



**Special Parliamentary Committee on  
2022 General Elections**

20<sup>th</sup> April – 21<sup>st</sup> April 2023

Inquiry held at  
National Parliament State Function Room

Inquiry into  
2022 General Elections And Elections In General

SOUTHERN REGION CONSULTATIONS

**Committee Members**

Honourable Allan Bird (East Sepik) – Chairman  
Sir Puka Temu (Abau) – Deputy Chairman  
Honourable Robert Naguri (Bogia) – Committee Member  
Honourable Jacob Maki (Mul-Baiyer) Committee Member  
Honourable Keith Iduhu (Hiri-Koiari) – Committee Member  
Honourable Elias Kapavore (Pomio) – 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**

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

### **Transcript**

Time: 10am

Venue: State Function Room

#### **In Attendance**

##### **Committee Members**

Honourable Allan Bird – Chairman

Sir Puka Temu – Deputy Chairman

Honourable Kith Iduhu

Honourable Elias Kapavore

#### **Witnesses**

Mr Ravu Frank – City Manager-NCD

Senior Inspector David Terry – Officer to NCD Central Commander

Mr Kila Ralai – Elections Manager-NCD

Mr Francis Koaba – Provincial Administrator – Central

Mr Peter Maliafeope – Elections Manager -Central

Mr Ashan Numa – Acting Provincial Administrator – Milne Bay

Chief Inspector Benjamin Kua – PPC Milne Bay

Mr Ivan Maraka – Returning Officer – Milne Bay Province

Ms Joyce Grant – Kiriwina-Goodenough Candidate

Ms Jennifer Rudd – Milne Bay Regional Candidate

## **Opening Remarks**

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – On behalf of the Parliament, let me just welcome all of you here today, especially those who will be providing submissions to the committee. I just want to reiterate for those that may not know, this is a properly constituted Parliamentary Committee, which means that all of the rules of Parliament apply. Everything that you say here at this hearing is covered by the privileges of Parliament so let me make that clear.

I thank you all and once again welcome you to this Special Parliamentary Committee on 2022 Elections and elections in general focusing on the findings and the issues that have risen from the 2022 General Elections. Thank you all very much and the hearing is now open

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Welcome everyone and thank you for coming. Our aim is, as the Chairman has said is to identify the issues but more importantly recommendations for us to do better in the coming elections and going forward. We really want to hear from you; the experiences that you went through and the recommendations that the Committee can package for Parliament and we are looking forward to presenting the report hopefully by July this year.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We will start with Mr Ravu Frank the NCD City Manager. Thank you for providing a substantive report to the committee. We acknowledge receiving it. If you could give us a summary. Obviously there were some serious problems associated with the National Capital District Elections. So, perhaps give up a summary of your experiences in this past Election and perhaps give us a comparison to the 2017 Elections if you had some involvement there from the perspective of the Commission.

### **National Capital District**

#### **NCD City Manager**

**Mr RAVU FRANK** (NCD City Manager) – Good Morning Chairman, Deputy Chairman and members of the Special Parliamentary Committee on 2022 General Elections. Thank you Chairman on giving me the opportunity to share the experiences as you have alluded to. Just by way of background, the provincial Elections Steering Committee was set up and comprised of officers from departments, also other organisations that made the composition of the PESC, but mainly from NCDC and Electoral Commission of which, I was the Chairman.

In that MOU, an amount of K1.5 was budgeted for by NCDC for the National General Elections 2022. The report is there. We spent about K1.45 million and a balance of about K50,000 is there. But I was just advised now that we have gone over that budget, about K19,000 or so, later, I will provide the proper details of that.

But, yes, Chairman, the experiences that you have alluded to, so we had about 15 meetings for the Provincial Elections Steering Committee and activities that were discussed in these meetings were; the update of the Common Roll, the Campaign period, Polling and the Counting.

The records from the National Statistic are also unofficial but trying to manage almost close to a million people in the city is a big task. So, we had issues with the update of the Common Roll; just to explain the disasters, problems and challenges that we experienced.

I as the City Manager, when I went up to the closest polling booth near my resident for voting, I didn't find my name on the Common Roll. But I actually filled in the form because the Common Roll is basically the jurisdiction within the Electoral Commission, we don't interfere that. The Steering Committee, we try to ensure and provide the support needed so, whenever the Electoral Commission wants funding for Common Roll update, polling and in all those activities our expenditure basically spend through all those four or five activities.

But yes, in a nut shell, I did fill in my name submitted in and went up to the polling booth try to cast my vote and then they told me, my name was not on the Common Roll. And I demanded and said that I am the City Manager and I must vote. So, they got another book and filled in my name and I voted because it is my constitutional right, I can't wait for another five years to cast my vote. But yes, after all the efforts of trying to update the Common Roll and expenditures are in there. That's an example of perhaps the inadequacy or I don't know what but the Electoral Commission is here, they can explain on that path. But yes, I for one never had my name on the Common Roll.

Another challenge Mr Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Committee Members, NCD was the first to open up for polling and then we were the last to close the polling. The cost is just too much, it was unbearable and so therefore, we had to exceed even about K1.6 million.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Let me cut in there in the interest of maybe guiding you. NCD spent just one and the half million. Are you aware of the level of the contributions from the Electoral Commission?

**Mr FRANK RAVU** – Not that I know of.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That’s okay will refer it to Mr Ralai when his time comes. You mentioned that NCD was the first to vote and the last one to finish. Can you tell the committee why that happened the way it did? What were the determining factors that caused this significant delay in the result for NCD?

**Mr FRANK RAVU** – Mr Chairman, there may be two reasons from my perspective as the Chairman of the Election Steering Committee. I think that Common Roll was one of the reasons and also interference by candidates during the polling and counting. So mostly they were interfering with the Electoral Commission’s work and therefore it delayed.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I’ll take your queue and bring Mr Ralai in and Committee Members feel free to ask questions.

Mr Ralai just taking on from what Mr Frank as just provided to the committee and obviously all the issues with the NCD polling and counting was all over the news, I mean we had a young lady lose her life in one of the electorates as result of the rioting that ensued.

Police response so obviously we will try to get to all of that and understand it and perhaps see how we can resolve it in the future.

(1) But back to you regarding the same question how much money was allocated for the NCD election by the Electoral Commission?

(2) In relation to the significant delays as mentioned by Mr Frank stating that the candidates were the primary cause of that and perhaps you could elaborate further because from the news report you were in the counting rooms?

### **NCD Election Manager**

**Mr KILA RALAI** (NCD – Election Manager) – Thank you, Chairman of the Special Parliamentary Committee and ladies and gentlemen, good morning to you all. Firstly, I want to convey my sincere gratitude to the Special Parliamentary Committee on the 2022 National General Elections, the general public, the former candidates and the Members of media and of course my fellow colleagues in the elections. Last but not the least I would like to thank my Chairman of the NCD Provincial Steering Committee (PSC) who has been very supportive in our administration and the operations conduct. I thank each team of officers who tirelessly assisted in terms of much needed resources like fuel, transportation and other operational costs agreed upon in our MOU and the terms of references.

Let me elaborate further on this, elections are one of the important events in PNG political calendar every five years. It's a change for the people of PNG to choose their representative in the government.

The Electoral Commission of PNG is an independent body that oversees the aspects of election processes, procedures and responsible for ensuring that elections are free, fair and that the roles and the regulations are to be followed by all stakeholders. Having said that elections are not easy to run these days as compared to the last ten to 15 years ago.

I believe not only in NCD but all across the nation and many factors contribute to this contention:

- (1) rural/urban drift
- (2) increase population
- (3) law and order issues
- (4) the global effects of the global warming
- (5) the declining of the economy and many other issues affecting elections in the National Capital District.

As you all know NCD is comprised of multicultural community and people with all walks of life in believes, customs and norms. People have become more literate on processes and procedures involved in elections in the recent years which is pretty good for democracy.

We also have international communities who are observing from very close proximity, in a nut shell, the city is a mini- Papua New Guinea.

Let me walk you through the hand over, covering pre-election and the post-election phases. Preparatory, the Budget; my office had budgeted for K10 million and it was submitted in 2021 for the conduct of elections for NCD. I will go through the allocations as part of the budget submitted to headquarters. I will just go through the enrollment figures as we have spoken about issues and these are the actual challenges that I have faced during the 2022 National General Elections.

#### **Enrollment figures.**

I have two factors and those are the very major challenges that I have faced in 2022. Firstly, it was funding and secondly it was the Common Roll. Let me take you through the final Common Roll that was printed before the elections. Moresby North East has 115, 749 electors, Moresby North West 100,707, Moresby South 79,790 electors. The total electors that were on the C was 296, 246 electors that were on the Common Roll. The actual voters that voted during the 2022 National Elections was 219,510 which is 74 per cent of that electors enrolled in the electoral roll. About 76,736 did not cast their votes because they have their own reasons which

we cannot deprive their rights, they have their own rights whether to cast their votes or not. Let me take you back to 2017 Roll, Port Moresby North East had 92,447 electors. Port Moresby North West had 77,794 electors, Moresby South had 62,721 electors the total voting figure for NCD was 232,458. When comparing the 2017 roll to the 2022 roll, there was an increase of 21 percent from the 2017 roll. The quota for the enrollment was six percent to cater for those new enrollments which are professional voters who turned 18 in 2017 and who will turn 18 before the 2022 National Elections. That was the six percent. So the other 15 percent came in because of the drift. People migrated out and migrated in, that gave another 15 percent, therefore the increase of 21 percent on top of the 2017 roll.

### **Polling**

Let me take you to the polling. The one day polling for NCD. The number of polling teams was 202. The number of polling location was 202.

It was a massive job and a nightmare for my operations team, especially when you talk about logistics. The one-day poll was a nightmare and on that polling day, there were five polling teams refrained from polling after the ATS shooting. In other words, we didn't re-deploy the polling teams because the tension was too high according to the security personnel. We stopped the five teams from going back to the poll. So out of the 202 polling teams, only 196 teams polled and completed the process in NCD.

### **Counting**

PNGEC with its quest to improve the election operations, we introduced LLG count in centralized counting centres, I think that applies to all the provinces. For NCD, LLG is regarded as ward and we have 12 wards. We have four wards in Moresby North-East, five wards in Moresby North-West and three wards in Moresby Souths.

So, those twelve wards were counted in their central locations; like for Moresby North-East, they were all counted at Sir John Guise Stadium, Moresby North-West at PILAG and Moresby Souths at Rita Flynn.

Likewise, for the provincial seat, I took care of ward 1 to 12 to be counted and they were counted at Rita Flynn together with Moresby Souths. There were live results transmitted through PNGEC website for public consumption on real time on what was taking place in each of the respective counting centres. There were three CCTVs each installed in the four counting locations, three each and it was first to be introduced in NCD.

The regional count was delayed due to intermittent interruptions by candidate's scrutineers, however it was eventually declared in September 2022; the last province to complete the election process in the country.



**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can I interject and ask you a question? These continuous interruptions of the counting process by scrutineers, are those allowed under the rules? Should they be permitted to do that sort of thing?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Mr Chairman, from my experience if there is any election disputes, they supposed to provide written submissions straight after the polling and before the counting. That did not eventuate. We didn't have any written reports, allegations or petitions that were given to us. So, in that case, we had to push the counting regardless of any disputes. I stand firm all the way and that is where we have delayed the counting process because there was intimidation and threat made to us and even the security personals were taking sides at the counting centres. So it took a little bit of time –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Under our current rules, and bear in mind that the public that the public is watching around the country. Under our current rules, the candidates and their scrutineers who intimidate the counting officials what are the sanctions? Wanem kain ol rule i stap where oli can kisim hevi wantem law. I gat sampla rule or nogat?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – I think they will be referred to the security personnel to look at those issues and if there are any regulations that needs to be applied, they shall be dealt with. I think we have not been doing this, especially dealing with election offences.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So what you are saying is that we don't have rules and we don't have processes in place that deals with that sort of intimidation at the counting

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Maybe we have the rules and laws that are perfectly done, it's the operational matters that has never been applied.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – One question, Mr Ralai, I understand, it's not only the scrutineers that interfere but the candidates actually came in and interfered

**Mr KILA RALAI** – That is correct

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So you allowed the candidates to come in

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Well, I am not supposed to but I was referred and taken to the police station to address those issues, which is not supposed be the case. It was my first time to be referred to the police station to attend to their grievances. Otherwise, I still stood firm to make sure that the election was completed.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Perhaps for the benefit of those of us who aren't very clear, what were some of those allegations by the candidates and their scrutineers?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – I think for allegations, when the ballot boxes were opened and seeing the results going one way that starts the allegations at the polling place to the counting center which were already outdated that we were not supposed to attend to those grievances at the counting center. The counting center is not a court house, it's the process we need to complete the elections and they have avenues to take it to the Court which is the election disputed returns.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay let's delve into that. Obviously, there were some underlying reasons that gave these candidates and their supporters cause in their own mind to interfere with the counting process. Could you explain to us? I mean you had one-day polling and then these ballot boxes were then taken to a central location.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – That's correct.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – You have explained that to us. So what you are saying is that, when the votes were cast, from there to the counting center as far as you are concern, there was no interference in terms of perhaps people meddling with the votes

**Mr KILA RALAI** – No

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And once they got to the counting location, they were secured

**Mr KILA RALAI** – They were secured and admitted and ready for counting

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And then during the counting and as you said when the votes were counted and a certain person was leading that was when the complaints started

**Mr KILA RALAI** – That’s correct

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Did any of the complainants or people interfering and threatening you and your fellow counting officials. Did they have any evidence at all to back up their actions.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Yes there were certain areas where we were targeted. When we made decisions, they were asking us to re consider those requests but we had to stand firm. To continue counting that gave us a threat to complete within three weeks. Because my estimated time was to finish between two to three weeks, but because of the scenario it took me almost two months to complete the count.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Mr Ralai, as the Election Manager for NCD, do you recall whether any election offences were committed by anyone during the course of the elections?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – I believe there were offences since 2017.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – No, I am asking about the 2022 National Elections. From your memory, were there any offences that were committed during the course –

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Polling or counting?

**HON KEITH IDUHU** – All of it, from polling to counting.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – I don’t think offences occurred during polling. The law is quite clear that the people have cast their votes. But when it comes to counting, the scrutineers need to be well-trained. They need to be briefed good and proper so that they understand that they are only there to observe the process, not to intimidate voters.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – In your mind, are these kinds of conduct in breach of the law?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Those are offences and scrutineers can be referred and be taken out of the counting centres, which I did.

**HON KEITH IDUHU** – Were any of them arrested and charged under the Criminal Code?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – That is where a separate personnel will come in. It is not in my area to answer that.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Who lays complaints of behaviours like that? If a scrutineer is being rowdy and interfering with the process, who makes the decision to refer the scrutineer, supporter or candidates?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – It is the decision of the returning officer or whoever is in charge to refer a particular person to the authorities.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Were there any decisions made in that regard?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – We did a couple of them and they were taken out.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Were some of them referred to the police station and charged?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – They were referred to police but I do not know what happened after that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well obviously, there is a failure right there. We can delve into that but it goes back to the whole issue of justice where a lot of times we see an issue occurring that needs to be actioned, and obviously someone needs to be arrested and charged and goes through the process, but it doesn't happen.

Anyway, just to follow on from that, and I want to be clear for the public that is listening. For us as the Committee, our job is to look at the entire process of elections from electoral rolls, funding all the way to the actual voting, counting and the declaration of the results. We are also supposed to look at the conduct of candidates and their supporters.

The entire spectrum of conducting elections in Papua New Guinea is being scrutinised right now. You need to understand that, for us you provide perhaps one of the best snap shots that we have because the things that happen in NCD are captured on camera, for instance, the violence on the streets and all of that. The world saw that, not just Papua New Guinea.

We want to bring you through every step. All of you here were also involved at some point and we will bring you in so that you can make your contribution. It will give us the opportunity to understand all of the different failures and then to recommend suggestions when we bring this to the Floor in the next sitting.

That is how quickly we want to move with this. Just so you understand, when we ask you these questions, we are looking to understand about what happened, why it happened and how we can resolve them for the future.

So, you are saying that not a single person was actually charged.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – No.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Why not? If we have a law that states that if you transgress here or there, we are supposed to charge and prosecute you and get to the final outcome. When someone or several individuals broke the law but were never referred and charged. We would like to know why.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Thank you Chairman, that is one of the weak areas for any elections, I think it is about applying the laws like making laws of election regulations. It has to be done so that. elections? How many elections?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – I've conducted elections from 1982 up till now.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So quite a few elections.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – In that time, have you come across interference, intimidation, threats from scrutineers and their candidates?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Yes, I did and I got them arrested, they were charged and were put behind bars.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you've done that already?

**Mr Kila RALAI** – Yes, I've done that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Why wasn't it done in NCD?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Well, there was a lot of intimidations. It was much different from the province settings.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How different?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – How different? There were supporters all over the place. My life was very important.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough. But we want to understand why there was this failure and we want to understand how can fix it. And all of you sitting here are supposed to be helping with that process. We are the government, aren't we? We're supposed to be providing some sense of security and safety for our people, right?

The way you are talking, you are making it sound like we are a powerless government. We can be overpowered by scrutineers and badly behaving candidates who decide to break the law and we can't do anything, is that what you are saying? Are you saying that this is what the case is in NCD?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Yes, I think that is what is happening throughout the nation. If we can apply the law that is the best way to advance on the election processes.

**Sir PUKA TEMU** – Mr Ralai, at one stage during our presentation you did say that:

- (1) There was candidate interference,
- (2). Those that the returning officers referred, nobody was prosecuted.

So, tell us, in that process, where was the failure? Was it with the police? What happened? Why didn't police progress the charges that the returning officer identified?

Did the police take sides with certain candidates? That has to come out, you can't hide it. You tell us what happened because your election took the longest time ever that this country experienced. And there were laws that had to be done and you had the security with you. You were in the city, not in Abau, outside where there is no police, you had access to intelligence, and you had access to everything. What happened, why? Tell us, what failed?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – The failure is with all the stake holders.

Firstly, the Electoral Commission became the failure because we did not do more briefings with the security personnel to apply this election offences. I think that is one of the areas that the Commission needs to focus on to train and brief the security personnels that we have the rules and regulations to follow, arrest and all those. If that was not done by us, then we were the failures. That happened during the elections and I was a failure because I didn't have time to have proper training because there was a lot of interference from all corners of NCD regional candidates plus other open candidates. I was the one who was focussed on all those issues.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Mr Ralai, we heard from the NCD City Manager that K1.5 million was expended on, was it preparations? How much did the Electoral Commission spend in NCD?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – That's correct. I'm still going through...

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well cut to it and go to the answer.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – I was given almost K2.2 million for the polling and counting.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So that is K2.2, K1.5 and K3.7; how much of it went to Police?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – That I will refer to Police because they have their own allocations.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Ok thank you, and how of that went to legal support?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – We do not have legal support here, it's only for our operations.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – What is operations?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Operations is for polling and counting; for logistics, we have certain items cash advances, catering, vehicle hires dinghy hires, venue hires.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Ok so this concerns more logistics; did you conduct training for retaining officers?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – We did.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – What did you train them?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – We trained them on all aspects of elections.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – What is ‘all aspects of elections?’

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Common Roll updates, accepting of nominations, actual poll during counts, etcetera; plus, the rules that were to be applied during any offences that occurred during the elections processes.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So after this training you, you gave them some kind of swearing in processes and they did their jobs.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – That is right; and the power is given to them by the –

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – How did you train them in terms of offences?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Well there are quite a number of candidates guides; even security personnel also have a guide too on the offences; but I did not see a copy of the offences book. It’s the headquarters to provide on that.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So you conducted a training but there’s no book for it?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – There should be a book in there but I have never sighted that...



**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Did you know that section 205 of the Organic Law; that the Criminal Code is applicable? That they have the full protection of the law?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – That is correct.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – And was the full protection of the law accorded to these returning officers and your polling officials?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Well the security personnel are there, under the safety but it's the intimidation from outside. The individuals have their own feelings.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Sorry about their feelings; but what about the police men; how many police were allocated to the polling center?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – We have quite a number of police personnel on the ground.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So you are saying that the police failed you?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Its not that the police failed me; it's the scrutineers who were using their candidates to intimidate the police personnel.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Did you arrest any of those scrutineers who were working against the law?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Well there were no individuals that I could isolate; they were mobilizing as a group.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** (Chairman) – Can I come in here? I will bring in the police now. We have the PPC here, Mr Terry; you were in NCD responsible for Common Roll out of the Elections and obviously you have heard everything that Mr Ralai has said. I would like you to response to some of those questions that Hon. Iduhu and I have just raised; particularly in relation to the fact that you had officers there, at all of these venues. In your knowledge, was

anyone arrested in NCD in the 2022 Elections particularly those who were, according to Mr Ralai, intimidating, harassing and threatening election officials?

### **NCD Central Command**

**Senior Inspector DAVID TERRY** (Officer to NCD Central Commander) – Thank you sir. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Special Parliamentary Committee on 2022 NGE, Committee Members, our esteemed colleague members from the Public Service, the panel; I'm Senior Inspector David Terry, I'm representing Commander NCD Central, Assistant Commissioner Anthony Wagambie Jnr, who unfortunately is not available, because he has been called by the Commission; but nevertheless, I am here with the PPC for Central Province, Superintendent John Midi.

Soon after the elections, the former Met Sup Mr Gideon Ikumu was replaced when we had some changes in the police command, so unfortunately, Mr Ikumu is not here to give you a comprehensive rundown on the conduct of the security operations. But I will see if I can give you what I recall based on based on whatever I recall.

I have taken a few notes down to present to the committee and Mr Wagambie has asked me to relay to you that we will give you a report after this meeting capitulating issues in regard to elections and what we have encountered and some of the issues that you may want to know. That will come in due cause but I will try to assist wherever I can with my knowledge.

I have spent about 24 years in the Police Force, I have been with the Police Headquarters Media Unit before moving to NCD Central Command as a staff officer there. Mr Wagambie is in charge of the NCD and Central Command.

Just to make it clear to our participants here, the Metropolitan Superintendent and the PPC reports to Commander Wagambie. So in essence, Mr Wagambie was in charge of the General Elections both in Central and NCD Metro.

