumi ting mas kam long dispela forum o dispela bung yumi gat em iolsem, I come from a LLG that is currently going through a very difficult time, we law and order em i wanpela problem now I would like to ask the Committee if they have considered that in future we might have some problems with the election process.

Mr CHAIRMAN – If I can intervene?

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – Yes, Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Sapose yu go tru long ating online yumi gat ol first olgeta ol session bilong Committee em istap online na if you will see the one where we crossed examined the

Commissioner of Police, na em i givim mipela dispela toktok na ating Defence Force Commander tu em i confirmim toktok bilong Police Commissioner.

Ol i tok olsem in 2012, they have an election map so olgeta province ol i putim colour code and the ones where they expect trouble they put them in red, the ones that are sort of half between problems and nogat bikpela hevi ol i putim yellow, and those provinces that they felt were easy to execute the security operations bilong elections ol i putim green.

Long 2012, about half were green and some were red mostly long Highlands tasol i red na wan wan long nabis i yellow.

Taim ol i kam long 2017, ol i tok olsem panti i go yellow na plenti i go red na green i wok long kam daun. Long 2022, i no gat mo green, olgeta i go yellow na red tasol.

Na long 2027 they expecting that majority will be red and their advice to us as the Committee and its on the record yupela yet ken sekim, ol i tok olsem even sapos yupela i doublim size bilong police manpower na doublim size bilong Defense Force, we will not be able to solve it until yupela i fixim election process na fixim behaviour bilong ol candidates na supporters bilong ol.

That's the advice from our security forces so just long kam long strongim tingting bilong yu, this is the reason why the Committee is very serious in the work we are carrying out because if we don't do a good job and if we don't bring in the changes that are necessary we are expecting, already predicted this year, by our security forces that 2027 will be the worst election we have ever conducted in this country. So, em toksave mi givim long yu na you may continue.

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – Thankyou Chairman, mi mas tok thank you that this concern has been addressed at this time because I know future elections there will be a problem. Its just to do with drugs. All our youths in the communities are involved with drugs.

Like you've highlighted and categorize different provinces and different regions but for now, I continue to tell my colleagues and friend that mi i stap wantaim yupela long Raluana. Maybe it's a season but in the next few months, it will be your turn.

So, this is a trend that is going around and I'm glad that you've actually captured this concern because I'm worried that we might, in future our leaders will be drug lords where they're using the power of drugs to lure our youths and they'll get elected, they might even remove some of you genuine leaders.

We have genuine leaders but in the next 10 to 15 years, we might lose good leaders and they will be replaced by people that are not good. That is why, mi laik go bek lo dispela tingting olsem, taim bilong eleksen bai yumi mas screenim ol man pastem. Choose genuine ones for

example, because I'm from Kokopo, instead of having 30 people contesting for Kokopo Open, we should just choose four people representing the four LLGs in Kokopo district? By doing that we should be able to choose the best candidate to represent that district in the National Parliament.

Otherwise, if the government continues to allow any person to contest, we might be surprised that the Parliament which is an honorable House in our country will be filled with drug lords. That is my fear.

Mr Chairman, that is my contribution to this forum, thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you, I think that's a timely warning to those of us who are doing this work and taking a look into the future, we appreciate your contribution, ToWawaga.

Mi go long Youth Rep nau, Mr Patilio.

Youth Rep-ENB

Mr EPHRAIM PATILIU (Youth Rep-ENB) – Thank you Chairman, Honourable Allan Bird, committee members of the panel; Honourable Elias Kapavore and Sir Puka Temu.

As a Youth Rep, mi gat sampela lukluk na view long ol ileksen i bin kam pinis, especially 2017 and 2022. I have got a few points that I want to make, only recommendations. As you can see, firstly we are in a disaster risk zone, like other provinces especially volcanoes na risk too long tsunami.

Mi understandim olsem i gat budget bilong elections but mi laik askim if i gat disaster risk budget plan bilong ol risk areas tu? Sapos dispel i ken kam insait lo halivim sapos em i ren or sampela samting i kamap bai nonap disturbim program blong ileksen?

Narapela samting em concernim ol temporary ileksen wokman especially ol youths; is it by law that only Public Servants can wok insait lo dispela ol ofis?

Mr CHAIRMAN – Ol ileksen wokman ah? Response em i olsem, me too I just learnt about this during the process; wampela strongpela tingting i woklo kamap lo restrictim i go long ol public servants tasol. The simple reason for that is that if a public servant is involved in conducting the elections and there is some foul play, it can be proven that this public servant was involved in an illegally election practices na yuplea i kotim em, then the administrator can take some action against the public servant so that they'll be some penalties involved

Suppose yumi kisim ol man nating long street na putim, ol i mekim sampela asua long taim bilong ileksen, there is no way to penalise them taim ol wokim asua long time bilong

election. To me personally, I think that's a good justification because yumi need long igat sampela kain control long election na yumi putin kainkain man igo inside na sapos em i decide long mekim sampela asua na yumi nogat way long putim sampela penalty antap long em, then we jeopardize the election.

So, personally, I think it's a good idea that we let the public servants run it but we clearly define the process so that taim sampela asua i kamap, it can be proven na em i ken pinis long work o lusim ol entitlements bilong em o sampela kain penalty ken kam inside.

Mr EPHRAIM PATILIU – Okay, thank you. Wanpela lukluk long dispela election, bai yu lukim olsem ol youths have the power behind their candidates. Certain things ol youths mekim em ol mekim youth mobilisation and many other things. Even ol issues em i kamap inside ol provinces bai yu find out olsem ino lapun man wokim, em ol youths tasol mekim.

So, are there any regulations that bai yumi wokim long helpim ol candidates long sanap. If anything happens when a candidate's youths or supporters creatim problem so yumi ken kamapim bifo long election so that those intending candidates can talk to their youths and supporters. Government ken givim sampela warning laws so that em bai remindim ol na tok if you do this and that, we will be removed from the race in the election.

This is just to minimise what is happening because the youth is behind all the forces and problems that is happening to this nation. Em wanpela tintin bilong me.

Mr CHAIRMAN– Thank yu long dispela suggestion. I think we've been hearing from some of the provincial consultations, they are recommending stronger penalties against candidates and supporters so in some of our recommendations; for instance, we could be suggesting that one of the penalties is that suppose yu candidate na ol supporters bilong yu go na disruptim election process or their violent towards some other supports na dispela kain, we could, for example put extreme measure on the candidates. The candidate will be banned from ever running for election again. So these are the example mi givim.

Mipela ino mekim law yet but it is still under consideration. We have to go back to our advisors, people like the NRI and others long skelim gud, but we will be bringing in a range of penalties for election-related offenses so that em bai karamapim ol dispela we yu raisim but i gutpela. As part of our validation process, mipela kam long here na yupela raisim em i gutpela. Thank yu.

Mr EPHRAIM PATILIU – The other thing is the voting system. I just heard from one of the mothers who mentioned about the NID system and as we were discussing, I see it like shooting two birds with one stone. What if yumi tok olsem olgeta man-meri inside long kantri i mas register na without NID registration, nobody will vote.

So bai you painim olsem olgeta man-meri now preparing for next election, they will all go and register. When this happens, probably we can do electronic voting like the way they are doing in other countries abroad.