Sir, coming to your point on whether arrests were made or not? Yes, I can confidently state here that we made some arrests. I think you have all seen this in the media particularly in this very unfortunate incident at Sir John Guise Stadium, where supporters of a candidate attacked other supporters of other candidates and it went viral on social media. The police did take action on that incident and we made numerous arrests. All this information can be made available when we present our brief. There were also other arrests made throughout the election period.

Now, when we talk about elections offences and Criminal Code, we have to understand that any offense committed during elections or not is the responsibility of the Police to take

action. If you assault somebody that is an offense and the Police will have to act on it or if you harass someone, you can file a complaint and the Police will have to act on it because these are constitutional functions of the Constabulary.

Coming back to Mr Ralai's comments on election offenses, we have to understand that when you make a complaint, the Police will have to act on it whether it is an election offense or a criminal offense etcetera but the process does not stop there.

Once the Police arrest someone, they will have to go through the prosecution stages, we em mas i go long kot na conviction na kain olsem. But, along the way, you will need people to come and testify in court, I think our esteemed leaders will know this very well so it is a lengthy process and it's not just okay, ol Police wokim wanem, mipla go aresstim ol man tasol, no the buck doesn't stop there. When you arrest somebody, you will have to follow through but half the time from my experience as a police officer, the complainants do not come and testify in court and that makes the job of the police very frustrating.

So I think that these were some of the issues that we encountered during the hype of the elections. We had a lot of issues. PNG is a negligent society when it comes to elections. We are very passionate about it and also we expect a lot of violence so as law enforcement officers, you have to know how to handle the situations very carefully and delicately.

So in situations like these, you must use intellectual judgment at all times. You have to continuously talk to people so that they understand your role as a law enforcement officer so they too can also –

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Senior Inspector, can I come in. All the incidents that happened during the elections here in NCD, particularly the wielding of the knives etcetera, in the presence of everybody including police, didn't your intelligence pick it up? Because you were rubbing shoulders with everybody there, and people must have been seen going and buying bush knives in the shops and I am sure they were carrying them. So what happened? Didn't your radar pick that up before it ended up the way it did? And the world witnessed it.

**Senior Inspector DAVID TERRY** – I wanted to come to that later on in the meeting but you see, in any security operation whether it is elections or any other operations, it is always intelligence driven. We must have funding for this.

To be honest and in the presence of the PPC, we have never had any funding for our intelligence operations. Yes, we know there are threats that exists and it common knowledge and these things are bound to happen.

Every election, we expect these things to happen but I can honestly say that we were not given the funding from the start. Unfortunately, when all these things happened, we reacted at the spur of the moment. Fortunately for us no body died in the incident and arrests were made. Our God lives, so divine intervention was there.

Sir, yes, I agree with you that we need funding for police intelligence operations every elections.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – The question is how much did you receive from the Police Headquarters for the operations of the NCD Elections?

**Senior Inspector DAVID TERRY** – The funding for all election operations was all controlled by the Election Committee at the Police Headquarters. We were just given some small amounts for administrative operations. Off the cuff, I think the Office of the Commander was given K78, 000, the Metropolitan Superintendent received K375, 000, and the PPC Central received K87 000 as supplementary funding and all these were acquitted. That is for things like stationary and et cetera. But the funding component was controlled by the National Election (NATEL) operations at the Police Headquarters. Like I said if they do present a comprehensive report at a later date, they would probably give you the actual amount expended.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Senior Inspector, are you able to advice the Committee, how much was appropriated for the police operations in the recent elections in NCD?

**Senior Inspector DAVID TERRY** – I am sorry Sir; I can't answer that. I might mislead the committee.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – You gave some figures.

**Senior Inspector DAVID TERRY** – This is the administrative funding for the Office of the Commander, the office of the Metropolitan Superintendent and the PPC –

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Ok. Logistics? Any idea?

**Senior Inspector DAVID TERRY** – Logistics, we were given vehicles

**Hon KIETH IDUHU** – While on the subject and we have the PPC here as well. Can the PPC advise how much was allocated for the election process in Central Province?

**PPC Central**

**Mr JOHN MIDI** – (Provincial Police Commander Central Province) – Thank you Chair, Deputy and the committee members. For Central, we also had the same arrangement that every funding was controlled by the Headquarters. So what the staff officer has mentioned is the arrangement that we dealt with. There is no specific cut out for us so everything was controlled by the team that was established to run the election from the Head Quarters.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I just want to ask Senior Inspector Terry again, you've been in law enforcement for quite some time and I just want to come back to this issue of identifying a transgression in terms of someone breaking the law, in this particular case in relation to elections.

Wanpela man i burukim law, yupela i arrestim em, there's a complainant obviously, and then were not able to follow through with the prosecution. Now take you back a bit, if we are unable to prosecute people particularly those husait igat bikpela tinktink tru long burukim law lo taim blo election. I mean they are highly motivated as you know. Man i laik burukim law na steal or mekim wanem samting including illegally winning an election for that matter, If we are not able to prosecute them or follow through na pinisim dispela process, what do you think sort of message are we sending out to them?

**Senior Inspector DAVID TERRY** – Thank you Chair, it is a sad situation, that is why I think the important thing is to emphasis on awareness. Yumi mas educatim ol man meri that if you file a complaint with the police, you must follow through, because it is a collective effort. The police we are doing our part in arresting people but we need you to stand in court and testify.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is that all you depend on? You depend on the complainant or like in this case, if I recall from what Mr Ralai told us there were cameras in the counting room obviously. So I guess the first question is, are the cameras working?

Secondly, were the information on those cameras good enough for you to pull out so you don't have to depend just on a complainant? You could have video evidence and would that have been useful to you?

**Senior Inspector DAVID TERRY** – Absolutely Sir. We need all the information and evidences we can get but more importantly, we need human beings at the court to testify.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay. Alright I need to manage the time because we've got Central Province next. Having heard the three of you from NCD. What can we do to make these better, like you know?

We can't repeat the same thing in 2027 obviously? It's unacceptable our people are crying are crying out and they want this thing to be fixed. You are a professional police officer and you know this committee is going to rely on officers such as yourselves who are giving evidence to tell us what we can do to fix it.

Like for example, coming back to the issue of someone laying complaint and we can't follow through with it, is there anything we can do to compel the complainant to come forward? Yumi inap long arrestim em tu or? How do we close this thing so that it works? What is your suggestion to the committee?

**Senior Inspector DAVID TERRY** – Thank you Sir but I am not a lawyer.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I want your practical experience. Yumi i ken i go na senisim. We can change the law that's our job. We can change the law to make your job easier but you need to tell us what you need.

**Senior Inspector David Terry** – Like I have said, we need a lot of awareness, secondly it comes back to funding. Everything we do, moni sawe makim ol samting i move. The funding from the government kam long Electoral Commission na ol katim kam for the PNG Royal Constabulary, we must have it on time so that whatever we want to do we can do.

In terms of awareness, encouraging or educating our policemen to do the right thing and at the same time encourage the public too. You know if you are having a complaint with someone at the polling booth na yu failim complaint, you have to follow through.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay. Let me come in here and paint the picture for you and the people of Papua New Guinea on how this committee has generally decided about what we are going to do. We are going to do to make sure that future elections are better. Firstly report

bilong mipela bai igo long Parliament long next sitting because we basically got enough information.

We know what the problems are. Now our report will go in and it's going to be adopted by Parliament so, there's going to be a whole range of recommendations in there. Recommendations from the people like six (6) of you sitting in front us today.

Once Parliament adopts that, it will be the role of this committee to follow up. If there's legislative changes need to be made, this committee will pursue them either myself or the Deputy Chairman. We going to take the proposed amendments to the Floor and change the law.

If there are things we need to do to protect the polling officials, by passing a law; for example, wanpela candidate em i go insait na threatenim wanpela polling official, the penalty will be a two-year jail term and life time ban from contesting another election, yu pinis.

I would be happy to take a such law to the Floor so basically; we ban you for life.

What this committee needs from all of you is yupela tokim mipela stret? How do we fix this? Because at the end of the day mipela ken passim wanpela law long Hausman long hap ya but it's all of you that are going to implement the law. The electoral officials, election managers, and yourselves as the long arm of the law. So, I know having this kind of committees you haven't been to a committee in the past twenty (20) years, have you.

**Senior Inspector DAVID TERRY** – Nogat Sir.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, most Papua New Guineans don't know what Parliamentary Committees are supposed to do. Well you are now having parliamentarians who are representing you? Who want to use the power of Parliament, we are not Executive Government, em opposition memba stap ya, mipela tripla mipela i sindaun long gavman but we don't necessarily support everything as government does.

We represent our individual electorates and people's power comes from Parliament, you are seeing this committee exercise that power for the first time in 47 years. Mipela exercisim dispela pawa nau.

So, you have an opportunity to really spell out for us, how you want us to do this so that mipela fixim once and for all. So that in 2027, our people are guaranteed a better election that's what we are here for. So, I just wanted to say that to you so that yumi olgeta klia. We are not

here to hide anybody's sins, we don't want to protect anyone. The thing we want to protect is our constitutional democracy that's what we are here for.

So, mi kam bek long yu na mi laik askim yu long wokim wok bilong yu easier and how do we make your job and your fellow police officers and other security personnel's jobs easier so that taim yu sanap long dispela polling or counting station or whatever it is, na wanpela man em i kam na laik bikhet you can take the appropriate action. What changes do we need to make? Do you want us to ensure that the funding comes six months before?

Well part of our recommendations will be, this committee is maintained up until the elections. So that we will make sure you get your funding six months before. We will make sure that the Electoral Commission get its funding two years prior. Olgeta dispela samting yupela laikim bai mipela i make sure em i kamap.

We will intervene in the Budget, we will make sure that in 2026 Budget, money bilong dispela wok em i go insait, em i no inap kam long 2027 Budget like we just did with money bilong 2022 election which came in 2022. There was nothing in 2021. We we want to change that, we want to set a new process for running elections so that this sorts of issues yupela tok moni ino stap, we will make sure money is there.

If you going to carry out your awareness, we will help with your awareness but more than that mipela no laikim yu wokim awareness tasol, Papua New Guinea planti bikhet man i stap. We are seeing that all over the place. The ease with which people commit crime em traipela tumas, yumi winnim ol arapela kantri. We are probably the most crime-ridden nation on earth. We want to deal with that particularly when it comes to elections. Mipela laik fixim, so Senior Inspector –

**Senior Inspector DAVID TERRY** – Me personally, I think we need to toughen up on our laws. Relook at the election laws because of the rampant election-related violence and all that. We got to tough up on the laws with regards to the elections.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can I make a specific request to you, Sir?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can you give us a written list of what sorts of penalties you would like for what offences? Look at the current provisions in the law in terms of what you can arrest people for and what penalties are there and provide us a list.



I assure you if I am not around to personally take that to the Floor of Parliament to be debated then Sir Puka or one of the other two Committee Members sitting here will certainly take that to the Floor of Parliament, bai yumi mekim dispela senis.

**Senior Inspector David Terry** – Thank you Sir, I will consult the legal branch of the Constabulary to talk about these issues and come up with some recommendations for the Committee and also shares some ideas with our counterparts, the Electoral Commission.

I am pretty sure they also have their set of election laws there; like I mentioned, we will look at these issues because most times when you look at election offences and then you also have criminal offences come together so –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay well, it's now 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023, can I give you two weeks and Mr Ralai, you and your colleagues in the Electoral Commission can work together with the police. Are you able to give us a written submission in two weeks? Mi les long wastim taim wantaim dispela samting. I think our people have suffered with this issue for too long.

**Senior Inspector David Terry** – I will tell the Commissioner and the legal branch that this is from the Committee and they should report back on this time given.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, okay I now move to Mr Ralai, and my final question to you, Mr Ralai, in 2017 you were in charge of the East Sepik elections and I remember seeing you there at my declaration and in 2022 you were in NCD.

Now can you just tell us the difference you saw between what happened in East Sepik in 2017 and what happened in NCD in 2022?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Thank you Chair, East Sepik is bigger in comparison to NCD in terms of population and land mass and the settings of the government with each individual setup in their LLG areas. The difference between NCD and East Sepik is the people.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What was the election in East Sepik like? Ol biket katim man na traim long cheat mekim ol dispela samting?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Yes, East Sepik is one of those provinces we ol save usim one meter bush knife and all those but when it comes to elections, they are very, very controlled. And I

think that is where the candidates talk to their people that election is the only time that families come together to share their choice of selecting their leader to be a representative in the government. So it's the candidates who will then speak to their own people that they have to be neutral at all times to choose who their leader is.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So how would you describe the behavior of the people in East Sepik in 2017 and the behavior of the people of NCD in 2022?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – They are educated and they know the law.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Who?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – The NCD people know the law much better than any other provinces

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But

**Mr KILA RALAI** – But they bend the rules and most of these scrutineers, I believe are lawyers and they were willing to bend the rules that's why it took us time to delay the counting process for NCD. That's the difference.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well I am happy to hear that my people of East Sepik were better and thank you for that now let's move to Central Province.

**Hon KIETH IDUHU** – Before we do senior inspector and Mr Ralai, in terms of the list of offences that you might like to recommend, I want to encourage you to look into the conduct of candidates because most of these things are coming from candidates. Then of course, you look at the behavior of scrutineers and this is not to gag or stop because the organic law is clear on disputed of returns and that's when election should be questioned or illegal practices should be questioned at that forum.

Everything else as we now know from practice, the court will always throw out the matter if it is taken to court prematurely or unnecessarily. I think at this realm, the police and the law enforcement agency at this level should be on top of the brief so to speak. We will look at the conduct of the candidates, there should be some level of ostensible authority also because a lot

of rowdy behaviour outside of the precincts of counting and during elections is coming from  
stead if you will, caused potentially by candidates and because of the passion for their  
respective candidates.

Candidates are leaders and should take responsibility. We can't have spill-overs into civic  
lifestyle of general citizens as well. I'm encouraging you to think along that line so that we  
have a more productive and constructive look. The Criminal Code and the Organic Law are  
clear but we need more legwork.

Mr Ralai, I understand in 2017, there were lawyers stationed in the counting areas,  
particularly in NCD. Did that happen in the last election? Were the lawyers from the Electoral  
Commission stationed to support the team?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – In 2017, we had some government lawyers who were with the  
Electoral Manager from time to time but not for this election. This election was a little bit tense  
for the lawyers to come in.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So there was a big amount expressed in legal fees during this  
hearing some weeks ago. What was the money for?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – I wouldn't answer on that because I am not at that level to discuss  
it.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – You may want to look into that as well so when you do the  
report you will advise this Committee what legal fees were expended for during operations if  
they were not in the counting room to support you. Your lawyers should be there to support  
you, giving you directions and telling you to arrest, charge and come back and do statements  
for you. That is how we should function as a team. You will agree?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Yes

**Hon ELIAS KAPAVORE** – My question is to Mr Ralai. You said something about the  
increase of eligible voters from six per cent to 21 per cent for the NCD Elections for last year.  
That is a huge increase. Normally it is only six per cent for eligible voters. Do you think that it  
is something that you will establish the reasons as to why this has happened for NCD?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – That happened because of the developments taking place like the construction of new residential areas like the Kennedy Estate, Skyview and so forth. People migrated from all locations to the new locations thus causing the increase from 15 per cent to 21 per cent.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – To the City Manager, thank you for the written submission and for the set of issues that you highlighted and the eight recommendations. I was interested in two of them;

(1) The fourth one – separation of MKA to be recognised as an electorate. You know that in 2027, it will be a separate electorate so you need to prepare for that.

(2) The seventh one – the weak participation of NCD population.

I understand that the 75 per cent of those enrolled actually voted even if there was only one day of polling. That is a great effort on the part of the team that was working in the city.

One of the issues that was raised by the Police Commissioner and the Major-General was, our people not behaving, *pasin em bagarap*, and the candidates make it worse. And so, they predicted that the next election will be worse than the last one.

So in terms of your recommendations of the weak participation of the NCD population, what will you do to prepare the NCD population with its very diverse and mobile population

What is in the set of recommendations that you will bring like what we have asked the senior inspector and his team.

How do you think at this stage, you will strategise and therefore the nation has to strategise? In my view I don't think two years in advance is enough. I think we have to start this year until 2027.

So, I was here as well but I went to Abau to do the election things but a lot of things are coming and appearing in EMTVs about what happened?

You are saying that the NCD population are not interested, as we see their behaviours are bad so strategise. When you think of that and write to the police, include it in the strategy because NCD has to make it right.

If there is one place in 2027 that we will have to make it right, then it must be in the National Capital District to set the pace so that you are clear. So in your set of recommendations that we will recommend, highlight some of the things that you as the city manager need to implement in order for the nation's capital to showcase that we did it better than East Sepik.

I want that song to be sung by NCD because we are all educated. So we need to take pride but when people saw around the world that we were wielding knives against each other in a democratic country, some of us almost died of shame so let's not repeat it.

So, make a set of recommendations to address the issue of the people's behaviour, awareness, education and get the things ready in 2024 as the Census is coming next year. Sharing of information with key stakeholders, but senior inspector, I am passionate about intelligence.

The reason for this is that I learned in the interviews with the Chief, Police Commissioner and the Major General, only the Defense Force came up with red dots around the country, not the police. But while they knew that this red dots also included, trading and movements of firearms, they didn't take action as part of their normal operation of that national security, not to wait until the election comes.

Similarly, perhaps in the recommendations during the election period maybe two years, we bar guns and knives, not to be allowed to be sold to any citizens. If a super market is selling knives and machetes, do an instruction no sale no order or none of those and if anybody carry or even normal walking around in a market with a knife, remove it from them.

Those types of proactive things in terms of your recommendation. People are participating in voting and bringing all the troubles but they're not participating in making sure that the election is free, fair and safe.

We can't blame the police and the polling officials so we have to take responsibility. For NCD, the seventh recommendation, I think it's one of the keys for our country and if you can trail blaze a smart strategy and recommend it to the committee, we will package it as part of the recommendation to Parliament.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Deputy Chairman. I think that was very comprehensive and I want to thank our friends from NCD. You can wait while we speak to our other friends from Central province. I think you've –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you Mr Koaba, I'll bring you in, you have heard from your colleagues on the other side. Could you summarize the conduct of the elections in the Central Province and what were the issues that you faced? And did you feel that you delivered the elections in Central province satisfactorily or not?

## Central Province

### Central Provincial Administrator

**Mr FRANCIS KOABA** – Thank you Chair, Honourable Allan Bird, Governor of East Sepik, thank you also to Deputy Chair Sir Puka Temu and the committee members Honourable Mr Kapavore, Honourable Keith Iduhu and others that are in absence.

Let me first and foremost say thank you to you for giving me the opportunity and the privilege to talk about our experiences on the last recent general elections and starting primarily with the planning process from the first time they said go, to actually the declarations and eventually the summarization of all the election reports.

Firstly, under the Organic Law on the General Elections you will see that there is a provision that establishes the Provincial Election Steering Committee (PESC). Now I just want to provide that as a preamble so we can see where the provincial administrator and the Provincial Election Steering Committee comes into play. The PESC as it is known initially, normally undertakes the coordination and planning part of it in collaboration with the National Electoral Commission. That is with the assistance of the Provincial Election Manager who is Peter Malai.

For central province we started of planning and the very first engagement that we took was to do with the Common Roll updates. Unfortunately, we thought that was an important factor because in the last elections, we thought the 3 per cent of our population that were at the age of 13 would have qualified to be 18 by then to actually vote so we thought we should go ahead and do voter enrollment giving the opportunity to this age group who are now qualified.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – When did you actually start that one?

**Mr FRANCIS KOABA** – I think time was not on our side and frankly we started three months before the elections, so you can see that we did not have any time.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** –Just to get further clarification on that. You started three months earlier, what was the reason for that?

**Mr FRANCIS KOABA** – Basic reasons are all too obvious and secondly there was a directive from the National Electoral Commission to engage in that committee and we thought we could take on that responsibility and try to as much as possible also include those age group who were 13 at that time.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Let me interject again just to get further clarity. Who provides the funding to you? Do you get it direct from Treasury or for this particular purpose for the Common Roll update or from the Electoral Commission? Where do you get the money from?

**Mr FRANCIS KOABA** – The funding would normally come from the National Electoral Commission but we also received some assistance from the Provincial Government

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you provide a budget yourself.

**Mr FRANCIS KOABA** – We also provide a budget. So for that very exercise we provided half a million for that exercise. But it's just unfortunate that PNG Electoral Commission did not come good on their part. So with a meager K500,000, we couldn't do much. That's from the Provincial Government

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So in your opinion, wouldn't it have been better for you to get the funding from Treasury so you could have carried out that operation.

**Mr FRANCIS KOABA** – I believe so. It will be even better because this particular body that is established by the Organic Law will be seen to be playing its actual roles. At the moment, without funding I can honestly say that it is only a rubber stamp.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough. As a Governor, I want to understand how to improve these processes in the provinces. And so, understanding that your funding comes in directly through the Electoral Commission, then perhaps if we straighten that bend and make it a straight line, that might make things work better in the future. You may continue.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Mr Chairman, complementary to that, when was the Election Trust Account established in the province?

**Mr FRANCIS KOABA** – Can you repeat your question please?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – When was the Trust Account for the provincial elections established and when did you receive the funding?

**Mr FRANCIS KOABA** – Mr Peter Maliafeope will be in a better position to answer.

**Central Province Election Manager**

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** (Election Manager-Central province) – Thank you, Mr Chairman. The Election Trust Account or the Subsidiary Trust Account came into play a little bit later when the election was about to begin. I am of the view and I can remember that it was at the time that the writs were issued.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, it was in April. It wasn't ready prior to.

**Mr PETER MIAFEOPE** – No.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough. You may continue, Mr Koaba.

**Mr FRANCIS KOABA** – You will see that for Central Province, the electoral roll update wasn't a success. We had a few issues, particularly paying allowances for the enumerators. The turnout was not good for the return of information and the application forms for registration of potential voters.

As well as that, I think the 15 per cent quarter that was given for each of the electorates wasn't sufficient enough. We requested for additional percentage to be allocated but that did not happen because it would be seen that we were inflating the Common Roll.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Who determined the 15 per cent?

**Mr FRANCIS KOABA** – That is normally set by the Electoral Commission.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – What rationale did they use to impose this figure?

**Mr FRANCIS KOABA** – I have no idea, but probably Mr Peter Maliafeope might be able to clarify that.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Mr Maliaefoe, may you clarify that for us.



**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Thank you, Mr Chairman. The 15 per cent was the figure that was determined from the Census population growth.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So it is three per cent per year?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – That is the kind of approach that the Electoral Commission now used to come up with the 15 per cent.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Let us get to the nitty-gritty of this electoral roll. This process of doing an update prior to the elections, let's just say that this committee recommends that we start two to three years earlier. Would that help?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – From my experience, that would be a very big help.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I want to ask this, in terms of transparency around the issue of Electoral Commissioner suspecting that you might be inflating the Common Rolls, this practice of inflating the Common Roll, how easy it is to inflate rolls? Do you have a cleansing mechanism?

Let us say that the provinces submit their 15 per cent updates, do you have a cleansing process that you go through to ensure that there's no duplicate? What is your process?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Mr Chairman, we have the cleansing system or process also in the Electoral Commission roll update and data processing particularly.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Coming back to Mr Frank Koaba, he mentioned that he was not on the final roll. I assume Mr Koaba was on the previous roll so he was able to vote. But on the current one, he fell off. How does that happen? Maybe you can explain that for Mr Frank's benefit.

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – We have a case towards the issue of the writs period. That is when the roll should have stopped. The writs are issued, the rolls come to a stop so we don't have to continue after that. But before that we had some issue with the data processing by the computer experts that were engaged.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What was the issue?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Well, some of the information that was posted into the computer did not get processed.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Why not?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – That I cannot answer Chairman. I am not a computer expert myself.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you're saying because that didn't get processed, people like Mr Frank and many other Papua New Guineans who couldn't find their names in the roll missed out?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How is it that we have this sort of gaps in your system of updating the election roll? I'm assuming that you have been updating election rolls for some years so there's bound to be some sort of experience there.

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Mr chairman, it's quite technical.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Cut through the technicalities and give it to us in plain English or pidgin, but don't speak Gulf because I don't understand.

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – We had a computer programmer who was engaged and I believe they were supposed to do a good job in getting our system in place.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So your electoral roll program is one that you developed in-house or you did not purchase? We are not using one that is similar to say India or Australia?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – We got one national computer expert. I think if I may.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So he built the program for us?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – If I mention the name, if that's ok.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – No, you don't need to mention the name. We just want to understand what happened. We don't want to blame the person.

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Ok, I'll leave it there. Well, he was the one who was programming and all that stuff for the updated roll.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So one man was programming this thing?

**Mr Peter MALIAFOEPE** – No, he had a company. His company was engaged by the Electoral Commission.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Ok, so it was a local company?

**Mr Peter MALIAFOEPE** – Yes

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So was this a tried-and-true system? Guaranteed to work? O yumi wokim natin natin, bulidim, buildim na?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – I'm not sure but I think its something more or less like trail and error engagement.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So for a National Election to guarantee the voting rights of our people, we did a trial and error? Is that what you're saying with an electoral roll?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – From my point of view, yes, I would say that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Mr Ralai do you share this opinion? I'm just trying to corroborate.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Thank you Chairman, I also support the EM for Central. I think it is the application that we used in the 2022 National Elections gave us a little bit of a problem for those new enrolments.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So the computer application caused the problem?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – yes, like what is now happening with BSP.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So how come we are only finding out now and we didn't know in April of 2022 that we had a computer glitch or malfunction?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Let me say this, each of the provinces had their data base and it goes through the national data base and maybe during that process, something must have happened and could not capture those people who missed out. Like what Ravu Frank, my City Manager has pointed out.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That's an interesting revelation. When we were talking to your other colleagues in the Electoral Commission, this information was not made available to us. So I want to delve further into this. So because of this glitch, 25 percent of East Sepik could not vote, because their names were not on the roll. That's what you're saying. Plus, countless other Papua New Guineans were turned away at the polls. Is that what you're saying?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Thank you Chairman, in one of my recommendations I said it is incumbent on the PNGEC management to employ credible management plan for improving the roll systems in the country.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well, can I tell you what our plan is?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** (Chairman) – We are going to buy a system that will make sure that you don't have a problem like this again.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Thank you.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That disadvantages Papua New Guineans from exercising their rights. Because obviously, this is a great oversight.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Sorry Chairman, if I may jump in before these chains of thoughts evade my memory; this IT Company which was recruited; was it done through a procurement process? Was it tendered?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Hon Member, I cannot answer that because...

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Why not?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – The engagement was not done by me.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – The answer is yes, or no?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – I don't know.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – How much was paid?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – That again I'm not sure.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – You are going to provide us a brief, is that correct? You know, without any election roll, we don't have an election. Do you agree?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Very true.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So you sent this country to an election on a flawed roll; election manager?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – If I may intervene; I think that is above your pay grade and we will be summoning the Electoral Commissioner. I can understand Honourable Iduhu's frustrations. I mean I was very frustrated too because for the first time in history two ballot boxes got smashed in my province in two different locations. They smashed the ballot boxes not because they wanted to cheat, but because their names were not on the electoral roll.

So, this is a very critical element of the elections, so you can understand Honourable Iduhu's frustrations. We will be writing to your commissioner again.

I understand its above your pay grade which is fine, but look, I want to thank you both for that admission because you have given us an insight we have never had.

We assume that the processes around the electoral roll were stringent and robust. However, you are telling us now that it was substandard in terms of its construct. And in listening to Mr Ralai, whatever information the provinces were sending through did not align with the one in the Central database here at Waigani.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Here's a question probably fitting your paygrade then; how much was allocated for Central Province, in terms of funding?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – In general for the elections, we were given something around K2-3 million.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Now how much money? You should know the money because you are the Election Manager.

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Yes about K2-3 million.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Not K2.5 million? Not K3 million?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Yes about K3 million.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – You sure? Not K4 million?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – No. We were given K3 million and the Central Provincial Government came in with their assistance.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – How much did the Central Provincial Government assist with?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – They came in firstly with about K500 000, then followed with another K500 000.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So K4 million?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Yes.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – As the Election Manager, you should have a figure of how much was allocated to certain headings of expenditure, is that correct?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Yes, yes.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – How much was paid for polling officials?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Polling officials were the ones that depleted most of our funds.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** (Chairman) – So most of the funding went towards their allowances for polling officials?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Yes, polling officials.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – You are free to speak, as the Chairman reminded us at the outset; do you agree that there are still outstanding to be paid to election officials?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Yes, we still have outstanding on officials to be sorted out.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So K4 million was not enough?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – No.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So when do you plan on paying this people who did your elections?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Well we have been running to and from Kone and the Hohola Office.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – How much is still outstanding?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – About K500 000 remaining.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Sir please respectfully, can you give us a figure?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Yes, it's about a million.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Sorry?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Yes, about a million.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Not K500 000?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – No.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Have you submitted to Treasury or anyone to give you that money to pay these people; who did your hard work?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Normally, I go through the election headquarters but if I don't get any support from them, I go through the Provincial Administrator.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – And have you since done that?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – I have been talking to the Provincial Administrator and–

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – No, the Electoral Commission because the K3 million was allocated for your function.

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Now, let me be frank. Every time I go and ask them, they tell me that there is no money.



**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, if I may intervene, Mr Ralai do you have a similar situation when it comes to outstanding allowances.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Thank you, Chairman. Yes, NCD has outstanding liabilities for poll workers, few counting officials and also service providers. My outstanding bill is K4.2 million yet to be off-set for 2022.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, what you are saying is the protected counting and all that is included?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – It is all covered in that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But that is the cause of why your cost blew out?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Yes, because of the delay in the counting process.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is that a similar story to your colleagues around the province?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – That will be the similar sentiment for the whole Nation.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So we could have K20 million if you count an average of K1 million for each province on outstanding allowances, sorry, K22 million there about, with the additional K2 million in NCD?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Yes, correct.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Chairman, I just want to come back to the Common Roll issues because we are going to be having the LLG Elections coming in next year so whatever we recommend also have to imply on the by-elections and LLG elections.

I understand that the 2017 Common Roll was discarded but with the City Managers experience what processes did you go through in order for you to be allowed to vote? Because the people want to hear so if their names are not on the Common Roll how do I cast my vote?

Mr Frank, can you share your experience on what processes we much go through or recommend for polling officials to allow a known citizen not to be turned away?

**Mr FRANK RAVU** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman. I think that the timing is very short perhaps maybe two years before the election.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That is okay but people still turn up and their names will not be on the Common Roll.

**Mr RAVU FRANK** – Yes.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – But, your name was not on the Common Roll however you were allowed to vote and some people were not so what process did you follow to be allowed to vote on that day you turned up? We want other citizens to perhaps go through that process so that they are allowed to vote in the 2027 election or in the LLG elections.

**Mr RAVU FRANK** – I asked the polling officials and when they checked the Common Roll, my name was not on it so I filled the application or the form for the Common Roll. If you look in one of those pages there I was pictured in the data processing centers.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So who allowed you to be given the form to be filled? The Electoral Polling Official?

**Mr RAVU FRANK** – The Electoral Commission Officers.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – I mean at the polling area, the polling official?

**Mr RAVU FRANK** – The Presiding Officer.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – The Presiding Officer gave you the form?

**Mr RAVU FRANK** – Yes, that's is right.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – But others were not given the form so why were you allowed to be given this form to fill?

**Mr RAVU FRANK** – Because, I filled in the form and I said that my name was supposed to be on the Common Roll and they told me that there were other people that were experiencing the same but then they brought out an exercise book and they told me that my names will be included in that book and I could vote. So, I was allowed to cast my vote by the presiding officers.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Okay, Mr Maliafeope, Central Province EM, some of our people did not go through this process. They were basically told, “Nogat, neim ino stap, ladana be lasi, Oi be oi voti lasi, idia guau.” Why didn’t you instruct your Presiding Officers to follow what was done in NCD? Were they applying a different law in NCD and we were applying another law in Central Province?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – I am going to assume what the City Manager went through, when he was allowed to vote after filling a form 11. It is a form that we work on in order to get the people whose names are not on the roll to be enrolled at the last minute which is unfortunate for others who did not get the same treatment as him. Otherwise, we could have given form 11 to every person to allow them to vote.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – My question was why didn’t you as the manager allow that to happen in Central Province.

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – In Central Province I didn’t practice this because I thought that was illegal.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So he voted illegally.

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Well. if you want to say it that way, yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I think in East Sepik, I personally asked that the Form 11 be used and the Election Manager there refused so we didn’t use it. Apparently, only in NCD. So why this ad hoc arrangement? Central province is using a different interpretation to NCD and so on and so forth? Is that normal?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – We did not experience these kind of encounters in Central Province basically because in all our Provincial Steering Committee Meetings, our emphasis was to follow the Organic Law and do the Elections by the Organic Law.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So the Form 11 is not allowed under the Organic Law? It's just a process that the Electoral Commission introduced?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – It's a process that we apply for enrolment, yes.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Is Form 11 is not part of the law, is it just a form from the office, what is it?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – It's a form designed by our IT people to capture those people who have missed out.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Without legal basis?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Well then they shouldn't.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Can I intervene, I think Form 11 is a regulated form that is approved under election regulations and it is part of the election forms to be used during the Common Roll update unfortunately, the CM went through that process.

There was a slip during the enrolment where the voters were asked to provide that during the polling so in this case I think CM must have used that slip after the update for him to be accepted during polling. I think there is a slip from the enrolment form which was given to the voters. I think most of the voters threw them away before polling that's why they were turned away during the polling.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Sir, what kind of a slip?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – It's a small slip that was taken out from the enrolment form and the other part was given to Electoral Commission workers to process the data entry while the small slip copy will be with the voter, that's with this new enrolment form. The regulated enrolment form.

**Hon KETH IDUHU** – That’s the case of voters, what about candidates? Did you find any candidates who turned up and didn’t have names on the Common Roll?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Well Chairman and the committee members, candidates are the more privileged group of people when it comes to elections especially during nominations

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Is that right?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – They have a special provision under the Organic law which states that if a candidate doesn’t have their name on the roll, he or she can be enrolled on the spot and we call this the special provisions

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – What if a candidate has his name listed in another area electorate and but turns up in another electorate to vote because his special.

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Well he has to own up and declare that he was registered in another electorate so that they remove his name from there and allow him to nominate in another electorate.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So the onus of proof is on the individual and not on you guys?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE**– Whatever the Candidate says, we take it on face value and on trust.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – The law also states that people who have been found guilty of a criminal offense are not supposed to stand for elections from my understanding. Yet in the last elections, there were several nominations accepted of people who are not qualified due to them being found guilty of a criminal offense by a court of law.

How is that treated, is the onus then on the same candidate? He has to turn up and say look I am guilty of a criminal offense so I’m not eligible. How does that work, do you accept everything and then later go to a court of disputed returns?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – The onus is with the individual because he went through the process.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So it's not on you?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – it is not on us because those are the questions that he would have gone through during nomination forms.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But, surely, it is the Electoral Commission's role to vet the adequacy of the candidate. I mean sapos wanpela longlong man long strit em i kam na even though the law says that he/she can't stand for election or they are not eligible to be a candidate, what you are saying is the onus is on that person. So ol filim form na kam putim bai yupela acceptim?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Accepted and the final decision comes from the Commissioner.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So any Tom, Dick and Harry can turn up and present the nomination form and because they are special as you have indicated and they will be accepted.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Under the Special Provisions they can be enrolled at the same time, for the candidates.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So even they don't pay nomination fee, they are special.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – They will pay the nomination fees, we are talking about the names on the roll.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – We are talking about eligibility of the candidates.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Eligibility of candidate is the use of birth right. Birth right is for the candidates while the resident for qualification is for the electors. Those are two different qualifications. Candidates have the birth right while the elector has the residential qualifications which is six months and above.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – So only those who are born in a particular electorate are allowed to contest.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – No. if he stays away from his electorate but want to go and contest at his district or province he can use his birth right to go and contest in his own province.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – You might want to look into standardizing this process and when you go back and have a think about this as well. Give it some deep thought because they could be doing great injustice to people. We are a nation of equalities, there are no special treatments in the eyes of the law. There should not be, there is only one law for all of us, candidate or voter, politicians or general citizens. There shouldn't be double standards. What you have just told the committee is that there is a double standard that is acceptable by the Electoral Commission.

This must not be the case! There should be one rule for all. If you are on the roll, you qualify for that electorate. If you pay the nomination fee, you qualify for the electorate. If you have no criminal convictions or indictable offense, you qualify for the elections because the Supreme Court say so.

There must be one rule for everybody in this country, not special ones for candidates and treat the rest of us voters as general citizens and we are not special enough for this Papua New Guinean law. Please give us some serious thoughts.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Thank you Chair –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Let me intervene and I want to just draw on that one. Since we have established the Electoral Commission treats candidates as special people, I want to come back to either PPC Midi or Mr Terry.

How many candidates who are special people, have been charged with electoral offenses in your experience?

**Mr DAVID TERRY** – Sir you referring to the recent elections?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – The recent and the previous one, I just want to know from your experience 24 years in the Force being involved in perhaps four elections.

**Senior Inspector David Terry**– For NCD and Central no one was charged, but we had one –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So we have never charged one of these special people called candidates with electoral offenses even though they may have been involved in enticing and encouraging their supporters –

**Senior Inspector DAVID TERRY** – Sir there was one candidate who was suspected of conveying cash but money was taken off from him but was cleared and wasn't arrested and charged. But Chairman, if I may add regarding the issue of criminal implications? I think we have to look at it this way; you are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But what if you already proven guilty? The law is clear.

**Senior Inspector DAVID TERRY** – Chairman that's a different story but if you have somebody who's been implicated in the crime maybe the Electoral Commission can look at those issues and formulate laws that can disqualify.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, fair enough come back to the first point. Let just say you or your colleagues are present at a counting room for instance and there's a candidate that intimidates, threatens and harasses polling officials. Can you arrest that person?

**Senior Inspector David Terry**– Definitely, if we have the complaint is filed by the polling officials.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But if you are present there and there's no complaint filed and you or another police officer witnesses this event would you arrest that person?

**Senior Inspector David Terry**– I would but considering the circumstances sometimes it is wise to use intellectual judgement. Considering the situation, if it is volatile we don't want to inflame the situation so sometimes it's always wise to talk. Just toktok long ol man tasol na daunim ol dispela kain hevi. But if they go out of hand and if they do commit an offence well the onus is on the aggrieved person.



**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is a threats an offence?

**Senior Inspector David Terry**– Definitely, like I said members of the constabulary can arrest anyone who wants to be erratic or behave in a threatening manner. But we always advice our members on frontline policing to be cautions in situation like this because when you do have somebody taken into custody you might create issues.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough but after the event.

**Senior Inspector David Terry**– You can still follow up and make the arrest but based on the complainant if he or she want to pursue it.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Just very quickly thank you, Senior Inspector am just going back to the two election managers regarding this IT company. I am going to ask because it's public funds and Common Roll we are discussing here. What's the name of the company that was engaged that you said stuffed the entire Common Roll up.

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE**– Thank you, Hon, Keith Iduhu, I was trying to mention the name but the Chairman –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – It's okay I didn't want you naming individuals but you can name a company.

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE**– The company that was involved in the computer processing and all that was called Mintsoft.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – Is this contract or the engagement ceased already or is it continuing?

**Mr PETER MALIA FEOPE**– I believe it has ceased.

**HON KEITH IDUHU** – So, I hope they won't be recruited again.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – It was a one-off contract is that what you are saying, just for the 2022 National General Election.

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE**– Exactly.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And when were they engaged; one or two year or six months.

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE**– They were engaged 12 months before the actual issue of the writs so they were there before the rolls were suppose to be produced.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – To understand that when the Electoral Commissioner was here he mentioned some thing about photo roll. Is that the new photo roll that we will be using in the future?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE**– Well I can't talk for the Electoral Commissioner.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – You from the institution and part of the senior management.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – Let me intervene, Chair. The photo roll is the one that am looking at to do a trial with Motu Koita elections. That will be the trial for this photo roll and if it works out than we can introduce it during LLGs election or even 2027 National General Elections.

**Hon KEITH IDUHU** – And is that a project roll update ICT component will you be tendering that or how you going to do the recruitment. Who's going to do the photo roll?

**Mr KILA RALAI** – The guy has already introduced the photo roll, the same company – Mintsoft.

**Mr KILA RALAI** – And I believe that Minsoft will continue with the photo roll update but when it comes to the bigger component maybe it will be tendered to other ICT companies to bid for that process.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Is that the same company that did the Kupiano ward by-election by photo roll?

**Mr KILA RALAI**– That’s correct

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So what’s the report on the Kupiano ward?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – The Kupiano roll update was completed and we were in the process of trying to use it when the whole thing was stopped but it’s all on the computer now and if we are to use it –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Why did it stop?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – Well we couldn’t use it because the others were not on photo roll except the Kupiano town and LLG

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – One ward

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – yes it was piloted at Kupiano.

**Mr ELIAS KAPAVORE** – Is this Minsoft company engaged by Electoral Commission or by respective provinces?

**Mr PETER MALIAFEOPE** – The same company was engaged by Electoral Commission to do the roll work for the entire country.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – I just have one or two questions to the Provincial Administrator and the PPC. In the counting process in one electorate in this country it took less than one week to count. In others it took two to three weeks to and one of them two months and I think that’s not fair.

From my observations; for example, the Abau one which I personally was involved in, the Returning Officer was not turning up on time. Everybody was ready at eight o’clock in the morning and he came after lunch at 3 p.m., in the afternoon.

So, we wasted two or three days not counting yet we were taking care of scrutineer’s three meals a day. This went on for three weeks whilst other provinces had declaration going on around the country.

In Central Province, we were delayed and we complained a lot but the same Returning Officer was never changed until and it's no good. Therefore, Election Manager and the PA, what happened? Why did it take a long time to count in Central Province and in other provinces it was very fast? What were the issues and how can we improve it?

**Mr FRANCIS KOABA** – Thank you Deputy Chair, first and foremost I think the counting for Abau, Rigo and Goilala were all eventuated at the Bomana CIS Training College. One issue that we found to be very stringent is the security checks at the entrance and I believe a lot of our counting officials which includes the scrutineers from respective candidates were subjected to a lot of irrational and high tactic intimidations by our security forces who were manning the gates. So that's one particular area which I believe may have also contributed to that.

Secondly is the logistical issues; movement of returning and counting officers in and out of the counting venues. To avoid that, we secured accommodation from the training college to accommodate and house all the counting officials including the counters, returning officers and the assistant returning officers so that we could have an effective and efficient counting.

But then again, there were some instances where counting has to go through the night and eventually into the morning so you would have seen that during the day in the first half of the morning so you would have seen that during the day, the first half of the morning counting was not happening because the counting officials will need to have rest and normally start after lunch.

**Mr FRANCIS KOABA** – So these are some of the instances which I believe may have also contributed to that but apart from that the continuous issues raised by scrutineers on suspected foul play or issues with counting also contributed a lot to the efficient counting process. So those are few issues I believe that may have contributed to the delay.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Yes, I am sure the other electorates had the same issues but they managed to count them on time.

PPC, what are your views on the security issues in Central Province compared to the other provinces with lots of problems, the nation is watching. Why did it work better in some parts of the country with regard to security issues and why did it just mess up and we designated 2022 Election as one of the worst in the country? As the PPC responsible for the security issues in Central Province which in my view was one that went fairly successfully. Why?

**Mr JOHN MIDI** (Provincial Police Commander Central Province) – In terms of security in Central Province we had this ongoing conversations in our PESC and one of the main factors that I highlighted was the capacity to be visible in our province throughout the polling status and into the counting of the election in Central Province.

We are thankful to the Provincial Administration that the considerations that they took on board to source additional manpower from PNGDF and CS was one of the thing that I believe is a point for consideration in terms of long term engagement in the field of elections. I looked at what we had in Central and NCD in general, and tapped into the available manpower that was already there.

I didn't want to look outside for recruitment of reserves and so forth but wanted to get the professional guys that were available. You would note that in the call out from the Commissioner, we only sourced about 1000 or so from the PNGDF. But the officers from other provinces, we didn't engage them but I asked the PESC to consider them as well in our own arrangements as we were allowed to in the process of planning for our elections. Also we looked at what we can do with what we have so we tried to make some effort to ensuring that we did go out and talk to the people.

More importantly, the Central people approached the election differently which is a good attitude towards elections. They accepted that this was an important time to express their rights to vote and they queued up. In the PESC we were vocal in trying to get the things done.