This is because everybody will be registered. Even the NID team can go and register those disables who are at their homes. Em tintin bilong me tasol. Thank yu.

Mr CHAIRMAN– Let me thank you on behalf of the committee. Those are very constructive and worthwhile suggestions coming from a youth rep. So me laik commendim yu. You obviously a very worthy representative of the young people in your province so let me thank and commend you for that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – I came a little bit late but thank you for coming and speaking but I was interested in the young man’s comments with regard to temporary election workers and the response was, perhaps the public servants should be the only ones because the Public Service General Orders can cover and discipline them, whereas outsiders yumi nogat process.

So that was one recommendation. Perhaps an option if I suggest an option and I’ll get your views.

In an election we engage, Policemen, Defence and our Correctional servicemen. They are already there for security. But we are not ready in terms of polling officials, counting officials, scrutineers. Taim kam na yumi kalap kalap nambaut na painim ol lain. And in the process as you are complaining other people come in and they become polling officials, et cetera et cetera.

Perhaps young people who are unemployed at the moment and becoming a problem in the country. Like police and security personnel in the country that we can call upon, couldn’t we in preparation for the elections every five years have a critical mass of polling officials, counters and scrutineers through a training program.

So once they go through the training then those people become eligible so they know the rules, they know everything, so no fighting in the counting room et cetera, et cetera. That we undertake a skilled training in elections and certify them. And for us candidates, if you become

a candidate and you are looking for a scrutineer, say for me in Abau, how many of you went for that training. I want to engage you as my scrutineers. If you give me a course that you have done with a certificate I can engage you, but these are the rules et cetera et cetera.

Would that type of approach attract young people so they come and they are trained and look forward to the next election or LLG election, or by-election any election that the country goes to. The Electoral Commission is also asked for PEA elections and other elections.

So these critical pool of people can be called upon and participate and we negotiate the rates because everybody is complaining now to review the rates of polling officials, counters, et cetera. What's your view on that?

I think it's a valid point, and it's a good view that we should take into consideration but the other thing on top of that is its also educational because a lot of these youths need to understand the system when they are in there. So if a youth has been trained for five years like you say and the WDCs and the Committee in the ward they do their part and they understand which youths have been part of this system, this education and they go in. the youths will also know how elections are run and by educating them in there.

Dispela em bai minimisim sampla samting where oli no understandim arasait. Sampla ol youth yah, without knowledge people perish, yumi understandim disla. So with the little they know ol save mekim ol mistake. Em oli part insait ol sidaun insait ol lukim what is happening up there. I think emi educational em way forward blo country blo yumi too. Tenkiu

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Deputy Governor Gerek and President Wawaga this question will go to both of you for one of you to answer. There is a period called the awareness period. So those candidates who intend, so we call them intending candidates. So they organize themselves and they go out they chose a period, two years before the writs or one year before the writs and so what happens is that when it comes to election petitions. Anything that has happened after the writs are issued is illegal and illegal practice. And then those who are not sitting members of Parliament are complaining that the period of election ino longpela and therefore the sitting members have an advantage over the non-sitting members.

We need to find a solution and my suggestion is, the so-called awareness period, why don't we stop calling it awareness period but we say from this period, you can start campaigning. If you have enough resources, you campaign two years ahead. Your money will finish during the election and all everybody will pass you.

So what's your view on this, rausim dispela awareness but like what United States do through their system, there's a 12 months' campaign going on and then they eliminate the candidates until the last one and then wanpela tasol em kamap long dispela pati.

For 12 months they campaign, and then the party later assess and eliminates. What do you think about this? We are sometimes too rigid so when the laws are too rigid; for instance, like the black market system, this is one of these areas for awareness campaign. Why don't we formalize it? We say 12 months before the writs, yupela ken go na campaign. You go and organize yourself 12 months before the election. Siting memba tu bai wokim olsem. What's your view?

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman. I'll respond first and maybe later on the Deputy Governor can respond.

Currently when you go into an awareness program in that period, a lot of people say that is early campaigning and it is an offense under the Electoral Commission. It is also the job of this committee to make sure that you clarify and if it is possible, the suggestion that the Deputy Chairman is –

Mr CHAIRMAN – Well that's what we're asking you. We are here to make the amendments where yupela ol pipol laikim. Na sapos yupela tok olsem yupela ol memba bilong Parliament you have an unfair advantage. Yupela usim moni bilong gavman.

From the way I see it and my colleagues can disagree with me, but taim memba go na givim sek during the five years' emi stap, I mean that is essentially campaigning. Yumi nokem haitim. So sapos yumi tok senisim lo na larim those who are not candidates and even the member himself if he wants to, the 12 months prior to the election, this awareness can be formalized.

So those candidates that wish to take part can go out there and I think that's essentially what the Deputy Chairman is saying. We are not saying we don't like the idea. What we are trying to do in this process is to understand the difficulties that are leading to disruptions of elections, the violence in the elections and such 'descriptions' that the next election will be worse than the previous ones.

We want to look at all of the elements that are important for us to consider. So if intending candidates, for example say, let us start early. Yupela ol members of Parliament yupela gat advantage because you are a sitting member of Parliament. You are already doing the job and people know who you are. You have an unfair advantage so mipela laik stat early.

And if that is the suggestion or the interest coming from the community, then by all means we should consider it and if our colleague members of Parliament are upset with it, then it's up to us to try and convince them that this will lead to a more peaceful election.

Sir Puka was suggesting na yupela tu toktok long wokim olgeta samting eearly like the training of officials, the common roll and planning of election.

For me personally as the Governor of my province, I had an issue in the last election where, taim Ombudsman Commission ikam na tok stopim olgeta funding blo ol province, so, for almost eight months, we had no access to funds. We were running around begging and then IFMS system too collapsed and became very difficult to operate as a province.

So, I have had one on one discussions with Chief Ombudsman to say that look, larim ol province i operate, yu no nid lo shuttim down all accounts. If there are issues to do with misuse or misappropriation of public funds, then yupla ol agency stap. Yupla kam na wokim wok blo yupla. Ino need lo passim account na tok you can't operate and channel everything through a very small funnel.

So, all of those issues are mipla need lo deal wantaim em because elections affect the operations of provinces. It affects service delivery. It affects the livelihood of the people. Up in the Highlands, many people get killed lo taim blo election, polis save indai stret, property destroy and the fighting is still going on now as we are sitting in this room.

So, we want to figure out how we can holistically conduct an election that doesn't risk the lives of people. It doesn't disrupt their livelihood; it doesn't disrupt the flow of services. So, if candidates want go campaign early or do awareness, whatever you want to call it and yupla lo community lukim olsem em ba halivim, we should consider it. That's all we are saying. Please continue.

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – Thank you, I'll continue. Thank you, Chairman. I think if maybe from me I would say just that if it's going to on a level playing field, then I suggest we allow at least one year for awareness to take place for any intending candidate who wish to contest the next election. That's from me. Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Deputy Governor yu sidanu na harim ol toktok pinis. Yu gat sampla ting ting, yu laik addim. Yu can pulim microphone e kam klostu liklik lo yu. Em nau.

Deputy Governor -ENB

Mr BONIFACE GEREP (Deputy Governor-ENB) – Thank you, Chairman. Firstly, mi acknowledgim yupla Special Parliamentary committee lo disla 2022 National Election. Chairman yet, Honourable Allan Bird, Governor blo East Sepik, Deputy blo yu, Deputy Chairman, Member blong Abau, Sir Puka Temu na committee member blo mpla yet lo East New Britain, Member blo Pomio Open, Honour able Elias Kapavore, mi acknowledgim yupla, bik man blong INA, Paul Barker we istap long hia na ol lain committee long Port Moresby lo Parliamentary Services yup la kam wantaim. Mi acknowledgim tu ol Niugini Island election managers we ol ibin kam wokim toktok pinis na olgeta lain we ol istap lo hia, ol women’s rep, ol distinguished guest na ol media.

Mi laik toktok lo displa. Mi gat tupla points lo toktok long em but lo dipela long election na long campaign period. M yet mi lukim olsem em gutpla olsem yumi putim campaign period olsem 12 months because dispela bai givim taim lo ordinary man meri we ol ilaik challenge. Em ol igat dispela taim bilong go namel long ol pipol na toktok na bai ol ikisim ting ting blong ol.

Because sapos yumi no givim ol taim, em sampela blong ol igo lo early campaign na dispela and then we have this confusion namel long ol supporters insait long ol communities lo votes blo mipla. So, mi lukim olsem yumi mas sensim na campaign period mas go 12 months in advance so igivim chance long ol ordinary lain we ol istap ol ilaik challenge againstim ol current members. The bonus is they have enough time na tu ol i save dispela taim em they can be able lo toktok wantaem ol pipol na ol ilukim performance blong ol. But ordinary man lo ples or somebody that wants to to be a candidate long resis, yumi mas givim ol enough taim so bai ol itoktok bikos sapos yumi no givim enough taim, planti taim ol kainkain hevi bai sa kamap.

So, em tingting blo mi olsem na mi sapotim dispela tingting o recommendation bilong Election period mas 12 months.

Lo mi lo kam sanap lo hia na toktok, mi gat tupela points mi laik kamapim; first wan em, long kantri blo yumi Papua New Gunea, i gat planti parties turu, its over 40 to 50 parties. From my observation, mi lukim olsem taim ol dispela parties i kam na taim blo eleksen ol pipol i split nabaut, ol i buruk nabaut. Na taim blo ileksen nau igat buruk insait lo komuniti blo mipela, people are not together. Even ol parties, planti blo ol memba or husait bai i stap bai win na sampela nogat. Olsem na taim ol i no win, the people that support them are confused because ol i lukim olsem dispela party or candidate blo ol i win em olsem ol tingting blo em; his vision, his plan na wanem ol sanap long em ol narapela i nonap sapotim em.

So recommendation blo mi em olsem, big man blo Electoral Commission bai reducim ol parties i go daun, I wanpela gutpela tingting bikos sapos planti party ol people blo mipela; mi em president blo Sinivi LLG and I have a rural LLG na ol pipol blo mi sampela taim ol i save faul long wanem tingting blo gavaman.

Pangu Pati is the now the biggest party that formed the government but i gat ol narapela we ol i form wantaim ol lo kamapim gavaman lo providim service but ol pipol blo mipela ol i no klia tumas lo wanem focus blo gavaman. Sampela taim mipela sa toktok lo ol na ol i no save gut tumas long what is the focus of the government or the policies of the government i toktok olsem. Mipela i lain up wantem na mipela i bihainim tasol, maski sapos dispela memba i lus bai yumi sanap wantaim.

So, mi recommendim olsem atleast yumi ken reducim ol party i kam daun. If yumi ken reducim i go long 11 or 7 em bai orait na confusion insait long komuniti bai ino inap stap.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Mr Deputy Governor, that is a very good point but try and recommend the process of reducing the number of parties, how do you recommend that the Registrar of political parties will handle this request to reduce the number of parties? What would make it happen, to achieve the reduction in the number of parties in your opinion?

Mr BONIFACE GEREP – Mi lukim olsem taim bigman blo political parties i bin traim best blong ol lo reducim parties but s they still –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – They still registered new parties not far from the election so one one way could be 12 months before the writs are issued no more registered new parties. That type of law could be one of them?

Mr BONIFACE GEREP – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Let me suggest another one, and others can comment on it.

In my opinion, people are voting for a candidate; man or meri candidate but in Papua New Guinea, we have not got the councilors voting for parties.

So, in this question that you have raised Deputy Governor it is very important and I know that three of us would want to achieve a time when the country will only have maybe three or four parties but how do we get there is a question.

In my personal view and I want your opinion, we have to now really look at the way we've been voting and it's only focused on individuals; Puka Temu, Allan Bird, Elias Kapavore, but we belong to different parties. However, the Registrar of Political Parties and Ombudsman tells us you go in awareness period and tell the people about your party policies but when it comes they are voting for Puka Temu and not ODP which is my party.

So, can we move towards a process to changing the voting of individuals to party, what's your view?

Mr BONIFACE GEREP – Thank you, Chairman, bai mi tokim stret olsem, mi nogat answer blo dispela bikos mi woklo tingting tasol lo reducim kam daun but long experience blo bigman blo political party ol i traim na nogat.

But olsem yu mentionim tu that we shouldn't be voting for the parties but memba dat sanap; sapos em gutpela man bai yumi votim em but taim i kam daun lo parties concerned em nau mi nogat gutpela tingting lo dispela.

Numba tu mi laik toktok lo em, em blo ol meri bikos mi sapotim ol meri lo sanap lo ileksen. Long observation blo mi, mi lukim olsem ol meri ino wok bung wantaim but mi encouragim ol olsem bai mipela wok wantaim ol ward membas blo mipela na ol i makim wanpela meri blo ol na ol district bai mipela wok wantaim.

Na dispel district rep mas i affiliate igo long Council of Women and they should come through the process where ol i makim wanpela meri na ol i ken wok bung wantaim lo taim blo campaign na sapotim em. Mi lukim olsem ol i makim but ol i no wok bung wantaim.

But, I see that at the district, we are trying to get the women to work together and then up to the provincial government and under the National Council of Women where they will have a voice and they can encourage all the ladies to support one of them. Mi lukim olsem i gat way yet so mi recommendim that ol imas wok bung wantem.

Olsem, lo mipela long wards, we get a rep and in the district they come together and they discuss and they come to the National Council of Women in the province. Narapela side lo financial side lo sapotim ol, em yumi lukim olsem wanwan meri i sanap struggle lo husait bai helpim ol i helpim ol.

The women can go forward but long provinces blo mipela ol i no wok bung wantaim. but sapos ol wok bung wantaim na nau mipela woklo strongim ol base blo ol women from the wards, LLGs and to the districts and then to the province, ol bai succeed lo igat wanpela or tupela women reps blo mipela lon go lo Paliament.

Thank you.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you. Mr Wawaga.

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – Thank you, Deputy Chairman, based on the question of establishing political parties like my Deputy Governor and colleague president has expressed

For me, I think it's for the Parliament to change the laws on the establishment of political parties. We have the Registrar of Political Parties but I don't think they have the power to stop new parties from being formed or established because like we all know some political parties just get established maybe one year or six months before the election and I think that's not fair.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – We should stop that.

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – We should stop that. I think that's tasking the Parliament to make the laws to stop new political parties, maybe we'll go through an elimination process based on performance.