The main issue that instigates problem is the unavailability of the names at the voting stations. So, when the Common Roll issue was sorted out. I was really behind the exercise with my officers to go out and try to get our people registered for voting.

Unfortunately, what I am hearing today is different from what actually happened because the conversations and interactions with our people to give them that information that this is the most important time to come out and express themselves was something which went on radio and media so that the people can be involved in it.

But mostly I commend the people of Central Province for their positive attitude towards the election outcome of their province. They actually took ownership of it and demonstrated positively towards problems that arose and allowed them to exercise their democratic rights in the polling boots.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, TBC media and I think on that note it's really encouraging that you mentioned that it was the behaviour of the people in the Central province

who took ownership of the elections that resulted in the outcomes there. On that not I want to thank all of you. I think we've just gone into our lunchtime and I just want to thank all of you for your contributions, we requested certain things of you which I hope we will receive within the time allocated and that would constitute a part of our report so I now adjourn our sitting to perhaps it's not 12.30 p.m. there about so we'll reconvene at 1.30 p.m., and all of you who are present welcome to stay and join us for lunch.

Thank you all very much.

*Suspended for lunch*

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Good afternoon every one, welcome back to the afternoon session of our Committee meeting. I want to thank our Milne Bay team for being patient throughout the morning while we dealt with NCD and Central. Welcome to the briefings.

Provincial Administrator, Milne Bay, as the person leading the planning and execution of the elections in Milne Bay perhaps you would like to give us just an overall brief as to how you went and anything you would like the Committee to note, if I may put it like that. Mr Numa thank you

### **Milne Bay Province**

#### **Milne Bay Provincial Administrator**

**Mr ASHAN NUMA** (Acting Provincial Administrator-Milne Bay) – Thank you very much Honourable Allan Bird, and the Special Parliamentary Committee.

Firstly, let me take this time to thank you and the Government of the day for taking this very important step in reviewing the elections. We will speak up a bit on our experiences and why this is a very important step for this Government and our leaders.

Before I go on further, if I may just introduce my team here. My name is Ashan Numa, I am the Acting Provincial Administrator and also Chair of the Milne Bay Steering Committee on Elections. On my right is Mr Ben Kua the Provincial Police Commander, who joined just recently about two months ago. He will be sharing his experience based on his involvement in the elections when he was with NCD. On my left is Mr Ivan Maraka, he is the Provincial Returning Officer, unfortunately the Election manager was ill, therefore could not make it to this Committee meeting.

But I will just give you a brief on how we ran the elections. Surprisingly, it jointly ran better than we expected although we had experiences along the way where we had to try and work around. We had the Election Steering Committee meeting intact. We had a committee fully established. We did have our plans ahead of the elections and we tried to prepare ahead of that. We had five seats that went to the elections; the provincial seat and the four district electorates.

Generally, we successfully implemented or made declarations for those seats out of the five seats. Four seats have been contested in the Court of Disputed Returns, one did not go or was clear. We were able to try and manage the elections from the get go, from Polling down to Counting and also declarations.

We have asked the Electoral Commission to allow us to centralize our counting. The polling was done at the provincial headquarter. But due to past experiences, we had to bring the counting into Alotau, to centralize and manage five counting rooms where each of them was headed by the PRO plus all his ROs under him. We provided the overall coordination as the Steering Committee.

So basically, we had our own challenges as well in terms of logistics, at the same time trying to get all our counting officials and everybody that was part of the stakeholder group that managed the elections.

Prior to the elections, we did have a lot of issues in terms of law and order. And so, the centralised counting actually made it work for us because we were able to concentrate on one area in terms of logistics, security and so forth. We had issues that came through but with the centralised counting, it actually helped us to move forward and complete the elections.

In a nutshell, we had completed the whole election process but we went through a lot of challenges from trying to make sure that the requirements, for example, the Common Roll was not updated in time, the funding came in late and training was not done for everybody. We had issues where we were not able to bring boxes back into Alotau because of logistics partly because we couldn't get in the boxes from remote areas like Nagaun.

Those are things that we went through but our team tried to manage the elections and we were able to successfully get through the process where the five seats were declared. Thank you.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Mr Numa. Mr Maraka, are there any particular challenges that you would like for the Committee to note, given the report that we have just received from Mr Numa?

### **Milne Bay Provincial Returning Officer**

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** (Milne Bay Provincial Returning Officer) – Thank you, Mr Chairman. There are a quite number of challenges but I will pinpoint just a few, especially to do with funding. When we provide our budgeting for the election for Milne Bay Province, we expect to get that full amount. If we are going to have some cuts, at least deal with us to get the cuts done so that we can be able to look for other means like going back to the provincial government for support in order to execute the elections properly or in a better way for Milne Bay Province.

Milne Bay Province is actually made up of three maritime districts and Alotau District, which is on the mainland. The logistics towards the islands is quite difficult for us, especially during the election period where the weather is harsh and we experience a lot of strong winds.

On the budget part of it, the National Government should provide the money straight to provinces according to their budget requirements.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – For clarity, how much did you request for and how much was actually provided?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** –We requested for about a million but we received about K500,000.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – From the head office in Port Moresby?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Yes, it is from the head office.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So we were just talking to NCD. They asked for K10 million and only got K4 million and your province asked for a million but you only got half a million. Please continue.

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – So if we get the funding back into Milne Bay Province, then it will be able to help us sort out all the challenges that we had during the elections, like wages for electoral officials starting from roll update, polling and all the way to counting.

So if we have all those funding down with us at the provincial level, we would have been able to sort all our officials out. Also, we have services providers that provided services and



are still waiting for payments. If we could get those moneys back to us, then we can be able to know how much we can be able to sort funds to support us in our elections.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, what is your current outstanding to your service providers and election officials?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Currently for our election officials, there is a good number but I did not get the statistics yet.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Do give us an estimate.

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – An estimate. Roughly about half of the service providers haven't been paid yet and that's during polling and counting and...

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So that would be how much? Half a million? A million?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Roughly about half a million for us to complete those payments.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, proceed.

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – The other challenges that we were facing, especially when it comes to the Electoral Office is controlling especially logistics that is very important to us, for instance, the air logistics and the sea logistics.

If only they left it to us to control it because we know the place better. But they controlled it for us so we had to wait for them almost half of the time. For instance, Daga LLG, the most remote Islands of Milne Bay, started polling when we were already into counting. So that also caused inconveniences for us and we had to deal with that issue.

**Sir PUKA TEMU** – What was the reason? Was it delayed funding?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – It was not delayed funding but it was to do with provision of air transport for us.

**Sir PUKA TEMU** – They were managing it?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Yes, that’s right.

**Sir PUKA TEMU** – And eventually it came?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Eventually it came and we transported polling officials into Daga LLG and brought them out again. But we had to be very patient for that to happen. That’s one of the challenges that we faced towards sea and air logistics. S

For sea, basically we need the vessels to stand by; the smaller vessels that take the polling officials in and back to the main vessel then to the station and when the sea is rough, its not good for them. So, we need monies there to charter proper vessels to do that job. Instead of getting a smaller boat and it gets overcrowded when it carries boxes and officials, it’s not safe for officials. Those are some of the challenges that we faced with logistics.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Who decides on the logistics service providers? Is that decision made in Milne Bay or is it made in Port Moresby?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – We choose those service providers. We are asked to choose them but when we choose them, they ask us to cut the cost down and that’s how we also cut our requirements down. For instance, if I’m hiring a K100, 000 vessel, but they say K100, 000 is too much for this electorate alone, then I have to cut it down to K20, 000 so that I can be able to get three vessels.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Do you know the method by which the Electoral Commission justifies its spending? For example, they obviously spend a lot of money in NCD. There are some provinces that received a lot more money in terms of their funding and you guys only get K1 million.

Is there a method to all of these? Or is someone sitting in an office in the Electoral Commission head office making these decisions on your behalf? What do you know about that? What can you tell us about that?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – For that, majority of the things that we request for Milne Bay Province goes up and the decision is made in Electoral Commission and we just follow those decisions.

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

**Sir PUKA TEMU** – Provincial Government support?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Yes, the provincial government support is there but in order for us to request a good amount from them, they need to tell us first that we are going to give you K500, 000. So, when we go to request from the Provincial Government its easier to request the correct amount.

We see that it's a national function but the provinces will support. For Milne Bay, yes, the Provincial Government did give us some funding of about K300, 000.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So it would have been good had you known earlier. But just so you know, even in my province, we had budgeted a million kina but we ended up spending K4 million. But that was a decision taken by the administrator and it was because the Electoral Commission couldn't come the party in time. I think it's a common problem; so continue.

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – On the part of candidates and scrutineers; we did not receive correct information and materials. The election officials were trained properly, but the candidates need to know what we are going to be doing.

There were some scrutineer's handbooks that were provided, but I feel that they need to provide Candidates Handbooks too. Or maybe come up with a forum for people intending to become members so that come elections, there are aware of what is expected of them.

**Sir PUKA TEMU** – When you called for the training program for the scrutineers, what percentage turned up?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – For Milne Bay, because of the timing, majority of the scrutineers were in Alotau but not all of them were informed. I think the only electorate that talked to the scrutineers verbally, not a full on training was Alotau District.

However, all of us did the talking during the process itself, when the polling was in progress. Which for myself is not good for the candidates and their scrutineers. They need to be advised earlier so that people have correct ideas and make proper decisions before the actual polling so that they are well informed.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– What prevented you from engaging with the scrutineers and candidates earlier?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Basically, the timing was very short.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– What timing?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – From nominations up until polling, the timing is not sufficient for us to conduct all these trainings. Then we are waiting for the Electoral Head Office to tell us what to do. So, majority of the time, we are just waiting for them. For Milne Bay, we used our experience to conduct the elections.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Okay, in terms of your scrutineers and your candidates; did you experience similar difficulties like what we heard from NCD? Did you experience unruly behavior from candidates and the scrutineers?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – I believe Milne Bay people are good people so we did not really face that even though we had some disagreements; but we allowed for the candidates to speak to us through their scrutineers. So, we did entertain the candidates to air their grievances and then we got legal advice before we proceeded.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, you had a lawyer engaged at your end for that purpose?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – From the Electoral Commission, we did not have a lawyer, but we had the Milne Bay Provincial lawyer who was present and was very supportive to us during that period.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– And you found that helpful?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Yes, it was very helpful for us, especially in interpreting the law so that we are within the law.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Is there anything further that you would like to add?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – I think that will be all from me, thank you.

**Sir PUKA TEMU** – How about the Common Roll preparations; how did you go in terms of preparing for the Common Roll updates?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – For the Common Roll updates, the whole province started very late because of logistics. To take the materials to the islands was another issue. It took time, so when the officials arrived, we soon found out that the people's names weren't there; so we tried to put names in, then we found out that there were limited number of the Application Form (Form 11). They have already calculated how many form 11s will be there and the forms were barcoded so we could not photocopy extras and fill so we had issues with that.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – In your view, how many estimated voters did not vote in Milne Bay?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – That would be roughly about 40 to 50 per cent of people did not vote.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Close to 50 per cent?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Yes.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That is a huge number.

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Yes

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – And the key reason for that number not being enrolled was not enough forms were given?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Yes, that is right.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – And then when you tried to ask for more forms, what happened?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – They didn't allow us.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – You ran out of time and they said no?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Yes

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – A follow-up to that one, isn't the Common Roll meant to just add new people? So, was your previous roll in 2017 updated or was it already deficient?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – It was already deficient in 2017.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, it just carried over?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – That is right.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Were you here for the Central Province and NCD presentation? Okay, Central Province and NCD basically said that there was a problem with the computer here at Waigani for handling the Electoral Roll so that is why a lot of people missed out. Did you experience something similar or was your situation different?

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Data entry was not done.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – They had a software problem.

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – For Milne Bay, the data team traveled down here to Port Moresby to complete the roll update. So we went through the roll update and was completed but it was the new intakes that were limited where we could not put in more eligible voters because Form 11 was insufficient for each ward.

For instance, the Alotau Local-Level Government ward previously had 600 people but now there are 3000 people.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – And how many Form 11s were you allowed?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – We only had two extra Form 11s.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Which one is that, Alotau ward that you are talking about?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – That is one of the wards in Alotau.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, you went from 600 to 3000?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Yeah, in the previous elections maybe in 2007 it was a low number around 600 so that was fine but in 2017, the population increased, and now in 2022, so the estimated figure for that area would be around 3000 but they allowed only two extra Form 11's for update in that ward.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Alotau ward?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Yeah. But if they saw that the numbers had increased then they should have increased the Form 11s for the new eligible voters.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – There is an interesting situation for New Ireland. In New Ireland, the Provincial Government has a perfect record of the number of people it has in its wards so the New Ireland Provincial Government tried to use that as a basis to allow their people to vote.

Obviously, the Electoral Commission turn them down but we have the report so based on the submission from the New Ireland Provincial Government they would like the Provincial Government to take over the update of the Common Roll and also to take over the planning and execution of future elections.

Now, from the Milne Bay perspective, what do you think about that?

**Mr ASHAN NUMA**– If I may just answer that question.

Yes, New Ireland's view and what they did is basically what Milne Bay wanted to do because we and a number of provinces have already started rolling out the ward record books.

In preparation for this election, we advised NSO and Electoral Commission to use these books because those are real numbers and names of people but unfortunately, as you mentioned it was disregarded. So, we should actually use the ward recorder books, we are now using technology, we have the database and we should use that.

In preparation for the National Election in 2022, we actually went ahead prior to Electoral Commission rolling out its budget and funding, we had put funding to the provincial government to set up the Electoral Commission data system in our provincial offices.

Basically, we asked them to use the information we had to update the roll which they brought down to the Electoral Commission. Our view is that there is already a system that can be used if we are talking about the next elections to verify what we got in the last and current Common Rolls we have been using.

So, to answer your question, yes that is the position of the Milne Bay Provincial Government.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, if we came up with a recommendation that gave ownership of the statistics to the provinces; we have already got the request from New Ireland and Milne Bay, I hear you are saying that you would prefer the same system where you take ownership of your elections?

**Mr ASHAN NUMA** – We are already doing that through DPLGA, they have already rolled out the ward recorder book database system. I think in New Ireland, Milne Bay, East New Britain, and some other provinces. The idea is to collect data to help in the elections and planning so if we can strengthen that by supporting it through funding and resources to use that as our basis, there will be no problem with the Common Roll updates.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – At the moment the separate databases are not talking to each other?

**Mr ASHAN NUMA**– No they are not and that is the issue.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So, the creation of an integrated approach would be the way forward.

**Mr ASHAN NUMA**– Exactly, yep!

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What happened to those who came to vote on that day and their names were not on the Common Roll? How did your polling officials handle those in your setting? Did you send them all away or was there a way out?



**Mr ASHAN NUMA**– My PRO will answer that, but from my experience, most of them were bitterly upset and frustrated but I guess we were quite fortunate that our people were understanding. They got the message and they did register their frustrations but they walked away peacefully.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – They walked away peacefully so they did not burn the ballot boxes?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA**– No, they were very frustrated and they showed that they wanted to belt the shit out of me. Maybe because ol Milne Bayans na ol gutpla lain na ol ino tromoi han lo mi but some came and screamt in my face but I explained I didn't not create the problem and those responsible were not near us.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Given the continued deficiencies in the roll update, if the same thing happens and the next Common Roll is not very updated because of other reasons, what is the option to make sure that voters are not turned away?

What structure would we have to recommend? How do we identify individuals, for instance, you tru tru Kiriwina voter and you have lived here? Or maybe the pastor or the chief can identify them and we will allow them to vote rather than send the 60 years old man away; he might spit buai on your face? How do we handle it, there must be a way out, can you recommend a way?

**Mr ASHAN NUMA** – If I may, I think as we have mentioned, firstly is getting the roll right.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – But, it might not happen.

**Mr ASHAN NUMA**– Yes, I understand that but what we should do is have a backup. We must always have something and we did not have that in this election.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – You were not allowed.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But you had one, you already had your ward rolls.

**Mr ASHAN NUMA**– Yes, we had the ward rolls but we were not allowed to use them.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That was your backup?

**Mr ASHAN NUMA**– That’s right but we are still working on those to verify them. So we said, “look, why don’t we use this as a backup.” You have your Common Roll there and then you have a backup that is legally authorized to be used during the elections. This is what people were asking but we couldn’t do it because the direction was not to use any other roll except the roll that was given by the Electoral Commission.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But, if this Committee recommended and we change the laws so that the law recognises your ward roll or any other provincial ward roll as a legitimate government document that could verify the existence of whoever it was so that they could do things like vote. That would help you guys, if we, I mean look, our job is to change the law. If the law says you can’t do it now and we already recognize it’s a huge discrepancy. It has affected the outcome of the entire elections. Like the situation you described.

In my province on the first day, two ballot boxes was smashed for the first time in our history. I had to go on radio and appealed to my people to stop doing that and so they stopped. But the fact remains that I would estimate that about 30 per cent of my people didn’t get to vote and that is my personal estimation not based on any empirical evidence or what so ever.

So here you are saying 50 per cent of the people of Milne Bay missed out and that is what Sir Puka is asking. If we had another way that would guarantee or at least to allow for your citizens to vote what would you recommend?

**Mr ASHAN NUMA** – Chair if I may just add, we need to start now if that is the case because 2027 is five years away and what we experience in last elections should never happen again.

If we are going to go that way, our suggestion is basically that we have a backup but we must make sure that the first roll must be at least as accurate as possible so we don’t have to use the second one. But if you want to make change, exceptions must strictly be exceptions because if we don’t you know we still leave open for abuse of the system.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So if the Committee recommended and we started updating the Common Roll proper three years out, you get a copy of it one year before the election, would that be sufficient for you to do any data cleansing or reconciliation or that sort of thing. Would that work for you?

**Mr ASHAN NUMA**– Yes it will definitely work for us. At least we have enough time to go through.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – You need the time

**Mr ASHAN NUMA**– Yes

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – My suggestion on the rolls is, if the government can put a law in place and say every year until the next election, the Common Roll must be updated. This is because man tanim 19 years every year. Every year insait long wanpela mun, age bilong man meri i go antap na tu man meri i dai. So why do we wait until taim blo election na yumi like updatim roll. Sapos yumi ken updatim every year, I believe displela situation bai no inap kamap long yumi ken.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That’s why the ward recorder plays an important role and it needs to communicate the voting age for the Electoral Commission to pick up the voting age and upgrade their roll through the process that is owned by the provincial government.

So that the provincial government takes ownership of the Common Roll update gives it to the Electoral Commission to register, ticks it, publish it and its done two years ahead, that type of process.

**Mr ELIAS KAPAVORE** – The election manager, you were saying that you were given Form 11 to update the Common Roll and we were hearing today from the NCD that the Form 11 was actually use on the polling date. If someone’s name was not on the Common Roll, they gave that form to them to allow them to vote. So yupela ino mekim dispela ah?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – No we did not do that.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – You were advised that was illegal?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – That’s right, we were advised that was illegal and from experience we know that its illegal. Taim bilong enrolment em over nau em taim bilong vote.

**Mr ASHAN NUMA**– If I may just add one more comment here. So this brings about an issue where there is inconsistency of advice given so as the PRO was mentioned, in terms of the handbooks. The information for training must be given early. People are empowered on that time to make decision and they are well aware of their rights especially returning officers and polling officials. They can make those decisions consistently and we don’t have to seek advice again from Electoral Commission.

That’s what we were doing because it was very unclear at some point on when do we use the Form 11 or we even suggested can we check our ward record books if it is on the list, but they were not allowed. So, we’ve seen across the province, some areas have been allowed to do things, we were not allowed to do, so there’s some inconsistency in the advice given.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – PA, what’s your view? How many electoral officials were engaged in Milne Bay approximately?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – For Milne Bay province.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** –From yourself to the PRO, ROs and POs.

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Counting officials are 1500, including myself and the ROs. Then the polling officials tu em bai wankain about 1000 plus ol involve lo election.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Majority of them where public servant.

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Majority where public servant na ol others were youths nabaut long street we ol igat gutpela educational background ol kam joinim.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – In terms of some of my personal observations, some election officials are aligned with some candidates and so in order to prevent the type of thing would you accept the recommendations ..... **(inaudible)**..... public services General Orders can therefore be immediately applied. What’s your view?

**Mr ASHAN NUMA**– In my view they should be public servants. In our case we had a former public servant who is actually was also part of the team because we have experience people around to appoint. So, I guess it was managed well because the public servant knew what needed to be done.

But going forward we need to have public servant so it's easier to manage and they know that they are under oath to deliver free and fair elections.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – And also in terms of preparing and training the same officials can be train so that they have the ability to manage and also, they know the laws so you may not need a lawyer during the time but everybody knows the rules and so there is a continuity and consistency. But in some cases, there was request by some candidates to bring a returning officer from the outside of that electorate or province. What's your view?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA**– For Milne Bay province itself, we won't be able to do that because before all these people are selected from PRO down. The Provincial Steering Committee is the one that makes the recommendations for them to be selected. The Provincial Steering Committee confirms that these are the group of people and send their information down to electoral office for them to be gazetted as returning officers.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – In your quality checking of the counting, what percentage after the quality checking where that those that should have thrown to the right box and were found in the wrong box because officials were bundling in tens and making it twelve rather than ten and throwing it in that box because that was their preferred candidate. What percentage of that happened in Milne Bay? Was it high or low practice.

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – If, I would rate it at ten as the highest, I will give it below one. It's a very low practice.

**Hon ELIAS KAPAVORE** – Before the provincial steering committee actually approves those who will be participating as ROs, do you have an assessment or criteria for those who will be participating to actually give their opinion on whether they are actually supporting a particular candidate so they cannot participate?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – We actually don't have some criteria on that but people apply through the normal election electoral office and the applications are sorted out and that's when they are brought to the provincial steering committee to be assessed.

So that was one of the reasons why for Milne Bay, we brought in a former public servant because the public servant that was involved em I gat connections long sampla ol candidates.

That's why they replaced him with a former senior officer of the Milne Bay Provincial Government to do that job.

**Hon ELIAS KAPAVORE** – That's actually based on your own assessment and its quite difficult to ask then because they normally keep it to themselves or conceal their affiliations so you have to assess them to participate or not.