Like last year's election, we see how parties performed. If parties that scored or got one member into Parliament last year should remain and if they scored nothing, then it should be automatically out of the race. We should just look at if we can establish five or four strong parties. In that way we are able to see some potential members coming into Parliament to speak on behalf of the various districts or in the case of provincial seats; the Governor, to get some good leaders coming in. So that's why my response to your question on how best we can deal with the political parties in the province.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What's your view on my third suggestion that is through the Registrar of Political Parties give instructions and say you go through all the parties and see what their policies are. Because in reality many of the party policies are the same.

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – Exactly.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And so if that work reveals that out of 40 parties only 10 of them have different policies all together and so rest of them should decide long bung wantaim into 10 parties to begin with that type of thing. If Melanesian Alliance and National Alliance have the same party policies, why don't the party executive level and leadership level,

Registrar of Political Parties instruct or find a way to merge them together rather than have two separate parties and I'll give you this amount of time to make a decision.

And so the instruction is to merge and we are half the number of parties in the country in a very fast time. Now those type of things that we must do as a country because plenty party i stap.

The other question that we haven't been discussing in this communications and consultation is, how about the issue of independent candidates planti save sanap. But when they stand sometimes they go and influence the formation of government where they really don't have a big mandate. And so, we haven't been discussing in the consultations how do we as a country handle in terms of the number of parties and also the independent candidates. Should we regulate, should we do something or leave it open as it is? Those are the questions that in this discussion I'm raising so that we begin a national conversation about this new thinking.

Our hope is to address, plenty candidates, plenty parties, too many independent candidates standing with no clear policies etcetera rather than just looking at the election processes; polling, counting preparation of a common roll but the other big picture is, how do we address parties?

We need to move towards, because it's parties that run the country and we must vote for the policy rather than the individual then we give them the mandate. If their policy is free education and we vote them and they win, then there's no question now they will do a free education policy and run the country under free pre-education policy. Those type of thinking.

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – Yes thank you, thank you Deputy Chair. I think with regards to the merging of parties, I think with my view on merging of parties is that when parties don't fare well in in a particular election then they should be asked, maybe consider 10 parties should consider merging, in that way we we cut down on the the number of parties because like you said Deputy Chairman, a lot of these parties have the same policies.

A lot of them just copy from the others maybe the main ones and it just confuses our people. When they come in they campaign for exactly the same thing, maybe two or three candidates from three different parties yet they campaign for the same policies. They confuse our people the people tend to wonder what they are trying to do?

They come with the same policies and the existing policies are already there. For the current parties in government, yes we may probably consider and believe in them because they are already applying those policies when they're in government but for others you know

because they just want to compete with that particular party and they come up with their own policies which is a duplication of what's already there so that's that's my view on the merging of parties.

So we we get rid of like those parties that don't fare well in a particular election and we'll probably consider merging them so that we start the elimination process by reducing the numbers and then they can come up with a name that they want when they can merge those parties. That will be for the good of our people in this country.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you sir. Are there any other contributions from the members, To Luluai?

Mr AUTHUR LULUAI – Bikpela issue long ol political parties. Long painim aut bilong mi long ol political parties oli nogat ol financial members inside long ol provinces. Nogat ya, even Pangu, mi no save long hamaspela financial members bilong em istap long East New Britain.

Dispela em wanpela condition bilong ol party. In order long yumi kamapim sampela tingting long yumi reducim ol political parties long country bilong yumi, yumi mas kamapim sampela ol requirement that man ilaik kamapim political party bilong em, em imas igat 1000 to 50000 financial members bilong em long 22 provinces of Papua New Guinea.

Bikos, yu lukim, yumi formim ol political parties oli nogat financial members. Even wanpela member long Parliament emi gat wanpela political party bilong em, emi nogat financial members bilong em. The strength of a political party in a province is determined by the number of financial members in a province na planti ol party inogat. Na sapos yumi kamapim ol sampela strongpela law olsem, soim mi ol financial members bilong yu.

Yu igat hamas long olgeta province bilong Papua New Guinea, sapos yu i nogat, we will never accept you.

Sampela tingting lo yumi reducim tu ol number bilong candidate t ol i woklo sanap lo olgeta ileksen. Ating yumi mas kamapim ol condition tu we yumi addim sampela moa condition long ol candidate lo bihainim.

Yumi harim pinis planti ol candidate ol i toktok lo financial constrains so husait candidate i laik contest, em imas presentism latest blo em lo account na sapos yu i gat K20,000 yu ken sanap lo eleksen but sapos yu nogat moni olsem den em bai nogat.

Nomination fee i mas go antap olsem K10,000 na tu bikos yumi laik preventim violence. Candidate tu i mas baim sampela kain bond fee we em i refundable so that ol supporters blo

em bai behave bikos bai miplela bai givim bek dipela K10,000. Sapos ol sopotas blo yu behave gut bai yu kisim K10,000 bek na sapos ol i no behave gut, yu bai lusim moni.

Tenk yu, Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN – I think those are practical things that we can look at. Whilst we are exploring the wider issues and some of the more philosophical aspects of democracy, we've got to look at some of the more practical aspects of how we can make it work. I thank you for that.

Panel, yupela inap nau o? Yu laikim wanpela moa To Luluai?

Mr ARTHUR LULUAI – Yes, bai mi toktok lo sampela bigpela issue save i kamap lo taim bilong campaign long ol candidate.

Na yumi woklo toklukaut olsem eleksen 2027 bai ino inap kamap gutpela ah? The style of campaign em i senis? Sapos yu gat moni ol pipol bai bihainim yu. Tudei, ol pipol ino lukluk moa long save blo man or quality blo lida but oli woklo lukluk lo moni.

Mi bin witesim lo East New Britain, large amounts of moni ibin pudaun lo taim blo ol campaign lo ol campaign locations. Candidatei bungim ol mama na baim kaikai worth K3,000 or K4,000 na on the other hand law i tok olsem sapos candidate i bin tok olsem mi baim dispela kaikai na yupela i putim wan ot tu lo mi that's buying votes na sapos em i baim tasol emi no baim votes?

But, the issue is that you are spending large amounts of money when the timing is not right because its election time.

So in the previous elections, it has been going on, so why did the law not catch up with this kind of situations?

Thank you, Chairman.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So, what law would you suggest? You want us to outlaw campaigning so candidates will just get their pamphlets and knock door to door like in other countries? Ol dispela big show campaigns should pinis. Every candidate should have their pamphlets in the electorate, they have one or two carriers going from door to door and they read and go vote? No rallies, no big campaigns because these are illegal and where all the corrupt practices are happening?

So, you should recommend that we should look at illegalizing so everybody behaves the same; no money, big money we all do the same, isn't that a fair law? What do you think?

Mr ARTHUR LULUAI – No, lo bifo mi lukim olsem ol man save bung, ol candidate i kam campaign but moni no save pundaun, em bifo. Na tete em i senis, taim Electoral Commission i wokim awareness ol i tok olsem wanem kain moni i pundaun lo campaign is already seen as buying votes so i mas gat law istap.

Olsem na bai i go bek ken lo askim blo mi, why na law ino catch up wantaim ol candidates husait ol i givim bikpela moni whether winning or losing candidates ol i baim.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Can I ask you a question, time ol meri lida bin sindaun, I think one of them mention that here long East New Britain, ol people tu i bin smart so taim ol candidates i kam, I think Manus tu i wankain, na mipela ol Sepik tu i wankain.