For instances, in Pomio certain ROs normally say that they cannot be participating as RO or PRO because they have some kind of relationship with certain candidates so that's how we can handle this kind of issues.

**Mr ASHAN NUMA**– Just to add to that, what's happened was that the election manager and the team received applications especially from public service and they submitted the listing to the steering committee. We went through them and where questions were raised in relation to certain applicants and their relations to candidates, we referred them to the team to cross check and see if they were in order before we approved them.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can I ask a question to you Mr Maraka and perhaps to some extent to you Mr Numa you can add, in your opinion, there are a lot of allegations, innuendo that polling or counting officials can manipulate the ballots, in your experience did that happen in Milne Bay?

Generally, you have been involved in elections for some times and perhaps you have been in other provinces as well. It is possible because that's the question on everyone's mind, Oh I lost it in the counting room? Dispela kain ol toktok save kamap ya.

From your experience and this is just a follow on from what Sir Puka asked you earlier and you rated it as one, from the percentage of one to ten.

Have you come across that and is it possible for the counting officials to manipulate the results of an elections in your experience?

**Mr IVAN MARAK** – From my experience, it will be quite difficult because all the POs journal must balance with the ballot paper inside the ballot box.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So that's your check and balance.

**Mr IVAN MARAK** – That's the check and balance that's provided for us so and that's why all candidates would want to stop ballot box and don't want anything else to go inside the ballot box. But whatever is on the POs journal is the figure that should be in the ballot box. So when the scrutineers at the polling station is taking his own tally on how many people have dropped the ballot paper.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So that has to balance the outcome.

**Mr IVAN MARAK** – Yes!

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, how many elections have you been involved with?

**Mr IVAN MARAK** – I have been involved in three elections.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So in the three elections that you have been involved with, you haven't seen any incidents where there are discrepancies in what was in the recording and in the outturn of the box?

**Mr IVAN MARAK** – Yes there will be some differences, especially to do with ballot papers that are misplaced into different electorate boxes

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Because you have the regional and open.

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – So still i bai gat discrepancy of five or ten.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, from the regional box going into the open box or from the open box going into the regional box. So that happens?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – That happens, yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Are there any problems when the ballot boxes leave the polling site to Alotau for storage and eventually counting? Are there any problems with the safety of ballot boxes or people adding ballot papers into the boxes?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA**– From my three terms of experience in dealing with the elections; after the polling is completed, ol scrutineer blo candidate bai sidaun with these boxes and go. So, in most cases in Milne Bay Province, the scrutineer and the security personnels look after the ballot boxes also the officials are placed away from the ballot boxes but are closer to the presiding officer.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, you are saying that there is no opportunity to manipulate afterward; like you know, you hear people say, “ol opim lid na ol raitim ol pepa na suim go insait na”. You know that Papua New Guinea is the land of rumours. Rumour becomes contagious and the next thing you know people start to make up conspiracy theories so what can you say to something like that?

**Mr ASHAN NUMA** – If I may answer to that, there is a possibility in fact anywhere, but the decision we made to centralize the counting helped reduced the risk to an extent where the ballot boxes were just about 100 meters away from the counting areas.

So we had the PROs and the AROs for the boxes who were not too far it was just within the Alice Weather Park if you know Alotau. So we tried to keep it within the area where you can be able to see the movement of people and it reduced that risk but there is always a possibility that that can happen. We probably were a bit more fortunate because we had the scrutineers that were there.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But if they did, how would you balance that out? Am coming back to what Mr Maraka is saying if there were additional ballot papers introduced after the close of voting, would you be able to pick that up or would there be a difference in your voter stub?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA**– Em bai gat difference. Maybe wanpla or tupla shot lo votes but when the scrutineers are there; for instance, the scrutineer for Alotau Open is there collecting



his data of how many voters are going in and the electoral officials are also collecting their data and the answers from the two data collection will end up at the counting center.

But for the question of if you can change the results. The only people that will be very close to changing the results in all electoral officials will be the returning officers.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And, you are saying that it can be done?

**Mr ASHANA NUMA** – It can be done.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can you explain it?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – For instance, sapos i gat argument lo displa ballot pepa, ballot pepa gat sumpla discrepancy lo let's say informal na ol scrutineer argue, em can go aut na candidate bai lusim numba. But, yu tu olsem returning officer tu bai try lo makim decision blo yu lo tok yes or no.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But, that is not a real substantial change to what we are discussing. That is making a decision on the validity of a ballot paper or not but for him to go and manipulate so the outcome will change na 500pla votes i go insait na narapla man i win?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – That for Milne Bay, we did not have such an experience and the majority of the officials that were selected did not have a chance to do such because they cannot.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But can it be done?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – It can be done but not in Milne Bay.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – In what way? Say it can be done in another electorate, I am just giving you a hypothetical question.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – They do it in other provinces. How do they do it?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Does it happen and how does it happen?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – If they stand there with all their security personnel na tokim mi olsem olgeta dispel ballot paper must igo insaitn lo hap

**Mr ASHAN NUMA** – Ino olsem olgeta dispela politicians bai go inside long hap.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So olgeta man mas passim tok ah, ino inap wanpela man tok.

**Mr ASHAN NUMA** – No, not one man.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – It has to be a conspiracy and done by agreement.

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Yes, wanpela man ino inap because everybody is doing checks and balance on each other. But suppose ol bung wantaim na pasim tok long 10 to 20 days ago or even a year ago na ol kam long wokim dispel, they will definitely do it because ol passim tok pinis. Time umi go me bai go olsem, dispel man bai go olsem na narapela man bai go olsem.

**Mr ASHAN NUMA** – If I can just make one observation when we had the elections, one of the risks that I would have thought would give rise to something like that for our case would be that the way the elections was run in terms of the timing, in terms of the changes and challenges that we went through.

The RO can confirm this, but we had to try to meet that timeframe and the deadlines. One of the things that really pressured a lot of people, we had to do almost like 24-hour counting with the same people and so you would probably end up with a lot of discrepancies if you had people who are tire. So that would probably one thing to consider in terms of ensuring that there is enough time and also the process involved because then you could also be able to avoid such things.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – One common issues in the disputed court of returns is undue influence. In Milne Bay from your observations, three of you, PPC, PA and PRO, for those who won, was there any undue influence seen by you in the 2022 Elections or was it all okay? Yumi gutpela lain na yumi behanim law or what was your observations? This is because as you know, a lot of disputed returns were registered for 2022 and for Milne Bay what's your view?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – For Milne Bay, yes there was a lot of influence and majority was from, for instance me businessman na candidate bilong me run, those type of influences yes we can see. You can see for Milne Bay. In Milne Bay mipela igat sampela businessman ol sapatim ol candidates bilong ol so there was a lot of this types of things that happened. But to play the game was a little bit difficult to play in Milne Bay. But, payim ol man na givim ol kaikai in advance na tokim ol olsem dispela em candidate bilong me, yes there was a lot of it happened but not during the elections.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – We got two candidates that were part of the 2022 elections are both women who are here. I want to ask them this time to have their views on the issues that we have been discussing with them and I'll ask Joyce to start on her observations and also being a long term political party executive over many years and what made you to stand and why did you lose.

#### **Kiriwina –Good Enough Candidate**

**Ms JOYCE GRANT**(Kiriwina-Goodenough) – Good afternoon and thank you very much for the opportunity to get involved, to have my say. After 20 years in this industry, I thought it was appropriate being a fairly experienced person in politics to put my hand up and I felt there was a big disparity between women and men not being represented. Coming from a matrilineal society I thought it was easy. I didn't take it lightly. It took me a good 10 to 15 years before I decided to stand because I was also mindful. I wasn't just representing myself as an individual but women at a greater level as well as of course myself and who I represent. –

Right from the start to the moment the issue of the writs was delayed, it set the benchmark. For some of us who were in Milne Bay, a maritime province, we could be out at sea for anything up to 22-hours on end to travel from point A to point B.

So, when the writs were delayed for almost two weeks, there was a lot of uncertainty. There was the fear of legal challenge should you win and the challenges that will be posed against you. For my team, we were prepared and I was nominated twice. I had to get within the time frame so that there was no challenge should it come later. I travelled to the main headquarters of Milne Bay in Alotau.

I went there to register and surprisingly, I wasn't the only one. I am really proud of the Electoral Commission and the actual fact that on the day that the writs were issued, because it was the final day, that if anyone was going to take anyone to court, it will be after the win.

We stood there from the moment it opened and came out when it was almost 9.30 p.m. because all the candidates for Milne Bay decided to register at Alotau. Some of them thought that it was okay that they left and started campaigning.

I was conscious of the fact that I registered at Alotau, which is not my electorate so I had to organise my team to move into Kiriwina the next day. My returning officer was there and I also registered. I registered twice just to safeguard myself. There in itself was going to be a problematic start but as we know elections are always challenging.

I have some deferring views from the Election Commission, but all in all having had that wider experience around Papua New Guinea, I think Milne Bay did conduct itself as well as it could, given the circumstances. A lot of it revolved around the fact that the confusion was created when the writs was delayed. There was a lot of people that felt that it was never going to happen. A lot of candidates outplayed a lot of money to prepare themselves because of the distance of moving from point A to B.

Out of the 18 candidates, I was the only female that contested. About 12 of us wrote an appeal to our returning officer because we were not happy with the counting to be conducted at Alotau because we felt that it was our legitimate right as a district to observe it and it should be conducted amongst our people.

I understand that we have issues with our last general elections so the rationale of holding it in Alotau made sense, but then it was the difficulty of getting it there and moving my team. Eventually, I took 55 of my scrutineers and supporters and then I had to house them for almost a month. That is another really big chunk for any candidate to run because that is a lot of pressure.

But once again, that is the sort of things that you need to be prepared for. I had issue with the boxes that were stored in Goodenough for almost four to five days with no sight of anyone picking them up. Our scrutineers were there but our biggest issue was we were not allowed to come and question anyone. We were advised to take our grievances to court later and so we have to wait.

I took a photograph when I was in the plane and flying over when the boxes were leaving Goodenough with the Election Commission dinghy running and almost 12 or other 14 dinghies escorting them in a straight line running between Goodenough to the drop off point.

So, I agree, we were able to keep an eye on it but it was just those days that they were left on their own in houses that had no electricity that caused suspicion and rumours. The fear was that things were being manipulated, boxes had been opened and all sorts of innuendos came through that there was definitely something wrong. I am a positive person and like to see

the good in people and the reasons behind it. It is a serious game that sometimes involve life and death also. Moving the boxes were a bit of an issue.

As our PRO have said, Milne Bay society is more laid back and so we enjoyed our polling period. It is interesting to watch after you hear all the horror stories around, but in Milne Bay the polling officials will stand there and actually call your name or your relatives and everybody will see you going to cast your votes.

I agree with what the PRO said, it was conducted peacefully and I had no issue during the polling. Even during the counting, when we did dispute something, we actually marched and brought it to Alotau. The candidates all supported one another. We felt there was discrepancies that needed to be clarified.

One of the biggest issue that I felt was that, when the polling officials were at the polling sites, they were all issued booklets of 50 ballot papers. We didn't know how many ballot papers were put there. But when we did ask, there was not a person that could answer.

In my village, I would have 600 people to vote and I should have 650 ballot papers because there is always mistakes. But we didn't know that reconciliation so what if they brought a thousand, what will happen to that 355 ballot papers. What happened to them? I kept asking that question, where are the unused ballot papers? Till today, no one has answered that. I felt that that was a question mark for my place anyway.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can I interrupt you, Ms Grant. We have your election manager here. It would be nice for him to respond to that.

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Sure. For all those unused ballot papers, they were all returned. They were not part of the ballot boxes that contained all the live ballot papers. The unused ballot papers were brought back by all presiding officers to their headquarters. They did up all their presiding officers forms, their journals, balanced out everything and then took them to the headquarters.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Was there any process for you to provide that reconciliation back to the candidates? Was there a process for that? Is it necessary to do that? What would you think?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – It would be necessary. From my experience, I saw that we should be worried about the live ballot papers that are sealed in the boxes. That was where all our concentration was.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Would you be able to provide for the Committee the number of unused ballot papers?

**Ms JOYCE GRANT** – How many was issued to Milne Bay, Kiriwina and Esa'ala? We as candidates could always feel comforted that what was given was fully used. It's simple mathematics like credit and debit and at the end you have the sub-total.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is it possible for you to do that?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – For me right now, I am not able to provide that information. There was a group of people that was also a part of our team, called the logistics team. They were the ones that brought the ballot papers in. We just went and confirmed that the ballot papers are here and signed off. They distributed for us and we went and signed off too.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – On the part of the Committee, I think that is a legitimate question. This goes to the heart of the high level of suspicion

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Yes, that information is very vital for people. The situation I am seeing in my experiences is, when we don't provide sufficient information, we are denied the authority to provide the information.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you are saying that someone has to give you the authority to release that information. Why is that? Is that a legal requirement? Or your boss just says don't release it? Maybe explain that for us so we can understand.

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Information that we are allowed to release comes from the Electoral Commission. We are just employed to represent them on the ground so we cannot make some of the decisions.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So if a request like that comes from 20 candidates and they provide you a request, what do you do? You then go upstairs?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Yes, we have to call up.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you go upstairs and if they say no?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Then we come back and try to make them understand why they are saying no.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I assume as Joyce was just saying. Ms Grant, that request was given to your officials and did you provide a response back to them as to why you couldn't do that?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – For me I did not provide any response back to them but I attended to some of their queries that they requested for to move those ballot papers and lock them up. Yes, we moved the unused ballot boxes and locked them up. That was what we did.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But you never told them the total number of ballot boxes that were remaining. Because you were instructed not to.

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – No I was not instructed not to but there was nothing in my information that I should provide information. That's why I had to ask for that information.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And when you asked?

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – When I asked, they said no.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So in essence you were denied.

**Mr IVAN MARAKA** – Yes, that's right.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Ok, thank you. Joyce you can continue.

**Ms JOYCE GRANT** – Thank you. Like I said when we were in Alotau when the counting was about to start and we felt that some things needed to be cleared before we started. We did petition, thank you very much PRO, you accepted our petition. Majority of the candidates were uncomfortable about certain things and he did receive us at the provincial

headquarters. We were still not totally satisfied. We walked away because a majority of the answer was, 'take it to court or election petition'.

So, we just wanted straight forward answers, one or two, that was it. It was nothing about losing. It was nothing about winning. It was just about getting the system process right. I mean on my island itself, my little hamlet, almost 80 of my people didn't vote, they voted in 2017 but they didn't vote in 2022 because their names were not there. And that 80 would have made a difference in my next elimination process.

Its water under the bridge but the point is, I was going to reserve that for my sister to talk about but we discussed quite a lot about the ward recorders. The ward recorders have the best and the most accurate information and I couldn't understand why the Electoral Commission didn't use that. There were names on the Common Roll that had people dead for more than fifteen, twenty years. And I saw it with my own eyes, people standing up and voting, young eligible voter, young gentleman or two, they were voting on behalf of their father who had passed away ten, fifteen years ago because his name wasn't on it.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So their names weren't there, they used their father's name to vote.

**Ms JOYCE GRANT** – Yeah, why not? That's what they say, why not. 'Your name's not here, no, that's my father's name, its ok I'll use that.' So, little things. In Milne Bay, I'd like to say that we did try our best and out of most of the five seats, four of them have been petitioned. So, four people were aggrieved, the rest of us just let it go. We're tired of doing that, we go and get prepared better next time. I think I will leave it at that, unless you want to ask me some questions.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** (Chairman) – Thank you Ms. Grant; Ms. Rudd, do you want to continue and add your own story?

### **Milne Bay Regional Candidate**

**Ms JENIFFER RUDD** (Milne Bay Regional Candidate) – Thank you, the Panel, Chair and everyone for the opportunity. I ran for the Regional Seat. As background, I was a former LLG President; I also ran an Open Seat in 2012, and so I decided to try the big seat after it was left vacant. Out of the 159 women that put their hands up, only two women got in; so, I would like to congratulate them.



As a regional candidate, the race wasn't easy. For me, I do not blame anyone for not making it. I am happy that I made it to the top five. I ran a race amongst so many political legends, and I wish to encourage women that it is ok, that there is always another time.

In my own experience, a lot has already been said; but I would also like to ask some questions to my retaining officer; Ms Joyce has covered most of it. But for me, the campaigning period, as a regional member, wasn't enough compared to the open members. That is one issue I would like to raise.

In Milne Bay we have the sea, and the mountains and the ocean and the weather to think about and to have just nine weeks to cover everywhere, I did not have time. We have the different places with their different problems, but Milne Bay at that we are facing the criminal activities and we were mindful of travelling as well. For me, I did not campaign in about 60-70% of my electorate because I just was not given enough time as a regional candidate. Maybe the open seats probably had enough time depending on how their electorate is set.

This is something I wish to bring to the notice of the Electoral Commission; maybe we could look at prolonging it for the regional seat, and maybe a bit less time for open seat. I'm not sure if that is even allowed, but I did not have time.

The second thing I wish to comment on is the Common Roll; most of the people did not vote. Therefore, there was frustrations, as they had voted in 2017, and they could not cast their vote in 2022. Some polling officials did not give a chance to those who had their father and uncles who were dead, some of them had married and gone away to another province, so they just did not have the opportunity to vote.

I think one of the main concerns that we need to take up here is updating the Common Roll. The ward record is a very good backup. I don't understand why they did not allow us to use that as a backup like you said, they did in other provinces. I said, human beings are alive so can they vote, using the ward records? Unfortunately, they weren't allowed to vote. If you ask if we had a fair general election? No we didn't. You know, most of our people did not cast their vote. They did not practice their democratic rights to vote for the person they wanted.

Like he said, 60 percent did not vote, that is a lot for Milne Bay, and I agree with him. I took a petition for my regional race and I got my fellow candidates to support me and he knows that I went there three times to stop the counting. One of my main concerns was, we put scrutineers there and we pay a lot of money for scrutineers to make sure that transparency and accountability is exercised in every ward and every district. Now when it comes to the counting room, it doesn't even make sense because our scrutineers are telling us that they are not

balancing the serial numbers. And some of them were saying that, we were only given 200 ballot papers but there were more than 200 counted there.

And the only thing we requested was to bring the unused ballot papers and balance it. That was all we asked for, and the only response we got from our PRO was, I am not allowed to do that, you have to take it up with the court of Dispute Returns that's why we have more than 100, and now we are wasting unnecessary money trying to address this when we could have sorted it out within a day or two.

So these are some of the concerns and maybe we would have exercised our mandated rights and our legal rights there and then. For example, there were evidence that we had especially in the rural remote areas where our scrutineers would go and get their opening serial number and their closing serial number and when you move to the next counting place, you are supposed to continue from the last closing serial number. They would put that, if they had 50 and only used 20, with 30 left, they should have started from 21 or 31 they would put it away and when they were questioned where the half of the rest of it was, they were not given proper answers so what happened to the 30 that wasn't used. Well 50, so 20 was used.

There were four batches provided so 50 multiplied by four is 200, only 120 people voted so where is the leftover ballot papers. When they go to the next polling place they put five new batches out and even when they gave us the recording with the serial number they were not matching. Some boxes were not matching the other boxes and those concerns were brought, he addressed it but the three times that we went and tried to address him, on the third time we were denied because he told us I will call the manager to give an answer.

I was blocked off, I would text him and WhatsApp him but I didn't get any answer so in the end, as a candidate, I was deprived my rights to get a proper accounting of the used ballot papers and the unused papers. To date, I don't even know if that balanced. You can say it is balanced but, well I did take up the election petition, some one else did but I think that is one of the problems we can avoid if we can address that in the district.

The other one amongst others that have already been mentioned is the lack of training for the counting officials, and scrutineers. They need to know their rights and the POs especially, they need to know their rights because some of them were very good and they were very helpful. They gave all the scrutineers the opening and closing, some of them didn't.

For me, I am not saying that is what happened but for me, I think the corruption wasn't really in the counting room, that's just my own observation. I think the corruption was with the POs or the ROs. They were probably compromised. Or the ones holding the ballot papers in

the counting area, I think that was where the corruption was. Yes, because that was where a lot of questions were raised and a lot of records were not matching in the counting room.

But then, how do we go back and correct that and that was the reason why we asked for the unused ballot papers to be brought out and balanced because a lot of them said after they closed off, they probably just ticked whatever names, we don't know. If there were 200 people registered to vote, then there should be 200 in that particular record. That wasn't even balanced so I think the ROs is something that we need to look into come 2027.

For me, I recommend that the PRO and AROs should be swapped. They should come from different provinces because the government of the day, most of us run for elections. The current member is running for elections. They have friends, I am not saying this for everyone. This is just me, please I am not saying any names here but from my own observation as a candidate, the district returning officers and the provincial returning officers should be swapped to avoid bribery.

Also, during counting, you know how someone counts and I have evidence after counting, they know you are counting the regional seat so they give you a little packet of biscuit for tomorrow, make sure you do this and that so I think you know when the officials are counting too, they should be swapped every second day or everyday so if they are counting here then the next day they must be counting another candidate. Something like that, we need to confuse the candidates that want to bribe.

Try to avoid what happened in this election from being repeated in 2027. This election is really one of the worst elections in history. So these are us my observations which I think we can consider it if we want to have a free, fair and peaceful election.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – Thank you Ms Rudd and Ms Grant both of you are very experienced so if you can write some of the recommendations from your observations and send to us because we want to use your experience as part of the recommendations.

Mr Numa, you are the Chairman, all these issues that transpired, how did you handle it as the steering committee to help advise the POR and all the ROs and now we have ended up at the Court of Disputed Returns and the request was, we should have avoided this if we had powers or taken action. The deficiencies and recommendations in this type of examples.

**Mr ASHAN NUMA** – As Chairman, my role was basically to ensure that the whole process, all stakeholders, the coordination of the Election was done properly. The key people within the Steering committee were the Chairman, the PPC and the Electoral Manager. So how

we managed to run the elections was, I also saw my part as Chairman was to also ensure that all stakeholders understood the roles of Electoral Commission. We were not – I advised that each person was to do what they were able to do within their remit and not to over step each other's toes.

So that's the way we managed the elections. Where the PRO had issues in terms of candidates, I would consult the Electoral Commission Manager plus the PROs advice and because we had issues of delay of advice coming from the Electoral Commission, we also had to provide our lawyer to assist them. We tried to manage best with what we had at that point in time so my role at that point in time was coordinating everybody, all stakeholders and where there were specific areas to respond to, I had to make sure that those areas did their part.

For instance, we had issues with security. At one point in time, there were rumours of disruption. This was intel from the PPC who was managing the security aspect of it. So my role was also to ensure that they had the resourcing and at the same time, the Commander had direct link to me. If he needed some assistance, we would support so that is how we managed it as we went along.

Given the vastness of the Milne Bay Province, I couldn't help but notice the enormous expense that everybody, the Electoral Commission

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Candidates who went through. In terms of the logistics support, were you given access to a helicopter?

**Ms JENNIFER RUDD** – Yes we were.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Because the ballot boxes were in Kiriwina-Goodenough for four days and they were not picked up.

**Mr ASHAN NUMA** – Yeah so that's why, in the beginning the PRO was mentioning that they did support, and this was actually from the Electoral Commission, but it came late. For example, Daga and inland, it came late so counting had to start for others. This was because of the logistics, because of the Chopper. The scheduling was changed and delayed and so we had to do what we had to do.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Ms Rudd, as you were telling us your issues. I think two or three things came into my mind. One was about the difficulties we have been having about the Common Roll, its credibility, lack of timing and preparedness etcetera.

For the long term, for our beloved country, biometrics – should the country spend money and time so that we do away with these ballot papers, the security. You go and vote and bang, it's counted. So you don't worry about the balancing of the ballot papers. What's your view about going digital and let the State to spend money on IT because it will save a lot of money and time.

**Ms JENNIFER RUDD** – I would be in support of a biometric voting system but that's if that is possible. The system itself. I am saying this because, is it going to be practical in the rural areas; our NID – It will still come back to our Common Roll being updated.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**– Not immediately but I am saying for the long term.

**Ms JENNIFER RUDD** – For the long term yes, I am opting for that. That is the way forward for PNG, the biometric voting system. For the short term, I think we should really empower our ward recorders to do the bottom up approach, where they give us the accurate records of people that are on the Common Roll. Maybe you should give it back to each province to manage the Common Roll for 2027.

I think you should really pump money into the provinces, the districts, let them take charge and assist the Electoral Commission with proper data for 2027. And do away with the people who are already dead and are still on the Common Roll, and fix the problem of why some voted in 2017 and but didn't vote in 2022. That I do not understand, like what is happening there. For the biometric, yes, I think everybody wants that to eventually be the way forward for our country.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – The last question is a much localized one, so I have a personal conflict of interest in this question as well. The election in our country is held during the strong South-easterly winds and we in the Maritime Provinces have great difficulty, would you recommend to the Committee to change the timing of the national elections.

For me, I sunk four times because the weather was bad and I can't imagine how you are coping out there in Milne Bay in the ocean. So, April to June is the bad weather period and

we chose this time for the national general elections. Would you recommend to the Committee to re-look at the timing?

**Ms JOYCE GRANT** – Could I answer that? She probably travelled as much as I did more regionally because of the regional seat. But my district consists of two LLGS so they are quite separated. Its eight (8) hours by open sea, we had to time our program so that we could avoid the bad weather but I also got caught twice in the sea .

In the storms and it would really test your faith so if there is an opportunity to consider it, it is a huge ask because obviously you will have to change laws but yes, I would seriously consider for the Southern Region anyway, its bad time. We can't travel at the end of June, July. It is very awkward and everything has to be, so that would have been part of some of our reasons why we she didn't get to a lot of the places. I managed to get into Goodenough and I would have loved to spend more time but it was the weather we were conscious of as well. Do change it.

And as for biometrics, oh my goodness, that's the only way to go. Of course every system has its flaws, eventually, it can be manipulated but on the outset it is something that we have to learn from. And if you can get that and get your results within a couple of hours after they reconcile everything, that's the way to go. Just imagine the cost that we could cut.

**Mrs JENNIFER RUDD** – For the Southern Region, I think the months between May and June is not the right time. I was just toying around with this idea, why do we all have to go for elections at the same time like the four regions. Maybe we could have Momase first, followed by Southern Region, in that way you can use the same people. You can train them to do the entire elections from region to region. Well trained and they are under an oath to carry out a transparent and safe election so this is a huge change.

But this is what I was thinking, the entire nation is going for elections and there's shortage of police officers, shortages of RO's and you are just engaging anybody off the streets. That is probably one of the reasons and our leaders are busy running their own campaigns trying to win the elections and the Electoral Commission is bombarded with all the complaints and nothing is – because everybody is concentrating on their own elections.

So maybe divide it, we have 12 months. So maybe say, we have eight months – I'm not sure but somewhere along that line would be for me, like separate it, this one starts first, followed by this one so we stop at the appropriate time. Maybe that can help avoid some of the

issues, but between June and July is just wrong, I missed out because of the weather as well. Those who had boats travelled, those of us that had to travel on dinghy couldn't make it.

### **Closing Remarks**

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well let me give you the simple imperative, it's a political one; see if someone from Momase got elected with 12 members whilst you guys are still voting it will affect the outcome of your results. That is the reason why we try to get all the results in at the reasonable time.

And if you were here earlier and you heard the comment from Sir Puka, it took four weeks for his results to come out and there are certain electorates that took a week for the counting to be done So suddenly you already have a skewing of results so it is about the fairness of the whole system that is why we have to do it all at once.

But look, we are not going to solve all the problems that we have encountered in the elections and suffice to say, this is the first time in 47 years that there is a committee that is looking at the entire spectrum of elections.

Look, at some point, we were candidates too, and you would be surprised that for some of the members, we were learning things from the Electoral Commission, the Police and the Defence that we did not know about because you are always on this side you don't know what happens on the other side. So this committee has given us an opportunity to try to take a look at the whole thing.

And we are not promising to fix all the problems of the world but we think that there are some things that can be easily fixed. And you have heard from your own public officials. Firstly, the Electoral Roll, to me that is 80 percent of your problems, you fix that, at least you get participation from your people. And we are adamant that –

Some of these public servants because of the difficult situations they work under. I have dealt with some difficult candidates as well so I can tell you from the way I am sitting here and from some of the discussions that we have heard as a committee, we want to bring in very strong punitive measures against candidates who break the law and their supporters because we need to restore the integrity of our election.

So that people like yourselves and other candidates and everyone can have confidence in the system. So I just want assure you that and to thank you for contributing this afternoon and to assure you and all of the other candidates that this committee intends to take charge of its duties to the best of our ability so that we can make sure that what underpins our democracy and our institutions, our elections post our findings should be better than what they were.

If you were following earlier, it was really worrying listening to the Police Commissioner, the Commander of Defence Force and Commander of our Correctional Services, they have basically said that our elections in 2027 are going to be worse than this one. They are predicting that now and as responsible leaders we can't allow that to happen. We have to make them better.

I have nothing further. With that thank you all of you for your contributions this afternoon. I now suspend the hearings until tomorrow morning 10 a.m. Thank you all very much

Ends//



## DAY TWO

**21<sup>st</sup> April 2023**

### **Transcript**

Time: 10am

Venue: State Function Room

#### In Attendance

##### Committee Members

Honourable Allan Bird – Chairman

Sir Puka Temu – Deputy Chairman

#### Witnesses

Ms Daisy Hombagani – Election Manager - Northern Province

Mr Ewai Sepi – Provincial Police Commander - Northern

Mrs Jean Parkop – Northern Regional Candidate 1

Ms Phoebe Sangetari – Northern Regional Candidate 2 -

Mr Navai Keavari – Provincial Administrator - Gulf

Mr Tore Poevare – Election Manager - Gulf

Mr Jeffery Lem – Provincial Police Commander - Gulf

Mr Wari Eho'o – Church representative - Gulf

Mr Posa Torea – Ward Councillor - Gulf

## **Opening Remarks**

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Good morning everyone and welcome back to the second day of hearings into the 2022 elections. We are looking at the Southern Region and today we have Oro and Western provinces. Oro is actually present and we should have Western Province joining us through shortly once our technical people get that going.

So let me welcome the team from Oro and let me thank you for a very comprehensive written submission and perhaps let you give us a summary. If I can ask Ms Hombagani, the Election Manager for Northern Province, you may go ahead with your submission.

## **Northern Province**

### **Northern Province Election Manager**

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** (Northern Province Election Manager) – Thank you and good morning to the Parliamentary Committee members, chairman, deputy and Mr Elias Kapavore. Here today is myself and the provincial police commander. Our provincial administrator sends his apologies as he couldn't make it.

So, before you, we have given a written submission based on the terms of reference that was given to us. So, basically we highlighted the main challenges faced during the 2022 National Elections and the recommendations which we think this Committee should take forward, mainly to do with the legislative changes.

So, before I go through the brief, let me thank the National Parliament for forming this important Parliamentary Committee. It gives us that privilege to air out our, not grievances, but the issues that we face when we are running the elections.

I was the Provincial Returning Officer for Northern Province and before the declaration of the governor-elect, I made an appeal to him to take certain election issues and matters to the National Parliament to address, and I'm happy that this Committee is established so that you can look at some of the issues mainly to do with nomination qualifications, scrutineer qualifications, election offences which are there but there is no proper body to enforce the penalties that are already in the law.

So, we started off by outlining the roles and functions of the Electoral Commission. As we all know Electoral Commission is a constitutional office set up by the *Constitution* and mandated to conduct elections in Papua New Guinea.

So, one of the main primary responsibilities of the Electoral Commission is to update and maintain an accurate electoral roll for Papua New Guinea and that has always been a challenge.

I believe from other provinces' presentations the issues are all similar. So, as you all can see there some of the challenges we outlined which is evident in all provinces mainly.

The function is there and we can update the electoral roll but the issue is the release of funds to do that work. When the funding is given late it hinders the Electoral Commission to thoroughly carry out the work. For the 2022 National Elections we were supposed to do the common roll work in three phases, which I have outlined in the report but because of time factor the three phases of the work was not thoroughly done. We have tried our best and produced the electoral roll for the elections.

So, from the recommendations issues are there. The recommendations from Northern Province, we are asking that we look at not a traditional way of updating the roll. We tried that and it seems to be not working so if we can look at embarking on biometrics, but it's a broad term so we will say start 2023 this year with a photo roll and put a face to our voters. So we eliminate or eradicate issues of ghost names on the roll. One voter with a face where they come show a valid voter-ID to get a ballot paper to cast a vote. So we want a photo roll in 2023.

One of our recommendations in terms of the roll work is to work with stakeholders, the civil registry, the NID is there and DPLGA our main partners. We worked with them through the provincial affairs office using the ward recorders to do the roll work in late 2021 early 2022 to compile a roll for the national elections. So we would like to strengthen that partnership with the Provincial Affairs through the DPLGA and continue to utilize the ward recorders.

Another recommendation we put forward is to provide adequate funding and on time, or if we want an accurate roll for 2027 Elections we should start this year and not wait until 2026.

Thank you, these are the recommendations we have put forward for the roll work. If I may proceed with nominations.

From experience we see that the Northern Province usually has the highest number of candidates when it comes to elections. With the increase in technology and the modern era that we are entering, we want to at least change and ask the Parliament to do some changes to the legislation to increase the qualifications of nominations especially candidate qualifications.

One of the factors that we looked at was the nomination fee of K1000 and team Oro is asking if we could increase it up to K5000. This is one of the recommendations that we are bringing forward. The main thing here is that we should understand that when the writs are issued, the term of office of a parliamentarian expires and citizens of Papua New Guinea, the position is vacant. It's like when you are nominating, you are applying for a vacant position and the qualifications of nominations must be clearly specified and increased to meet the

modern era. What we said here is that we must closely look at things like attachments to the nominations, the qualifications of a citizen.

We know it is a democratic right to contest an election but we want to guide that democracy, make it a guided democracy rather than an open democracy. Attachments to the nominations; candidates, if the Parliamentary Committee through recommendations make changes we include things like birth certificate as evidence of a candidate's qualification as a citizen to nominate. We look at Police Clearance, make those mandatory requirements, medical clearance, things such as bank statements so that one of the qualification we know that a candidate declares that he or she is not insolvent. Provide bank statements as evidence for that.

Those things we see that it is necessary if we are to be mindful if you are looking at the nomination qualifications of a candidate. We see that during the elections there are a lot of independent candidates with no proper policies. So maybe review the OLIPAC

I would recommend that only candidates who are endorsed or affiliated with a political party may contest in the elections.

When it comes to elections, the main players are the scrutineers who represent the candidates. Section 1-7 of the Organic Law outlines that; though the appointment of scrutineers is not mandatory, candidates may appoint scrutineers to represent them. These are a very important group of people when it comes to observing elections. Their appointments need to be clearly spelt out in the Organic Law and that includes their qualifications. The timeframe for appointing a scrutineer is very important.

We are recommending and asking the Parliamentary Committee to consider that. In the Organic Law there is no specific timeframe to appoint the scrutineers and we are suggesting that the appointment of scrutineers be done during the campaign period only. That timeframe be given to us to appoint scrutineers. So, when it comes to counting, candidates don't go and disturb returning officers with scrutineer forms for appointment when they are busy trying to supervise a counting. A specific timeframe must be set for the appointment of scrutineers because that is not clear in the Organic Law.

The issues faced in regards to that are all outlined here. The main issue that comes up is the process of appointing a scrutineer. It is stated in the Organic Law that a candidate must clearly write out their names and address and present it to the returning officer for them to sign off to formalise the appointment.

However, during elections we see candidates coming with bulk, blank appointment forms and telling returning officers to sign off. That is not a formal way of appointing a scrutineer.

That gap needs to be made clear in section 1-7 of the Organic Law so that we strengthen that and work closely with our candidates to appoint scrutineers in the right way.

During the 2022 National Elections, we experienced a lot of issues with scrutineers stopping the polling and counting process unnecessarily. That is an issue we have dealt with and it was also witnessed by the PPC. He will later brief the Committee on how that was done.

As I have mentioned our recommendation in terms of appointment of scrutineers, we want to tighten the appointment process and that the appointment must be done within a specific timeframe. We recommend it be done during the campaign period so that during the counting period, the returning officers will focus mainly on supervising the count.

If I may touch on polling, for the 2022 National Elections, the polling strategy for the Northern Province was the multiple day polling. The main issue faced was of air logistics support. I watched the Milne Bay presentation yesterday and realised we all faced the same issue when Helifix pulled out at the last minute when they were supposed to assist with the Southern Region. The teams that were needed to be deployed out by air were stranded for a week until the other teams were returning and then we managed to send them out for polling.

That is a challenge logistics wise.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What was the reason for Helifix pulling out?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Maybe because of payment.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – And payment was done by the Electoral Commission and not by the Provincial Government?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes, it's supposed to be done by the Electoral Commission.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So just to clarify that, if you had more autonomy in terms of, not just you but other electoral managers, if you had more autonomy in selecting your suppliers of services including things like airlift, would that make a difference as opposed to centralising everything? What are your views on that?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – No, I don't think so because the procurement process is done by headquarters and they know which companies are best suited for each region so the main issue was the payment side of it. They wanted upfront payment.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well, that's why I'm asking. If you people had the money yourself and you could procure it yourself, would that have made a difference?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes, that would have made a difference, Chairman.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Because that was the same issue that was brought to us by Milne Bay yesterday. Thank you, you may proceed.

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Okay, so for polling that main challenge, as I said, was logistics. Roll was an issue which I mentioned earlier. Another issue, especially to do with the roll, the main issue here apart from the three phases that we had no time to properly update the roll, as I said, double voting continues to be an issue during polling - voters using another person's name to vote. All those are illegal practices. Under the election offences there are penalties there but, I would say there is nobody or task force to properly implement or impose those penalties. Later, when voters or people come with their grievances or evidence of double-voting we send them to the police station. From my office we say go lay a complaint. When they go to police station, they say you go to Electoral Commission and report that matter. So, on our recommendation we want a task force during elections to enforce the election offences.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – On the issue of the common roll you advised the committee that three phases were not completed because of the issues that you have outlined; late release of funds, logistics et cetera. In your view, what percentage of the voting population actually enrolled?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – I'd say around 80 percent of the voting population were enrolled.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Because in Milne Bay, we were told 50 percent did not enrol and obviously there is a difference in geography. But you are saying at least 80 percent enrolled.

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – So Chairman and the committee, our recommendations –

**Hon. ELIAS KAPAVORE** – You said 80 percent were enrolled. How many actually cast their votes from the 80 percent that were enrolled?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – The estimate eligible voters for Oro is about 150, 000. From the counts we did, about 80, 000 voted. So, seeing that only 80, 000 voted, it can be because some names were not on the roll. We know enrolment is compulsory, voting is not so some people may have decided not to vote.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – In Oro, tell us why didn't at least 50 percent of those who enrolled, did not vote?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Why didn't they vote?

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**– You said out of the 150, 000 only 80,000 voted. That's close to 50 percent. Why didn't the rest vote in Oro?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – When it comes to elections, we see the election fever in certain locations. We saw a low turnout of voters especially in the remote areas. They say because of government services, they refused to vote. When the polling teams went out with the ballot papers, the people refused to vote.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – But because in some provinces, many did turn up but their names were not on the Common Rolls, or they were told to go away. Was it similar in Oro?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – For Oro, the public need to know that we make an update all the time. As I observed, voters who used to be in a particular location previously moved to a new location. Now come the polling day, they went back to their place of residence to check names and realized that their names were not on the roll. When the ward recorders updated the rolls, those who were not present were moved out as part of the roll cleansing.

I mostly interviewed disgruntled voters and that is where I got most of the information from. They said that despite them not being there, that is where they usually casted their votes. When they went in to vote, they found out that their names were not there. I found out that when the ward recorders updated their rolls, those who had moved out had their names omitted.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – I did note in your report with regards to ward recorders that you specifically said that some of them were not honest. Please elaborate on it.

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – What I meant by that was that, I received reports of people who weren't eligible casting their votes. Some voters using other people's names to cast votes. That is what I meant be ward recorders being dishonest.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Because what we would want is to see whether we can recommend that part of the common roll update process is have the ward recorders and the ward records become important in the updating of the common roll, as a backup.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Would the proposal of a photo ID voter roll resolve the issue of dishonest recording at the beginning? Assuming we had a system with facial recognition to eliminate double registrations?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Of course, that would definitely eliminate the issue of double registrations – same person coming with two to three names to enroll which amounts to a lot of ghost names on the roll. We see that that is the way forward – putting a face against the name. They come with a valid ID card during the polling period to cast their votes.

Let me proceed to the counting. Counting in previous elections usually took around 14 to 21 days because of the LPV system we use. For the 2022 National Elections, we were given seven days to conduct the counting. Team Oro tried their best. The strategy we used was to reduce the number of polling days so we could have enough time using some of the polling days to complete the counting. We tried to meet the deadline to return the writs on time. Counting officials, returning officers and security personnel, we all worked under extreme pressure to do that, but one issue or hindrance we realized was the continuous disruption of counting by candidates and their scrutineers, almost every day.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How did you handle that?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – We, the returning officers, were called out to address them. Candidates came out with loud hailers calling us by our first names to go out and if we didn't go out to address them they screamed at us. For example, they were calling me to go out



and address them but those issues were managed thanks to our provincial police commander and his team. We talked to them in the first two days and when we saw that we were running out of time the PPC took over and took the candidates away from the counting centre to the police station and addressed them and because of the teamwork we were assisted to dissolve some issues.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Maybe the PPC could come in now as we want to hear about your success because in many places that was one critical issue that affected the result as well. So, how did you manage the counting issues in Northern Province successfully?

**Provincial Police Commander -Northern**

**Mr EWAI SEPI (PPC)** – Thank you. The success issue basically came about as a result of effective communication and coordination between our Chairman, the Election Manager, and the security forces. But at the same time, we had challenges with cyber or social media especially *Facebook* triggering violence and we were given short periods to work around issues because we have to be on top of everything given the situation. So, what we did was the entire operational planning heading into the election – and it is untraditional but it was a step-order scenario where I was given the challenge to work around what I had within my disposal to ensure that I deliver the election within that short space of time given. And as alluded to by my election manageress we were put under extreme pressure but we had to work around the issues.

The most important thing is having our candidates and voters becoming politically conscious of what they want to achieve at the end of the day and lack of awareness was one of those big challenges. I would also like to give credit to our Electoral Commission and the Government for giving us the opportunity to work around the issues within a limited timeframe and I hope that it is something for us to look at in the 2027 Elections basically because from the securities turn point, you are looking at risks associated with time dragged on as a result of the violence that was literally spiralling out of control given the onset of the social media and all that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can I ask for some clarity, what was the main reason or if there are several reasons you can elaborate for the constant disrupt to the counting? What was the reason given by the candidates wanting to suspend and stop the counting?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – Basically that is associated with what has been presented, the security gaps where certain candidates wanted to capitalize given the opportunity to trigger violence; I will use that one as a basis to sabotage the elections but we were very much aware of that.

So, one of the issues that popped up was that certain candidates and scrutineers were deliberately present at the counting venues to cause violence as a diversion. I believe that as we progressed we came to realize that we had to isolate the candidates and their scrutineers until after two days of suspension.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Do you know which candidates were doing that and are you aware of their identities?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – Yes, we have identified certain candidates. Maybe it was basically to do with the process of appointment, qualification, and all that attributed to the issues that we encountered during the polling heading into the counting and declarations.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Do we know why they were intent on disrupting or maybe failing your elections?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – I think, as I have alluded to earlier, they approached the undertaking within the short space of time that was given. Unlike before, we were not given ample time to go out and conduct awareness on election issues – that could have been one of the contributing factors – and our preparations, in terms of our security alignment towards the conduct of the General Elections. In that case, I would say that for my command, it was very precarious in the sense that I had limited manpower, logistics issues, funding issues, similar to the Electoral Commission. To an extent, it was like a ticking time-bomb situation where had I triggered a situation like attending to or reacting to an incident that was about to happen, and having to arrest scrutineers and candidates and I was conscious of the fact that had I created a situation, I would have diverted my attention away from achieving the outcome of the elections within the timeframe that was given.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Do you have enough evidence to arrest those perpetrators?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – Yes, we have done that. We have arrested five scrutineers in total. We have three complaints registered with one suspect who has been arrested for alleged bribery and corruption on the part of a certain candidate.