Ol people ol bai kisim na kaikaim bilong olgeta candidates. In fact, the people are taking advantage of the candidates and not the other way around. Na yupela long East New Britain em yu think wanem? You can say that one candidate is spending K3,000 for food and mipela long Sepik ol i save mekim olsem.

I tell you now, it has become an industry. Ol youths bilong mipela ol bai buildim stages long olgeta ples. Time bilong campaign nau, me stori long yu long Sepik style. You want to campaign in that village ol bai tokim you, K1, 000 long hire blo stage. It doesn't matter who you are, singsing group em sanap i stap em K600 each, mama group bilong kukim kaikai em K1,000. So they actually give you the bill upfront bill.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Commertece of ellections

Mr CHAIRMAN – Na yu kam long Sandaun Market which is a very popular market insait long Wewak, every election ol youths will build a stage there na ol bai putim sign long side olsem hire PA system, stage, baim kaikai ol raitim pinis na putim stap. Na ol bai tokim yu, crowds i stap, yu yet nau.

(laughter in the conference room)

Mr CHAIRMAN – So where do we go? I mean, for me, I had my ingenuity of my people. In every village we go, infact, I think it started in one district and I saw it back in 2012. Nau em kamap long olgeta province. Ol bai toktok long candidate na tok yu laik campaign long ples em cost ya, singsing group, youth group, hire bilong kar, hire bilong speed boat na olgeta

samtin igat rate ya. Long mipela, taim yu like hire long speed boat, bai yu hirim boat, bai yu baim engine, na bai yu baim fuel. Em ol save tok head motor, and then you pay for the operator of the speed boat.

In fact, when you hire a speed boat it's more expensive than hiring a car. So, mipela Sepik wara ino liklik, bai yu travel long wara. So you can imagine the cost and then people are commercializing it.

So I don't think our people are stupid, certainly not in my province. In my province, taim ol tok taim bilong election em nau. Some districts, ol i stop long work garden too because ol it tok em taim bilong kaikai nau and they expect the candidates to feed the village. So every village yu go to, ol ready long yu kam campaign na ol i stap.

They are ready, you just have to pay the fee to hire all of the amenities. Car too ol bai givim yu. Taim bilong election ol bai textim ol candidates na tok car bilong me available and this much every day. Em ol mekim money nau.

Na yupela long East New Britain are you doing the same or what's happening? I'm giving you the other side. You are saying stop it but our people are saying no, em chance bilong mipela long mekim moni ya.

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – Thank you, Chairman. So that means that ol awareness bilong Electoral Commission long wanem moni em i pundaun long taim bilong campaign must be stopped?

Mr CHAIRMAN– Well, I just presented to you the practice in some parts. Mipela em commercialised pinis ya. I mean, do you want us to illegalise it? In Sepik, even if you want to, o yu laik wokim bung bilong stori long graun, ol i tok yumi igat kot case long stori bilong graun o church activity o wanem, they'll expect you to cook food and provide transport for everybody to turn up and have that meeting and then provide transport for them to go back.

So, you can't have it both ways. For us, ol bai tok why bai mi kam na wastim taim long harim toktok bilong yu when I should be looking after my vanilla or coacoa garden. They don't want to come and listen to you. You are wasting their time because yu go long ples long campaign, the people are in their coacoa garden so they would not come and listen to you. So you have to provide the environment long ol lusim wok bilong ol na kam harim toktok bilong yu. So these are some of the realities. If you go to, like on the Sepik River if you turn up and they are all out fishing em empty village bai yu kam na lukim yah.

So what you have to do is, well the stage is going to cost you this much. Yu laik bringim ol man long dispela ikam daun it will cost you 200 litres drum of petrol wantem zoom. If you don't then nobody turns up and those are just some of the realities.

So what do we do, as Sir Puka said, in my province; for example, if you want to go from Wewak to Mei river it will take you four hours to get to Pagui, and then it will take you 26 hours on the river to get to Mei River to campaign. So those are the realities in my province, its similar in other places.

I think Abau it takes you four hours to get across the ocean and then in places like Milne Bay it can take you two days to go from one island to the next unless you have a plane.

What do we do? Elections are expensive exercises, ol man bai campaign lo yu, ol bai lusim ol femili blo ol na tripla mun bai ol raun wantem yu na femili blo ol bai kaikai olsem wanem.

So I'm just playing the devil's advocate here, in fact when I was taken to court these are all the things I put down on my affidavit to the judge. I said look East Sepik em olsem, you want to campaign in the village you have to hire the stage, you have to hire the sound system. If you want a singsing group well there's a standard cost, you want a band, well the village has a band, you have pay for it, stringband bai kam play. And for us it's a big show day. In fact, for me when I was putting on rallies mi invitim ol candidate, open candidates, regional candidates, mi tokim ol, stage stap yah, its already paid for, I'm only going to speak for 20 minutes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – They'll only vote for the one who paid for it

Mr CHAIRMAN – Mipla em nogat yah, ol Sepik bai ok, em tok pisin steret bai mi givim yupla. Ol sepik save tok osem taim blo election, yu kaikai lo olgeta hap na yu pekpek lo toilet blo yu yet. What that means is that, six months before the elections, they already decided on who they are going to vote for and it doesn't matter how much money you spend they will not change their mind, em lock pinis na stap. But that's for us, that's our cultural practice and you just have to recognize it. If you know that you're not going to get votes from there then you ask yourself, should I campaign there or go long narapla hap. Mipla save mekim olsem.

Manus we heard from them this morning. They lied to all their candidates especially the ones from Moresby, ol bai giamanim ol na olgeta spendim moni na man lo ples bai kisim vote. Which is interesting coming from, mipla Sepik too wankain. Ol lain kam lo Mosbi yah pinisim mani blong ol. So you know I've known of some candidates who came here and spent a serious

amount of money. You know, I mean I'm talking in the millions, and these are people I know. And they still lost.

So mipela em, mi ken tokim yupla stret olsem I don't think money influences the outcome because the people are smarter than the candidates. One young candidate I know; he ran for a particular seat em kilim bisnis blong em.

In fact, in two seats they finished their money to the point where now ol struggle stap lo Mosbi. One of them said to me, bikpla, I will never run for any election again. Mi pinis. I am not even going home any more. Ol man lo ples e singaut lo mipla igivim mani lo ol liklik halvim, I'm not helping anybody in the village. Mi inap. Mi pinis. So these are some of the both sides of the coin. But mi just sharim wantem yupla, yupla skelim. I mean what do we do, do we allow the practice, or do we outlaw it.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – I just have one question to both the Deputy Governor and the president and also the young man and Mr Luluai can answer. Next year is LLG elections. I want to know how you are preparing as a province.

Would you recommend to the Committee that LLG election should be the responsibility of the provincial government rather than the national government, what's your view.

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – Yes, thank you Deputy Chairman, running elections is expensive but for LLG elections it should be a lot cheaper than running a national election because of the geographical location within each LLG and the districts. We are able to and can contain the situations and the costs and all.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Na sapos mipela, through the Committee suggest olsem moni bilong National Election bai go stret long province na ol ken go pas long wokim. What would your response be?