**Hon ELIAS KAPAVORE** – From your assessment, which group of candidates were the ones causing disruptions? Were they the ones leading in the counting, or the ones at the bottom?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – I believe and according to my observations, I was set that those independent candidates in particular in Oro – it's unpredictable where you have the educational level of certain candidates – the lowest being grade 3, which happens to be my cousin. And he took part in the Sohe Open.

The increasing number of independent candidates was another challenge. What I have seeing during the election period was that those increased number of independent candidates are actually aligned to certain candidates which I observed later on were deliberately set up to sabotage the election process so that those who have money and resources can gain from that. My assessment literally reflected that. So believe that when it comes to review, certain provisions of the Organic Law need to be looked at, especially the scrutineers that are scrutinising those candidates who are properly qualified to participate in the elections. Hopefully, that is going to help.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – In the election manager's report to us, which was very comprehensible by the way, you indicated that many of the scrutineers did not understand the electoral process, and you felt that that could have contributed to some of the disagreements and unrest. You said in your report that they were giving incorrect information to the candidates, could you elaborate on that?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – What I meant regarding that was that candidates should appoint scrutineers who at least have some knowledge and are educated enough to understand the polling and counting process.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So because they didn't understand there was a lot of suspicion and distrust?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes! We observed the appointments; they get boys from the streets or any village person or anyone that is available to be a scrutineer is usually appointed.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – There were times provided for scrutineer training. Did you hold some of those in Oro?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – We had candidates refuse scrutineer training because of limited time and the workload we had so we did not, but we encouraged what we –(*inaudible*) to the candidates for them to inform their scrutineers.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well, I mean it's really not your responsibility to be educating the scrutineers. That should fall on to the candidates themselves. We won't hold you to that but to what level did that lack of scrutineer understanding of the process contribute to all these attempts at stopping the counting. Was it significant? Was there a lot of say incorrect information leaving the counting center and going out to the candidates? What was some of that misleading information? What were the scrutineers alleging to their candidates?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – The main allegations we realized were their expectations of the result after we opened a ballot box. And when that did not eventuate, they thought some foul play was happening in the counting centre.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So ol i tink dispela ballot box ol should kisim certain amount of votes but ol ino kisim.

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Ol ino kisim. They thought there was some foul play at the counting center. Those were the allegations.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Let's get into that. When the voting is completed at a certain polling place and that ballot box is sealed and taken to a storage location, is that done in secret or in open house?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Scrutineers are always present. It is not done in secret. On the the last day of polling in a particular location the presiding officer is tasked to call out the seal number to the scrutineer who is present. They get their record and the security personnel gets their record and they all escort the ballot box.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So all of those scrutineers who are present when the ballot box was sealed, would follow the box to the storage location?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes, Mr Chairman. But we at the Electoral Commission realized and we encouraged that the same scrutineers who are present during the polling should be present at the counting.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But there was someone else at the counting.

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes, there is always someone else at the counting. This leads to inconsistency and lack of oversight. New scrutineers appointed do not know what happened at the polling place so as you see in my recommendation I suggested the appointment of scrutineers be done at a certain time frame and those scrutineers who are present during polling are the same ones to be present during counting.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you experience new appointments during counting by the candidates? Is that normal?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes, that was evident. That was the practice in Oro for the recent elections and we want to stop that to avoid some issues that we are discussing now.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But at that time you accepted those new appointments during the counting?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes, because of the pressure.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – You were pressured to accept and sign the new appointments of the scrutineers by the candidates during the counting. But your process required that these scrutineers be appointed prior to polling I suppose and prior to counting?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – The Organic Law does not clearly specify when those appointments should be made. So we are recommending the timing for appointments to be specified in the Organic Law.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So it seems to me that there is a lot of confusion between the scrutineers themselves which perhaps may have led to this situation. So they would be feeding information to their candidates I suppose, and that information would be that some cheating that took place and if that allegation is to be processed well, in their mind where did they think the cheating occurred?

Did it occur during the voting or during the transport of the ballot box, storage or at the opening of the ballot box, which one was it? Are you sort of familiar with some those details?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – We had an issue to do with the storage of the ballot boxes at the police station.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What was the issue?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – The issue was that there was a by-election conducted after the 2017 National General Elections through a petition. They alleged that there was some foul play facilitated by the security force personnel. I had my security personnel who were originally there during the conduct of the 2017 National General Elections, they were appointed again and that became an issue for us to manage.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Security force personnel.

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – Yes, security force personnel.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We heard from Milne Bay yesterday that there were certain allegations, in fact, it came from the Provincial Administrator who was the election manager and his assertion was that some of the security force personnel in Milne Bay were taking sides with certain candidates. Did you have a similar situation in Oro?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – I don't think so, we had a good working committee as I alluded to earlier, our line of communication between us and the Provincial Administrator was good.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, you don't think any of the security personnel assigned to the elections in your province were aligned with certain candidates.

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – Well of course during elections certain issues are unpredictable and that could have happened but we managed that issue during the conduct of election period.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What you said is; you did guarantee through your processes that the safety of the ballot boxes under your care in the police station was secured and no interference.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So it was just the suspicions during the by-election that gave the people the same impression and that those suspicions then were still valid during the 2022 National General Elections when you stored the boxes.

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – We were literally scolded including my policewomen by certain candidates during the elections alleging that we were been bribed.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – For example; were the scrutineers present when you were shifting the ballot boxes from the vehicles to the storage locations?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – They were present. They had the outer line of scrutineers who were static at the location where we were going to take the ballot boxes there so, in terms of scrutinizing –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Where were the ballot boxes stored in a container?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – They were stored in a container at the secured location at the back of the police station.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And you had locks with tags?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you locked the container with tags.

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – And the copy of the tags given to scrutineers.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – When the containers were opened did they have the same locks with tags on them?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But the scrutineers still alleged that there was foul play.

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – I think most of those allegations that raised came out as a result of suspicions and mistrusts.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And in your opinion there's no way those locks could have been opened prior to the counting?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – Yes, I think that would be reflected by the voters and the scrutineers. We have conducted elections since independence up to now. I believe in terms of the level of political consciousness about understanding the process is yet another challenge. And I believe misconception and suspicions arise as a result of that, and as I figured out if that can be also captured in view of our current changes in the review that we would like to conduct for the 2027 National General Elections.

We must ensure that the scrutineers, as alluded to by the recommendations by the election manageress need to be seriously considered. And it's about misinformation basically that contributed to all these underlying issues that we have encountered.

And for my case, I saw that one unfolds basically because the scrutineers themselves are the trigger. They can trigger violence any moment basically because they are aligned to certain candidates and if we are not conscious of that it's going to affect us. And it would have created an overlap in a situation where – as for Oro province that is a real time challenge that we've gone through.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Ms Hombagani, one of the recommendations that you have recommended; counting and declaration on page 8, which I am interested in for further explanation and it sounds smart I think.



That is the last bullet point on recommendations which reads; to do primary counts at polling place right after the close of polling record and bring the results. Can you elaborate on this and the reason why you are recommending that after the polling that day, in front of everybody, we should start counting?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Thankyou Deputy Chairman, the reason why I put in that recommendation is that looking at the lengthy timeframe to do the counting and the continuous disruptions we would like to minimize the time frame for counting and do primary counts at polling locations just to give the opportunity to voters who are there to witness the counting of the primary votes and I know security will be an issue here but I have served the Federal Elections in Australia in 2014 and I saw that being done. I think PNG should take on this strategy. We want to see that the counting is completely done within a short period of time. So do primary counts at the polling locations and bring the results then we will do quality checks again at counting center and proceed with elimination.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – We already did that with the ward elections so why can't we move higher up. Therefore, the challenge is; how do we prepare the security of that to make it happen? It's good that you have thought about this because one of the issues that I personally have been bothered about is the credibility of every process that we employ in regards to enrollment, common roll issues and so forth. In my simple mind I said why don't we just allow people to line up and vote and record and we move it to the counting center. These are some of the simple issues but primary counting after the polling is something that the committee will have a look at it. But I am glad it's in your set of recommendations and we really need to look at it seriously and see how we could test it in the coming LLG or by-elections with photo IDs and so forth.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Just describe to me the behavior of the voters, scrutineers and the candidates? Could you describe that for me in Oro?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – During the polling period?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well, during the polling, counting and the entire process. What were the voters like? Was there trouble at the polling or was it orderly and then moving on to counting which was almost a disaster which thankfully didn't happened. How was the conduct

of the polling in terms of the behavior of the voters and the scrutineers compared to when you were actually doing the counting and the elimination of course?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – The voters were more involved in the polling

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Was it orderly or were there disruptions?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – The obvious reason being that names were not found in the roll was an issue where some were not happy and showed their frustration at the polling locations.

The scrutineers, yes when they saw that their candidates' voters did not have that opportunity to vote they raised their frustration at the polling place but the presiding officer and the police personnel in charge managed to control so not much disruptions occurred during polling.

The candidate behaviour was okay during polling but when it came to counting, it was the worst we faced in terms of candidate behaviour. We know candidates are not allowed at the counting centre but they literally came to the gates which is like less than a 100 meters.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Did that happen in the previous elections?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – No, it did not. For the 2022 National Elections we use that decentralized model of counting so all three electorates plus the provincial electorates, we were all in one location, and that may have given them the opportunity.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – You mean this time you have centralised all the counting?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes, we centralised all the three open plus the provincial in one location so you would see the number of candidates for the three open electorates plus the regional all come into one location to air out their frustration during the counting.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But in 2022, you did not have that, you spread them out.

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes, in 2012 and 2017 it was spread out.

**Mr EWAI SEPI** - If I can make a comment.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Sure!

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – Thank you Chairman. We had a situation where we were limited in terms of resources that we had so when our committee met up, we decided to centralize the counting venues so that we pull the resources together to maximise security and allow the transition. So that was the whole thinking and the idea behind that.

Adding onto the conduct of the election, there were certain –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Sorry if I may, did that create suspicion the fact that you centralise all the counting in one location?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** - I think everything else was done in consultation with the candidates and the scrutineers.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So the candidates agreed that you should centralize counting?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – Yes, they agreed so we proceeded with that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But it still caused problems?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – Yes, but we managed it. In a similar situation, we encountered at certain polling areas certain candidates going there within the boundary that was barred from them so they do not have access to the conduct of the election process, but that was done as a result of security gaps, meaning that there was not adequate police presence at that location.

So, what we did was we had a rowing patrol concept security operations to accommodate that. So, that created the opportunity for the candidates to move in there and try to stir up situations at the polling booth. For example, at Masiroga we encountered one instance where two candidates actually got involved in escorting the ballot box without us knowing and there was a dispute so we brought the parties involved back and they came together and got things resolved and reconciled and went to the conduct of the election. So that is how we worked our way around.

In terms of intensity and escalation of violence building up to the declaration was the challenge that we have faced, especially when it came to the primary counting, elimination and going through the declaration process.

So, the intensity of people coming closer to the counting centre and demanding the results here and there on behalf of the candidates was the challenge that we encountered and after three days we were able to extend our barricade away from the counting centre and reposition our security personnel before the next day to resume counting. When the candidates realized that we isolated them, they came closer so we had to isolate them and that is how we have managed them and the scrutineers were kept away. So, that was the strategy that we've adopted to manage the polling and counting processes.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – In terms of funding, election manager, I understand you received a total of K1.1 million. PPC, you received separate funding from the headquarters?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – Yes, we did

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How much did you receive?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – It was about K1.2 million for allowances only and for logistics I did not get any funding.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** - So how did you manage?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – We were able to consult our stakeholders, provincial administration.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How much did they give you?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** - They only supported us with logistics

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** - In your report, in terms of financing, there is outstanding. How much and in what areas in particular is for outstanding

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** - Thank you Deputy Chairman, from the report I indicated outstanding because what we budgeted for wasn't given in full. The outstanding in terms of logistics a total of over K250 000

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That is yet to be paid to the service provider?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes, that's yet to be paid. But the provincial administration has agreed to pay.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – And the allowances issue? Are you yet to pay allowances for your workers?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Maybe 1 per cent.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – You have done well. So the provincial government has offered to pay the logistical outstanding and you have managed to pay the majority of the workers?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes, thank you.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – PPC, my last question is on security of which you were in charge. You had combined security forces on the ground or only the police?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – We had military, police and CIS.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – In terms of preparing for the elections in Oro and you were in charge as the Police Commander, were you able to map out areas that you felt you had to focus on, or did you have a system of intelligence that informed you that you had these issues and these are the actions that you must take? Because from hearing from both of you, you had a successful election in the province. And we want to know because security issues is one big issue in this 2022 Elections and we understand in 2027 it will remain a big issue.

So in terms of one province's preparedness, how do you organize yourself to prepare to manage hotspots? For example, would you know where guns are moving in, whether candidates have guns or are there people aligning with certain private companies, et cetera?

Your intelligence capability in the province is what I'm asking about so you prepare better the security of not only the election but the security within the province on a day to day basis. Can you comment on that?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – Thank you. Heading to elections my province was categorized as a red zone that literally put us at the escalated level where our security assigned officers was such that it required more attention than that was exposed during the conduct of the elections. We had information in relation to locations that were identified. As you know Oro province –

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Was it coming within your own police intelligence or the combined intelligence to declare your area as a red zone?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – Actually heading to the election, there was a PPC's briefing and PPCs or the combined security forces briefing and the outline of the combined intelligence indicated that our province needed specific attention during the buildup into the election process. And our local intelligence including the other security force agencies gave us the security assessment report heading into elections and was such that we would have been given adequate resources to manage those issues prior to the actual conduct of the election.

That put us in a precarious situation where we had to work around and when the snap order scenario popped up we were actually going into elections on the eve of elections unprepared, I would say, but it was well captured.

How we succeeded in achieving that was dissemination of precise information to our people to take ownership of what was needed within that period of time. We had used media platforms like NBC and print media within that short space of time we were to conduct elections. But prior to that during our preparations, I was able to use our community network to synchronise and bring the people on board to assist us conduct the elections. That was through our –

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Elaborate on that. What do you mean by community network?

**Mr EWAI SEPI** – We have a community networking or community policing concept that has been adopted into the conduct of the elections and we actually conducted awareness

prior to that. In a way it helped us with managing the security and sharing of information between the three security force agencies was of vital importance.

We have a military intelligence officer who was specifically tasked to be on the ground to assist me collaborate and disseminate information that was crucial. Our chairman was receptive to that and was able to take on board what was presented to him and we worked through the election process.

**Hon. ELIAS KAPAVORE** – My question is directed to the Election Manager. You mentioned something about your voting population in the Northern Province being around 150,000. For the last election you said only 80,000 voted. What sort of common roll were you using for the 2022 National Elections? Was it from the Electoral Commission?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Thank you, Mr Kapavore. You asked about the type of electoral roll that we used. We used only one electoral roll that is certified by the Electoral Commissioner. An electoral roll that has the signature of the Electoral Commissioner; that is the only legal roll that we used.

**Hon. ELIAS KAPAVORE** – The percentage of people that did not vote is around 30 to 40 per cent. There is something about the Form 11 that was issued in NCD to those that did not have their names on the common roll to vote. Are you aware of the Form 11 and were you able to use that to allow people to actually vote or not?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Thank you for this good question. By law, all enrolment must stop when the writs are issued. We try to compile or have a roll before the writs are issued. The use of Form 11 is not legally allowed after the writs are issued. That is according to law and what I see.

I cannot comment on the use of Form 11 in NCD. That did not happen in Northern Province.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So the use of the Form 11 in NCD, I will say it for you is illegal because no returning officer has the right to use that form after the writs are issued. Is that correct?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes. According to law enrolment, no new enrolment must be made after the writs are issued. So in Northern Province, we did not use the Form 11.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – We are very satisfied and thank you for the excellent written report and set of very good recommendations that the Committee will consider, and we acknowledge your preparations for coming and wish you all the best in the 2027 National Elections.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Before we excuse you, I want to check if the Western Province is online,

check over there. Do we have Western Province? Okay, in the interest of time, I notice we have a candidate here, at least one, would you like to come and have your say? You're both candidates? Please come forward. We make it an all-Oro affair, while we wait for Western Province to get organised. Please take a seat in front of the microphone and then we'll allow you to contribute. We've obviously heard what your election management have contributed. Please state your name and which seat you contested for and you may proceed.

#### **Northern Regional Candidate 1**

**Mrs JEAN PARKOP** (Candidate – Northern Regional) – Good morning, all. My name is Jean Parkop. I contested the Oro regional seat among five other women and I have with me Ms Sangetari who will speak later on. But I wish to thank the Chairman and the committee for giving us the opportunity to come and say a few words regarding the 2022 Elections. For me this was my third time to contest so I was able to do some comparisons between the 2012 and 2017 elections, but I will leave that because this is concentrating on the 2022 Elections.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Just a correction, we are looking at all elections even though 2022 is the focus. So, if you would like to place on record some of your observations over the past three elections, we would welcome them.

**Mrs JEAN PARKOP** – Thank you Chairman. We actually have prepared a statement here so we will give it later on but before I say anything else, I wish also to say here that women candidates generally from all over Papua New Guinea had our diagnostic workshop on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September and we have had our observations which came out in the form of outcome statements so I think we have submitted that on several occasions. One through the secretary



by a small committee which Ms Sangetari and I are part of and the other through the UNDP office and the other was given by Michelle Hau'Ofa. So, a lot of our recommendations from the women candidates can be seen in there but I want to thank Ms Hombogani and our PPC for presenting our report. Phoebe and I, our intention is not to blame anybody.

We are here to give our honest observation about the election in Oro with hope that whatever we report here can be able to contribute to improvements in future elections for the good of this nation so we can achieve free, fair and safe elections which we all want to see happen. So firstly, this is a chance given so I'll just go through what we have prepared here quickly.

We've written our report in the stages that we went through in the elections so we have five stages – preparatory, voting, campaign, polling, counting and general observations. On the preparatory stage, the main issue is on the common roll. We felt that it was really late and we don't blame our office in Oro. I think this is a general issue all over the country so because of the delay, especially the availability of the results. We didn't know what common roll was used during the polling, this is an issue and this is like in 2012 and 2017 when the hard copies were available and we were able to get copies and check for voters' names, and when we took them out during the polling, we had prepared our voters' names, therefore, this did not happen in the recent election.

We were told when we enquired at our office in Oro to check online, unfortunately, for many communities in Oro, this was not possible as we weren't under any network coverage. That was a big problem for us. And so, the result of that was that, we weren't able to confirm if our voters' names were on the list or not. Many of our voters did not vote.

For my case in Tamata Ward 10, we knew this was going to be a problem so we had a meeting with the polling officials before the actual polling. Since the 2022 common roll was not going to be ready, we requested if we could use the 2017 common roll as a fall back. I must commend the polling officials that they were very cooperative. In fact, I must congratulate this particular ward because there is always good cooperation between the polling officials, the voters and the candidates, and I wish this could happen in all the other polling booths. I think the common roll which was used was not uniform; maybe some used the 2017 common roll and others used the 2022 common roll. Something to think about. With voter education, we feel this is very important. Election is a very serious business.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can I intervene just to correct something, because you are on air across Papua New Guinea. Our understanding is that, there is only one Electoral Roll that gets updated. You said there are two, so I just wanted to make that clear for the public. There's actually one roll that gets updated. So, the one that was supposed to come out in 2022 is supposed to be the same one from 2017 where those who have passed away are removed and those who are new voters should be added. That is the way the Electoral Roll is supposed to work. So just to clarify that because you know, everyone around Papua New Guinea is listening in. I don't want them to think that there are two different rolls. It's actually supposed to be just one.

**Mrs JEAN PARKOP** – Yes, this was just a specific situation in one of the wards in Oro where the people voted. Now for voter education, since election is a serious business, we feel that it is important that voters are educated on the leadership qualities we are looking for in a candidate and the preferential voting. Maybe this happened in other provinces but we did not see this happen in Oro. Therefore, we want to see this done later in other future elections to prepare our people.

In relation to preparation of election officials and scrutineers; this was raised. It is sad to say that the preparations for this election was not done well. In previous cases, the scrutineer booklets were available which enabled us to prepare our scrutineers. In this case, this did not happen as the scrutineer booklets weren't available. I do not know whose responsibility it is to prepare the scrutineers. Some of us took it upon ourselves to do that. For me, I fly some of the trainers from Port Moresby to do the training for my scrutineers as well as scrutineers of other candidates who were around. For this election it was really ad hoc. There were briefings but most were done at the last minute and a lot of scrutineers were left out on these important briefings from the electoral office.

Our election manageress said something about different scrutineers going in and causing confusion. For me, that is half-truth because some of us prepared scrutineers for the counting room and scrutineers for the polling.

So what we were told at the last minute, just before the counting was done, was that the scrutineers in the polling booth will go into the counting room, and a lot of our scrutineers from the counting booth did not come because some of them came and left the boxes and they had returned and were not able to go into the counting room. And those that we prepared for counting didn't go to the polling booths so the information was not consistent and confusing.

So, it is important that information comes out and it has to come out in advance to give us time to prepare properly. The idea of bringing scrutineers to come in was hard.

In 2017, for myself, I prepared scrutineers for the counting room and polling booths so that when the scrutineers from the polling booths came to the counting booth they reported to the scrutineers at the counting rooms and they had journals regarding those specific boxes.

Also, a lot of confusion occurred when the counting started because those journals were not given out so the scrutineers that went in were not able to confirm if the number of ballot papers in those boxes would match the information they had but had they counted out things will be okay. But, in most cases, the numbers were not matching that is why we raised that issue. I think this needs to be –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can I stop you there first, that is an interesting point you made because the same issue was raised yesterday for Milne Bay. So, I would like to like to pause you there for a short moment and I will ask the election manager to respond. This discrepancy that they saw in the journals, what do you have to say about that?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Okay, some presiding officers were smart enough to remove the journals from within their returns, the extra ballot papers. Those that removed them from their extra ballot papers which were locked did present them at the counting center.

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

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – After the polling, the returns of extra ballot papers were locked up –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Let's go back a little further. What is a journal? Explain it so our people watching from around the country can understand what we are talking about.

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – A journal is the presiding officer's record of what usually happens at the polling location.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, proceed.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That includes how many ballot papers were issued and how many were returned?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That is the package that the candidate was talking about? What happened to that? Continue.