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – For the national elections or the LLG elections?

Mr CHIARMAN – For both.

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – In the province we have the capacity to run elections supervised by the Electoral Commission but the funds should be left with the provincial government. Like you expressed earlier, mipela no save moni bilong last yia igo long we?

Because it was the same in East New Britain. We probably received only a million kina. Because of that, it depleted our provincial and district budgets.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Yupela tu district givim moni ah?

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – Yes, district tu putim moni long sampela areas. So where did all that money go to, yumi no save. That is why taim askim bilong ranim ileksen long bihain taim, yumi long province ken ranim because we have the capacity to do that.

Mr CHAIRMAN – The other question that I wanted to ask was, wanem tingting bilong yupela long; presidents are ward members who are elected through a council chamber election. Yupela stil laikim dispela o yupela laikim direct ileksen bilong ol presidents?

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – I have been a ward member and a LLG President for three terms now. And I prefer that if I'm the LLG President, Id rather just stick to being the LLG President for that LLG.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Direct election?

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – Direct election by the people for the LLG President. In 1997, the people elected the ward members who then elected the who elected the president at the Chamber Level.

That was the same for 2002 but as of 2007, there was a separate election for the LLG president who was voted in by the people and also the ward member was elected separately.

From the experience that I had, I think that it's wise to have the LLG president voted by the people as the head of the LLG and then be a member of the provincial assembly, who then becomes a member of the provincial executive council.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you. Deputy Governor, you gat sampela tingting?

Mr BONIFACE GEREP – Thank you, Mr Chairman. Tinting bilong mi olsem mipela mas gat tupela ileksen, wanpela bilong president na narapela bilong ward memba. Long nau yet, I am elected as ward member long ples bilong mi na taim mipela kam long LLG, ol ward membas makim husait em president.

Mi lukim olsem taim dispela kamap, igat kainkain ol halivim tu kam long outsait.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Ol man arasait putim moni go long ol ward membas long husait bai kamap president?

Mr BONIFACE GEREPI – Not really. Ol I lobby na ol I provim logistics na tok ol laikim, mi laik bai yu kamap president so taim yu kamap president, mipela bai lukluk long yu long yu givim sampela contract or sampela halvim ikam long mipela.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Nogat independence taim man ikamap president bikos long dispela kain pasin.

Mr BONIFACE GEREPI – Mi lukim olsem, Taim ol ivotim president separately, em olgeta pipol long disla LLG blo mi, olgeta putim han long em na taim ol ward members yet ol igo long assembly na ol ivotim em, em olsem ol dispela ward members tasol ol istap. So, they'll be in two camps tasol olsem dispela lukluk olsem sampla sampla ol lain antap ol iwok long influencim ol, sampla taim em dispela kain leadership ikamap ino gutpla.

Em mi lukim olsem so he doesn't represent olgeta pipol. Taim yu kisim wanpla man emi representim olgeta pipol blo LLG, em olgeta pipol ivotim em. Taim ol ward members ivotim em, em disla kain practice ikamap na mi lukim em ino gutpla.

But olsem mi wok lo lukim narapla tu long sait bilong responsibility blong mipela, nau mi no go daun olsem, mi makim wanpla man olsem chairman long ples blo mi but sampela taim bai oli lukluk lo mi yet ba mi mas go daun. But bicos taim mi. –

Mr CHAIRMAN – Yu gat tupla role?

Mr ARHTUR LULUAI – Yes, narapla olsem mi president nau na number two na bihain mi go lo district blo mi and then mi kam lo provincial government, I have my duties here.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So you have three different appointments.

Mr ARTHUR LULUAI – Yes, na nau olsem mi kamap wanpla PESC member, mi gat ol wok blo mi lo province.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Yu gat fourpla appointments?

Mr ARTHUR LULUAI – Yes, its burdensome. Na sampla taim mipela no mekim gut wok blo mipela. So olsem, larem olsem president yet ol pipol ivotim em na ikam. Na long ol vote em bai responsible igo daun lo ol pipol because taim mipela iputim olgeta responsibility ikam long mi olsem ward member, na bihain mi president, na bihan mi kam antap member bilong DDA lo district blo mi na kam antap lo provincial government, mi member blo provincial government lo PEC.

Na sampela taim ol dispela samting it occupies my time, mi no save go daun olsem na mi wok long lukim olsem president yet, olgeta pipol imas votim em. Then they will know that he was chosen by the people, ino ol dispela ol ward members ol save wokim. Em ting ting blo mi.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you Deputy Governor. Any further questions?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Yes on that one, Deputy Governor. We have the same problem with us, we are open members and also members of the provincial assembly. And one is a Minister, then like you, too many jobs so unfair on the individual leader. Too much pressure, etcetera, etcetera.

So, if you look at the overall structure, my own view and you can debate it later but we have to reform some things. On the presidential election, all we do is remove the optional component and we will say presidential election is by the people.

Currently its either ward members or people so we'll have to rausim dispela option and have just one option only. So that will cut it out altogether. Some people are arguing that members of Parliament should not be members of the provincial assembly. Some people are also arguing that presidents should not be members of the provincial assembly. They are heads of the local level government; they must be full time at the local level government. Not come to the provincial assembly like us, we must be full time in the electorate and not worry about assembly meetings etcetera, etcetera.

Some lawyers are saying this is unconstitutional and so em traippla issue ya. My own view and I can say it in public media, we can have been doing it wrong. So, we have to undertake a major relook at this issue of open members being members of provincial assemblies, presidents also being members of the provincial assembly. And so, in our efforts in the election integrity issue, our consultation is about the integrity of the election process in Papua New Guinea, and

so, the question that comes is, is the election process the only way of electing leaders in our country?

This so called democratic Westminster system of going through an election process even at the ward level, you conduct an election, where do our Melanesian structures of leadership come in? And, then we are messing up election with its issues that we are now faced with. And so a Committee is established to try and make elections free, fair and safer in Papua New Guinea, so these are big issues that we are struggling with.

So, in the reforms that we want to do with the elections as a committee member of this Parliamentary Committee, I think our work will not end here. We will have to re-look at the questions that I have raised that the open members shouldn't be in the provincial assembly, same question, the governor shouldn't be in the National Parliament, he should be running the province. The presidents should be running the LLGs and not coming to the provincial assembly and so how do we organize ourselves at the LLG level? Should we go through an election process? Why don't we say forget the election process in the ward elections? Why don't we use our Melanesian structures of leadership and say okay, lotu istap, meri istap, business istap, youth istap so why don't those organizations nominate their own reps and we form the Ward Development Committee and they elect their chairman rather than an election because there is so many problems at the provincial assembly level.

So, our president yupela istap our LLG and the provincial assembly we have a representative government. Why don't we say business rep you elect one rep to come to the provincial assembly, women you elect you nominate one to come to the provincial assembly rather than go through this silly fraudulent election process that we are struggling with as a young democratic country.

I thought I'd throw these things out because I'm seeing the future as somewhere that we have to reorganize ourselves as a country. We are playing marbles or wokim samting hap hap na it's not fitting together so we are not providing traction in getting the country moving forward in the right pace of development.

Forty years ago, Malaysia was same as us, a rubber producing country, they left us 40 years behind now and we are still where we are. Maybe, it is these issues that is strangulating us. The last session I raised the issue of independence of the public service, it is politicized too much.

I want to use this opportunity to raise these issues and I want to reach a level of national conversation about these structures that we have been struggling with. We have adopted a Westminster System of Democracy but someone told me, we adopted it but we are still struggling

with our culture because it's not us it's a foreign concept so I think this conversation must continue.

But coming back to the Election 2027 and the 2024 elections for LLGs; for 2024 it's just next year, my question of should we give the funding to the provincial governments and let them conduct the 2024 LLG elections and let the Electoral Commission oversee everything that is done? And, then in the 2027 election the Committee's recommendations will then be implemented to target 2027 elections to be free, fair and safe?

So, those are my strong personal reviews, I've been in Parliament for 20 years, it is now my fifth term and I have always said that the country must address these issues and if we don't, the powers, functions, and responsibilities is with different levels of governments will still confuse each other; same as elections, public service and the governments.

The Organic Law and Provincial Government Local Governments came in 1995 and it was one of the organic laws that had the majority or the largest number of amendments in this country but we really have to sort that out.

As well as the Organic Law and the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates which went to the Supreme Court, recommendations were done and we haven't picked it up as a country. We have to solve that out too and clean it up because that's politics with the election changes that we want.

We also want to look at how can we promote parties. For example, how can we stop party hoping? The issue of members of Parliament changing parties every now and then so they be penalized? Those type of issues are real and I want citizens of this country to be serious about this country.

And, as I said creating a highly credible election process is the way to go and it requires all of us to behave according to law; young people, churches, candidates, supporter we must all follow the law. Na sapos nogat committee bai pinis narapela committee bai kam and will be repeating ourselves until the cows come home.

Mr ARTHUR LULUAI – Chairman, mi laik makim sampela comment?

Mr CHAIRMAN – Yes, please go ahead

Mr ARTHUR LULUAI – Sir Puka Temu, mki agree waintaim ol toktok blo yu that yumi nid lo lukluk bek lo sumpela law blon yumi.

Long mipela lo East New Britain, taim mipela ibin stap lo olupela provincial government system, mipela i bin orait yah. Na mi yet mi save tok olsem the reform that came about in 1995 was like a curse. Em i bringim bigpela hevi ya.

Bifo long olupela provincial government system, yumi bin lukim olsem ol national politicians i stap ol yet, ol provincial politician istap ol yet aninit lo premier na ibin gutpla. Ino bin igat bigpela political interference ikam lo ol national politicians ikam lo province; yu lukim,

Tudei, taim yumi stap underneath long dispela reform bai yumi lukim nau olsem, the Judiciary arm of the government i stap em yet, the Administrative arm of the government wantaim the legislative arm of the government lo dispela reform em i bungim tupela wantaim lo kamap wanpela. Na yumi lukim olsem ol pipol i lukim ol memba blo Parliament i no bilong wokim law but nau ol lukluk lo material, lo sevis delivery.

To make it worse the DDA Act i kam insait so em i kisim nau dispela memba blo Parliament ikam lo go insait lo implementation framework, which em i wok blo public servant. That is when yumi lukim memba bilong Parliament iwok olsem public servant tu nau.

Mi yet mi save sindaun na tingim olsem dispela Organic Law for Provincial Government LLG Reform, yumi mas putim bek lo drawing board na yumi lukluk long em, yumi mas senisim sampela ol clause blo em insait. Whether yumi rausim dispela functions bilong ol national members from being part of the provincial government? Yumi ken rausim.

Yumi ken lukluk lo senisim so dat ol presidents, they are not voted to the LLGs instead, bai yumi votim ol ikam insait lo provincial assembly?

So, mi yet lon lukluk blo mi, mi lukim olsem planti reform yumi go insait lo em iputim yumi lon wanpela kain confused situation na nau yumi faul nau na ol hevi ikam insait.

Long lukluk bilong mi, mi yet save lukim olsem, yumi mas lukluk bek long ol reform we yumi go insait long en. Whether yumi rausim na kisim bek olupela provincial government system em i stap long han bilong yumi, long yumi lukluk long en.

In addition, long dispela mi wok long lukim olsem, ol mambas long National Parliament iwok long increase long olgeta term, nau emi 118 nogut 2027 bai go i 125 or amas. The more yumi wok long addim ol mambas bilong Parliament, yumi kamapim ol nuipela electorate, district na yumi kamapim ol nuipela mambas bilong Parliament, yumi givim bikpela hevi long Electoral Commission.

Why can't the Parliamentary service long national level tu mas igo insait long ol sampela reform? Planti taim yumi lukim olsem having so many members up there is very expensive and just imagine the allowance, kaikai, travel, na ol dispela. Mi planti taim, mi save ting olsem why can't yumi lukluk long kamapim bikpela Parliament na liklik Parliament.

Mi yet save tingim olsem the National Parliament nau yumi votim tasol ol governor long kamap memba bilong National Parliament na olgeta open membas yumi ken votim kamapim regional Parliament olsem nuigini island, momase, southern na highlands. Em sampela ol tingting we i save stap insait long mi, tenkyu.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Em bai bikpela reform olgeta.

Mr CHAIRMAN – But look, these are interesting things and mi laik bringim yumi kam bek ken na yumi focus liklik long election na mi allowim. Na mi tenkim yu long ol dispela kain ol tingting em Papua New Guinea harim pinis. Na bihain sapos yumi i gat taim, yumi ken lukluk long dispela kain ol samting, but it’s important that those thoughts are out there in the public domain. Honourable Kapavore.

Hon ELIAS KAPAVORE – Thank you, Chairman. Toktok bilong mi i bihainim some statement made by Tiolam. Toktok long reducim namba of candidates during elections so you said, ‘if there’s a process in place getting example from Kokopo district, sapos i gat four tasol ron em bai orait’.

We want to tighten up the system, make it efficient and cost effective as well. The more candidates we have, we use up a lot of funding. So, we were discussing today long previous discussion blong yumi, we said something about ‘if there’s a need for pre-election’. Bai i gat sampela election i ken go pas long wankain olsem six months na olgeta lain we i laik contest long dispela election, they all come and contest. And after six months or so, dispela ol top five candidates they are the ones ol inap go tru long process na endosim ol na ol ron long main election stret. So, what do you think about that kind of suggestion or tingting olsem. Yu supportim dispela idea or yu ting olsem wanem, sapos yupela reducim, that’s the important point; National Elections.

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – Thank you, through you Chairman, question komiti memba em i rasim em i important. Based on my earlier suggest long reducim the number of candidates per district and maybe the regional seat, if it can also consider reducing the number of candidates. I only suggested like as an example for Kokopo because we have four LLGs in the district. In Pomio, currently we have five LLGs, however, if they bring in the Baining electorate later we probably end up with six.

Hon ELIAS KAPAVORE – We have five now and it will be six.

Mr TIOLAM WAWAGA – Okay, whatever the number it is, but in that case will consider one member or one candidate representing each LLG, it just a suggestion. And that will definitely reduce the number of candidates per electorate and then like you said Honourable Member ‘we will reduce the cost of preparing for elections for that particular electorate it can be across the board

Mr CHAIRMAN – Can I summarise for you in the interest of time? Obviously, we need to look at a method to reduce the number of candidates and allow better choice for the citizens, I think that’s what you are suggesting and that’s what everyone has agreed to so that note has been taken down already by our team sitting there.

Closing Remarks

Hon ELIAS KAPAVORE – Chairman, I would like to say that the observations or discussion made by the security personnels giving the status of the respective ol regions bilong yumi long kantri, NGI Region yumi save olsem yumi stap green for the last couple of years i kam and we need to maintain that so that’s the reason why dispela komiti em i important true ol toktok yumi mekim tudei making sure that we maintain our status as free, fair and safe elections in the years to come.

Sapose yumi lusim control long election process tudei em bai yumi go towards yellow na red which we don’t want to see in the future. So em yumi stap long wanpela alert nau long sampela samting i no kamap gutpela tumas long province bilong yumi long NGI long regions bilong yumi so we have to be really be aware of this and be careful that we should not lose our status.

At the moment, its green na yumi laik maintainim dispela going into the future because toktok ol i mekim pinis em next election will not be the same so I think NGI Region, we have been conducting free, fair and safe elections in the past couple years and I would like to say that its not the same going forward that’s the reason why this Committee is important.

Mipela tok tenkyu long the Chairman na team i go pas long em so we will continue to support the Committee going forward in the future, thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Orait on that note thank you Honourable Kapavore. I want to thank our participants, em i kam five o’clock nau so bai mi closim session, but before I do, this is our

last of our regional consultation and I want to just give a note out to those who may be watching and those who may still wish to do written submissions.

You probably have about two more weeks and our goal is to finalise the report and take it to the next session of Parliament, we anticipate that the next sitting of Parliament could be three weeks so somewhere within that period. We would like to take a final report in and the reason for that is quite simple, listening to the contributions by all of the state agencies and all of you at the provincial levels, we noticed that time is of the essence.

Sapos yumi laik bringim sampela senis i kam long insait long dispela ol process long mekim election long 2027 i kamap more better than what we have seen, then of course we have got to act quickly and get into the budget in November so some of these structural changes or even legal changes that we need to make like legislative amendments and so forth, mipela i nid long mekim em hariap.

A lot of the recommendations are, mi laik tok olsem long ol lain we i nogat opportunity long contribute, I think from listening to all the different provincial teams its very obvious that the issues are the same. And its just how the changes that we make, will improve on the outcomes, orait common roll, issues around the funding so that the conduct of the elections are a lot better and who should be holding the money and who should be spending it and who should be responsible for updating electoral rolls, who should be conducting what, who should be doing the oversight, all of these management type issues.

The thing that I want to assure the people of PNG over is this while many of you who had not have the opportunity to contribute, the opportunity is still there and I am happy as Chairman to conduct some more hearings in Moresby and those that have very pertinent issues or papers that they wish to present then we can always entertain them there.

However, the NRI whose Director is sitting with us today and has been here also yesterday, the NRI has been compiling observer's reports going back several decades. So ol i gat olgeta dispela report we plenti ol samting nau mipela kam na harim long yupela ol providim na kain olsem em i confemim tasol wanem samting NRI iholim istap.

So, NRI, and INA, yupela i lukim Paul Barker em i sindaun stap, they are writing the report.

Mipela ol memba bilong Parliament husait mipela i stap lo komiti, mipela i no lukim ripot yet tasol mipela aprovim framework bilong ripot na oli raitim. I would expect that us, the Member of Parliament, we will only make superficial recommendations if we have to. Otherwise olgeta tingting na toktok bilong olgeta lain i kam na contribute lo steretim dispel

ileksen, em bai stap insait long dispel ripot. Mi no ting olsem mipela ol membas bai wokim sampela significant change long ol recommendations, dispel em bai nogat.

The reason for that is what you have just expressed in this panel and what we've heard from everywhere. We cannot risk the 2027 elections; I think it's too important for the many reasons that have been brought forward.

So, we have a responsibility as representing the Parliament to ensure that whatever is practical have an oversight. Once the report is presented on the floor, the members of Parliament I expect that many of them will not object because many of them are happy with the work that we are doing and they will support the recommendations that the committee will make.

The Committee, I expect will continue its work up until say 2026, to oversight that all recommendations must be implemented so the committee will continue to work. But, I think it's important that we get the document in quickly because it is 2023 now. And if we are given funding to fix the electoral roll and there has been suggestions to start again from scratch or to use the ward roll and all of that; our academics and all technical advisors will consider and they will make recommendations. But, if we are to change that we've got to start next year in 2024, by 2025 and 2026, its going to be late. So we've actually got two years to do this.

So mi laikim ol pipol biolong Papua New Guinea o husait iharim stap at least yupela i ken understand why mipela i woklo speeding up ol samting. It doesn't mean that we miss out on anything because I'm confident that the reports that NRI and INA are writing, are credible reports that go back, and many of them are independently published.

I want to say this to give confidence to the people out there who didn't have an opportunity. Yupela yet i ken kam lukim dispel ripot once em I finalized. I speak for our members sitting here, the integrity of Sir Puka, Honourable Kapavore and our other members who are not here Honourable Maki, Honorable Naguri, Honourable Pim. These are people who have sat on this Committee and I've seen their personal commitment because they too are concerned about their electorates and people so, mipela collectively laik traim na improvim.

So, I just wanted to say that up front and finally let me on behalf of the Committee and on behalf of the Parliament, I want to thank all of the provinces and the teams who have heeded the call and turned up, given us your thoughts and provided evidence. The Southern Region starts from Western, Gulf, Central, NCD, Milne Bay, Oro. The Highlands Region, I think two provinces in the Highlands didn't turn up and those are the two troublesome provinces but we will be summoning them to Port Moresby to hear their version of events because they need to

also be on the record. Yumi nonap abrusim tupela province because ol pipol lo dispela ol tupela province deserve better elections and it is our responsibility to try and give them that.

But ol lain blo yumi lo Highlands generally, ol lain lo Momase na nau yupela ol lain lo NGI i pinisim dispela wokabout na mi tok tenk yu lo yupela olgeta on behalf of the committee.

Finally, I want to congratulate those provinces that had pockets of success despite the very difficult circumstances that every province had. Sampela blo yupela ol Public Servants, did your duty and were exemplary. And also the people, I want to commend the people. We just heard from AROB and they have done a tremendous job asnd they deserve the recognition and congratulations of the people of Papua New Guinea. Same with Eastern Highlands and one or two others all provinces like West Sepik, where they conducted election, peaceful or they managed to do all those things. There are oothers that sapos me no bin mentionim, me tok sori.

But to recognize all of your efforts. Dispela samtin ino mipela komiti wan bai mekim na em bai kamap. Em bai nidim helpim na luksave bilong olgeta national agencies, ol saveman bilong mipela, yupela ol lain long province, na yupela ol lain long electoral ofis.

It's your own motto that says 'elections is everyones business'. Well this committee is trying to ensure that it is, and the very basic concept of one person one vote is done in a relatively safety and secured so that the voices of the people of Papua New Guinea get heard. I think that's what we're trying to ensure and of course, all of the issues of quality and everything else that you have mentioned.

So, with that, thank you long yupela olgeta na nau dispela hearing bilong Special Parliamentary Committee into the 2022 elections is now adjourned until further notice.

Thank you very much.

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