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – So, as I mentioned, some presiding officers were smart enough to remove or have that separate from the unused ballot papers and the other materials they locked in the container. Once those documents are locked in the container they cannot go back and retrieve it. That is the issue that this candidate is stating, that those journals were not available at the counting center to match. However –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – The presiding officer actually or accidentally locked it with the ballot papers?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes, the presiding officer accidentally locked it with the unused ballot paper so he could not go back again and retrieve it.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How did that happen? Isn't there supposed to be an instruction on how to manage the journals?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes, there is an instruction, however, we see the pressure that the presiding officer and his team are in; they arrive very late in the night and lock the materials and the next day when they go back the unused ballot papers are there and it will be seen as tampering or touching the unused ballot papers which they are not supposed to do.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But once the box is open, that journal is then available?

**Mr DAISY HOMBAGANI** – As I said, though the journals are not available, they still have their records on hand to present. So although the presiding officer's journal is not available they do have their records written.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – But, they may not be accurate records, we want the physical records.

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – That’s right.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We are all talking about the issue of trust; the people trusting the process. These are the issues and now that it’s being raised, I want to get to the bottom of it.

So, at some point, were you able to present those balanced documents to the candidates if they had such concerns?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes, presiding officers were asked to give their reports. Before they open a ballot box, they give their report to the scrutineers and the counting officials. They inform us on which locations they have covered, how many voters are involved and their estimates –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, fair enough. I appreciate the explanation. Now, let’s just say one of the candidates – and we have two sitting here – came to you and said, ‘can I see the full record?’ Would that be available?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – If it is available with us at the counting centre it could be –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well, forget the counting centre, say, today, now. If she asked you to produce that document, would you be able to do that? Is it available?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Those are part of the returns so when the writs are returned – yes, it’s available at the headquarters.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What stops that document from being available to a candidate or to the public? Is there any legal requirement preventing that document from being available? Because she is just saying they have a problem with it.

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – There is no legal requirement stopping them from accessing that document.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – If a candidate, in this case Ms Parkop sitting here, if she came to you and said, ‘look, I want to see that document.’ Could you produce it and give it to her?

**Ms DAISY HOMBAGANI** – Yes, we would. It’s a public document.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, that’s the answer I wanted. Thank you, you may proceed.

**Mrs JEAN PARKOP**– Chairman, unfortunately, it’s hard. We’ve tried getting those journals but it’s hard. We have been sent back and forth to the provincial office and to the headquarters so we kind of gave up. We all do things that help us –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That’s fair enough. Can I intervene? This is why we want to get to the bottom of this. In future if this committee can make a recommendation that is adopted by Parliament, by law, that you are entitled to that document that we want you to have it.

I just want to make that clear for you. I know you are frustrated and everyone is frustrated.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – It’s called transparency.

**Mrs JEAN PARKOP** – I must say honestly that – I mean we’re not picking on anybody, but as I said, we have to be honest and so we report accurately what we observe so that in future, we may never be perfect but at least we try to minimise certain things. The journal is important because that is –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – It is a reconciliation document.

**Mrs JEAN PARKOP** – Yes. And so for us, I think maybe the open candidates were okay, but for us regional candidates, none of our journals were available. That was one of the main causes of frustrations of the scrutineers.

Quality checks of ballot papers before distribution to polling booths; this is something we as candidates are proud of our province and we want to commend our electoral office, the election manager and the team. The committees and scrutineers were able to check the papers before they were sent out to the polling booths. The only downside there was because again it was just adhoc and last minute, not all the scrutineers were there. So, election managers, maybe

in future we can do that in advance so we try to get as many scrutineers as possible to be in this important event.

One of our issues was that the provincial electoral office was not manned adequately by qualified officers. The front desk, we felt, was just looked after by casuals or temporary officers, resulting in many instances of unanswered queries.

The change in nomination dates; you saw what happened. *Planti senis tumas na*, you know, you are also candidates so you know what had happened. We prepared everything and then because change *igo kam* it caused confusion. We recommend that it does not happen again.

And for the campaign period, again, because of all those changes it was reduced and I think it was okay for the open candidates but for the regional *em bikipela wok*. Hard for us to cover all the places so we were just strategized and covered whatever we could. So eight weeks is still not enough.

Security, fortunately for Oro and for the women's perspective ino *bikipela* issue, everywhere it was good. Sorry this may not agree with what you are saying but that's what I saw. During the campaign the PPC especially in our area I think that violence that took place were really not related to election but incidents were already happening there before we went and fortunately the polling took place at the same time. This is in the border of Oro and Morobe province in the Gira and Ayah area we had some issues that were there but the PPC and his team successfully attended to it and the polling continued.

Polling stage, again, delay in updating of common roll that resulted in many of our voters turned away. Change of dates also caused confusions like polling was delayed for by a week. So many who came to vote, you know some stayed in the hamlets so they had to go away and then when they are told to come back they said, *hey mipela go kam na tired*, we had to walk or *pulim kanu*. They said if there is no *dinghy* they won't vote. That is why *sampela ino go vot*.

Again lack of understanding of a quality leadership this is the point that we want to make from the women's perspective and for Oro. It is important that people know what they are voting for. Because of that we didn't do any education and people just voted *long laik bilong ol*. *Ol i votim kandere bilong ol or susa bilong ol em yumi no sawe*. Whether they have the credentials to become a member of the parliament or *nogat em nogat*.

Security of polling boxes. Our concern here is that plastic boxes are not secure and they can be easily broken and changed. Furthermore, we realized that space under the handle of that box is big enough for extra ballot papers to be squeezed in at the time of transportation.

Some ballot boxes were transported long distances and at times it was late to arrive at the provincial headquarters after polling. Maybe in other provinces it was okay, but in Oro we did

not have choppers so we had problem. Some polling teams and ballot boxes travelled by foot and arrived late at the polling booths. Some of our election officers were alleged to be involved in some offences during the polling. This was seen at the counting room and we raised this with the election manager and asked if they could be suspended and don't engage them in any this duty but, unfortunately, we saw them there so mipela repotim dispela.

On the positive side boxes are transparent so you can easily see the ballot paper because the colour of the ballot paper we can distinguish that. I think the issue as a candidate is the extra ballot paper being squeezed in.

Separate lines for women was a good idea. In fact women feel free to vote so it should continue.

Counting arrangements were announced one day before the actual counting started, so the candidates and the scrutineers were not prepared well in advance.

Oro Kaiva market was elected as the new counting venue and was setup late and the counting was delayed for two days and rushed through the period of counting. So, counting for three Open electorates and Regional were done at the same place and you could see what it was like in fact. It was very chaotic and confusing because the counters in the four electorates are all counting at the same time so how bai mipela save when our papers were called out. This is unlike in 2012 and 2017. Yupela countim long separate locations and we were there and it was actually announced through the PA system so we could actually hear and monitor the progress of the counting.

I don't think central counting is the good idea. The counting was not audible. Broadcast by NBC, not like in the 2017 and 2012 was not live, it was actually delayed by a day so candidates could not monitor their progressive results correctly. The tally board was not present until a few days later and there was only one tally board. So, we were not able to tell whose scores was on this tally board; em bilong Open electorates or bilong Regional candidates.

This continues; scrutineers are our legal representatives but they were seated at some distance away from the counting table and that made them difficult for them to confirm the names on the ballot papers that were announced and the appropriate signatures on those ballot papers. So, em hard long ol scrutineers blong mipela long confirmim.

Secondly, in many instances counting was done without the presence of the scrutineers. The scrutineers' concerns were not addressed adequately, am sorry Mr Hombagani. They were actually intimidated, threatened, and told to shut up by election officials. And they were told to go back and tell their candidates to take their matters to the Court of Disputed Returns. This is unlike in some other provinces where scrutineers' concerns were addressed and those officials



alleged to have committed election offences were charged and dealt. We have case in Madang and Sepik for example.

There were two containers at the beginning of the counting venue and towards the middle of the counting a third container was added without the explanations to the scrutineers, candidates and voters in general. Also, before the counting the election official of painim hard long opim container because the key and lock did not match. So, they had to use a bolt cutter to cut that lock so that also raised the suspicions and I have the lock with me. The key is with my big sister who is looking after the policewoman, Ms. Hombagani's iron lady.

Finally, our general observation is that the Provincial Election Steering Committee; candidates had issues with transparency and impartiality of this committee. Chair, candidates were not clear about how they were conducting their business because our concerns and complaints raised firstly through our petitions then later through a letter to election manager was not addressed adequately. In fact, two complaints were filed at the police station and OB numbers were given and it's with me and will submit it with this report so bai yupela lukim behind. And they are still outstanding, we did actually meet with the PPC and he did not want to address it so later on he gave us a really long legal opinion which looked like one doctorate thesis. So, we were not interested in that, we wanted things to be done at that time so we can be satisfied when the things were running well. And that again caused confusion and suspicions. Is the PPC supporting all the candidates or only one candidate only?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Or was he just doing his job, you couldn't tell.

**Mrs JEAN PARKOP** – Yeah, election petitions, these are just general observations. There were over 100 election petitions filed after the 2022 General Elections all over the country and Northern Province had two. This questions the management of election, especially the declaration of winners and it confirms our statement made in the women candidates election diagnostic workshop held in September 2022 at Holiday Inn. There were about 39 of us there.

This election, I am sorry, was the most disorganized and problematic election in the history of elections in PNG. And the third point is the qualification eligibility of candidates and current eligibility criteria for candidates is such that it does not help in getting people who have credentials to contest in election and serve as members of National Parliament. This was shown by the caliber of candidates who contested in the three open seats and the regional seat in the Northern Province which some of our members here have alluded to earlier on. Others had questionable backgrounds and they also had criminal records including people who were found

guilty by courts of disputed returns in the previous elections. Em ol tu kam wanem ya contest so em yumi kisim ol kam back and unfortunately this is a serious issue which needs to be addressed if PNG is to see or have credible members of Parliament.

Based on our observations we have nine recommendations which I will just run through; preparations for national elections to begin as soon as one ends, so preparations for 2027 Elections should begin this year. Provincial and National Government should conduct voter education and leadership qualities and preferential voting a year before elections and common roll updates to be completed more than six months before the elections so that gives us candidates time to check the voters and if they are not on then we can do what needs to be done.

Selection of election officials to be based on merits and done transparently but up till now we don't know how they were selected. Election officials' offences to be addressed there and then and not to be left to be taken to the court of disputed returns, em waste of taim na planti moni ya plis. And they must be barred from participating in future elections. Okay and we also proposed that PSIPs and DSIPs to be ceased a year before election because what we saw in our province the incumbents where you know they had the advantage of the money and all the logistics and everything were some of us were struggling. Review candidates criteria to include qualifications and other back ground information's and people with criminal records should never be allowed to contest in the elections please.

Provincial steering committee and its members to be impartial and they must be visible and they must be present during elections. Thankyou em presentation bilong mipela and this was written by Bibie and I who contested the regional seat and also Ms Delilah Gore, who unfortunately couldn't make it together with us, so thank you Chair for giving us the time to share our bit here.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – You are most welcome and let me also thank you for being available because we couldn't get Western Province due to technical difficulties so you actually helped us, thank you. But thank you for a very informative view and we did this yesterday with candidates from Milne Bay with their election officials and we have had that opportunity again because the two of you turned up so I thankyou for that. Some points that you mentioned which we are seeing consistently throughout and I want to assure you that we are very keen to ensure these things are fixed for the future.

As you can rightly see from your own presentation and from the presentation of your election officials, I think the break down in the system has created a lot of suspicion and

mistrust, and you know, I mean you are just talking about a lock where a key can't fit and that just made matters worse. So, we've got to fix those things and I think that's what the committee is here to do and all of your contributions will be taken on board.

Just to say to you, for example, you made a good point there, you know, Members of Parliament have an unfair advantage because of their access to funds. I think my colleagues are here today. I do not have an issue having people who are just candidates begin campaigning earlier, I don't see any issue with that personally if that would help. So, things like making it more transparent and fair process and those sort of things which would kind of help.

You can see from the perspective of the provincial police commander, he sees the trouble makers as the candidates and the scrutineers, whereas all of you see them as creating the problems. So, somewhere therein we need to find a solution that is amicable for everyone and

I found the same thing in my province because I thought we had a fair election but you know, there's a lot of suspicion with returning officials and so on and so forth and some of those are very apt recommendations. Look, if someone has a criminal allegation or –even if I asked a question, how do we select polling officials and what is the criteria and I still don't have a good answer and you know, I'm a Member of Parliament so I guess transparency around all of the processes would help and if everyone felt that it was a fair process they were participating in, it would maybe make things a lot easier.

Anyway, I'm going to adjourn the hearing for lunch.

## **Northern Regional Candidate 2**

**Ms PHOEBE SANGETARI** (Candidate - Northern Regional) – Thank you Chair and the members of the Committee, I'm a former ombudsman and Acting Chief Ombudsman. I was Acting Chief Ombudsman for two years and I decided to go into election thinking that my quality of experience in government administration for close to 30 years would make a difference in this selection process so I put my hand up with good intentions but it didn't work out.

Let me say that our people don't look at quality, they look at other factors, and my sister colleague has talked about it, the material things like rice, tinned fish, flour, cash and you name it. They don't look at quality and that's why it's reflecting in Parliament, the quality of leadership is you can see. It lacks because of the selection process to getting someone into Parliament.

I thank you for this opportunity to at least allow me to make couple of comments and I thank our election manager and PPC for their reporting here. I just want to make two or three comments to add on to what my sister has mentioned. I also stood for Oro or Northern regional

and it's to do with the voter education and awareness. This was like a 10<sup>th</sup> election or what. The kind of people that our people are voting into Parliament, it's just not getting quality in and we need education awareness on quality leadership.

In my capacity as Ombudsman, Ombudsman Commission used to do a leadership quality awareness prior to elections and I don't know whether they did it this time around but in the Oro province I didn't get to hear about the Ombudsman awareness there. Basically, they used to do awareness on the leadership qualities. Talking about electing or voting people who are transparent and accountable and you know, the whole works and that's what I am talking about in quality and leadership besides the voter education on the preferential voting and that's important.

On the point about the PSIPs and the DSIPs to stop one year before the elections, Ombudsman Commission has authority and powers under the Constitution to issue directions to stop access of these funds towards the elections. I would like to see the Ombudsman Commission exercise these powers like one year ahead. They always put in place some procedure so that you the members of Parliament have projects that are already budgeted for. You can always put in your documentation to the Ombudsman Commission which has an inter-government committee there that screens through and approves and then releases the funds. So it's not a total restriction but at least some control. But that control should probably be imposed one year ahead before the next election. That's to do with the PSIP and the DSIP funding.

The other comment I wanted to make is with regards to electoral offences committed during the election. My sister Jean has mentioned that in other provinces, police stepped in fast, they investigated and charged those electoral officials. We got to read about it in the newspapers, because we were back in the province. We didn't have access to EMTV and all the TV stations.

But the point I want to make here is that, there were electoral offences, alleged electoral offences which we brought to the attention of the police but as a result of this legal opinion that they got from their legal counsel, the police from the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary had to wait until the elections were over. When the matter is taken through the national petition process, only after then can they step in and investigate. I think that is a wrong advice. Police should step in, these are two separate processes, it's a criminal process and there's an electoral petition process. Through the electoral petition process there are provisions if found that the officials are guilty. If there's evidence, then the court can refer this information back to the police or to the public prosecutor. There are provisions for that in the Organic Law.

But the point I'm trying to make is that the police must step in and do the investigations, not wait for the outcome of the election process. So we saw that happening, inconsistency in the police. The police in other provinces were moving in fast arresting on complaints, investigating. In our province up to now I don't know what they have done with their complaints and we got OB entries. I think on record the candidates who had scrutineers lodged three complaints and OBs were given. I think we only state one OB entry here for information in our presentation, but there are two others.

I think with better organization the election process will be a better and fair and cooperation between election officials and candidates, scrutineers and everybody together will make the election a fair process. Thank you Chair.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, we note all the concerns and if it is any consolation, in the case of my province the Ombudsman stepped in and shutdown all our accounts. We couldn't operate for eight months.

We had a violent uprising where people were killed, houses were burnt down. We had to go and beg for money from business houses to deal with that. But the Ombudsman was really tough in this election and my province couldn't access funds for eight months. All funds were locked down. So just to let you know, and this is something where my province will be taking into account, because I don't see the PSIP or the DSIP as a personal fund for the member of Parliament. I would like to see that go through a proper government process, which we do in my province. So I just want to assure you of that, and I don't think my people are easily swayed by money and cargo, perhaps it's a different story in Oro but will wait and see what happens.

So once again thank you for your contributions. Please stay for lunch, I now adjourn the proceedings. I apologize that we couldn't have Western Province due to technical difficulties but that's something that we can sort out in due course. We are now adjourned until 1.20 p.m.

*(Suspended for lunch)*

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – *(Audio recording cut)*... looking at all the previous elections, picking up all of the learnings and with the intention of taking a set of recommendations to Parliament so that we could improve the conduct of future elections.

Before us, I welcome the election team from Gulf Province, the neighbours of NCD. What we will do is to let you tell your stories. Were you here in the morning for the explanations? All Special Parliamentary Committees are covered by the privileges of

Parliament so everything that you say in this inquiry is protected so speak honestly and truthfully about the things that you want to contribute to today's hearing and if need be, we will ask questions.

Do you have a written submission? We will start with you, Mr Administrator. Please state your name for the record and give us the synopsis of how you conduct the elections and what were some of the things that you saw and want us to improve going into the future. Thank you.

## **Gulf Province**

### **Gulf Provincial Administrator**

**Mr NAVAI KEVARI** (Gulf Provincial Administrator) – Thank you, Mr Chairman and Members of the Committee. I have here with me my PPC and my two Provincial Executive Council members. Our Provincial Election Manager is still on his way over. All of us here will be presenting our views on the 2022 National General Elections.

There are two features of Gulf Province; we have the waterways and the highway. The only road network is from here to Kerema. We have no road network in the western part of the province and the only mode of transport is by sea.

In terms of the conduct of elections, we only look at three modes of transport; the sea, the land and the air. We have a lot of difficulties in trying to mobilise and demobilise election personnel to the province.

In the province we have the Provincial Election Steering Committee which has not been functioning too well in working with the Provincial Election Office. We have seen that the Provincial Election Office tries to operate by themselves without consulting us in the administration. We in the administration feel that it is our elections whether it be the national elections or the local level government election. It is still the election of the province.

We feel that if there are provincial electoral officers in the province, we should all work together and deliver an effective and efficient election in the province. We also have the issue of police personnel and the provincial election manager given separate funding in the last election. The province was not given anything but we were told that we need to have an MoU signed between the Provincial Election Office and the Provincial Election Steering Committee.

We had problems in starting of the elections. It would be better if before the election starts, those issues are addressed. There should be a meeting between the Department of Police,

the provincial election commission and the Provincial Election Steering Committee to sign a MoU distributing the roles and expenditures to prevent misunderstandings from happening during the election period.

For Gulf Province, we started off not coordinated. We feel that there must be coordination. In the LLGs in the districts, they are staff of the provincial administration and normally we have our officers on the ground who are answerable to the provincial administrator, assigned to do election duties. They do not have direct control by the election manager. That's why I said we got to sit together to firstly to establish linkages so that you and I go out to effectively carryout the elections. PPC will have his share. Police personnel on this matter. We did not know last year how much was given to Police department because their funding came through the national department and by way of their own budget estimates, the PPC was probably given his allocation. This allocation should be known to the Provincial Election Steering Committee which administrator is the chairman. We never knew about how much was given to police and we have to go in and help fund police operations as well.

So, lack of having proper data base, in terms of a drum of zoom, to travel from Kerema to Kikori, that's about K1, 600 per drum, and for you to go to Kikori and come back you need two drums. From Kerema to go to Kikori one drum and another to come back. So, in terms of trying to facilitate our election officials to go out from the headquarter or be it the district head quarter to the LLGs and the counting centres, we did not have proper data base to say that the cost estimate will be this and that. We were only assuming from experiences that we normally have when carrying out our normal administrative duties. This was one of the reasons why we overblew our budget. The province did come in...

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, let's cut to the chase. How much did the elections cost you? How much did you spend on the elections?

**Mr NAVAI KEVARI** – The province spent about K2 million assisting the provincial election.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– So that was the province's contribution?

**Mr NAVAI KEVARI** – Yes, the province's contribution.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But you are not clear on the police department's contribution.

**Mr NAVAI KEVARI** – No, we are not clear on the police department’s contribution.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, fair enough. Now in terms of the actual conduct of the elections. Did your administrative and logistical difficulties affect your conduct of the elections and if so, in what ways?

**Mr NAVAI KEVARI** – Yes, in terms of trying to get our team out to the very remotest part, logistics was a problem for us. We couldn’t get the team out to the hinterlands because we had problem with the airfreight of teams out there and also coupled with the weather condition we had; we couldn’t deploy the team in time to conduct the elections.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you’re saying that your elections were late in terms of the conduct and the counting and the declarations?

**Mr NAVAI KEVARI** – No Chairman, we had it in time but we had two or three places, the election manager will confirm, we did not deploy manpower there that early.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But you had no problems bringing the votes in and tallying them up?

**Mr NAVAI KEVARI** – No, we had no problems in bringing the votes in and tallying them.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – In terms of the behaviour of candidates, scrutineers, voters during campaigning, polling, transportation of the ballots and at the counting centres, could you tell us a little bit about that please? Maybe the election manager, Mr Tore. Please state your full name and designation before you give your statement.

### **Gulf Election Manager**

**Mr TORE POEVARE** (Gulf - Election Manager) – Good afternoon, my name is Poevare Tore and I’m the election manager for Gulf. Firstly, I’ll say that this election has been very challenging for us Gulf, especially for me, after being in the Electoral Commission service for 30 years. I took the challenges head on whether they affected me or not



With our operations, the logistics was still hard, especially with the deployment of teams to the outer parts of the provinces. The reason is that, the chopper we had was controlled from Port Moresby therefore it made it hard for our movement. So, we had no choice but to delay our teams for one week just to stay in a station and the following week the chopper came in and assisted us, but that was okay.

With the shifting of ballot boxes from Port Moresby to Kerema; I came here and did it myself. I took the ballot boxes from the main ATS Distribution Centre and brought it to Kerema with the escort of police. And from there going out, we did the same thing with outboard dinghies as our area is mostly covered by rivers, while a few places we covered with chopper and aircraft. So that is how ballot boxes were brought into Kerema and out-stations in preparation for the actual polling.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – In terms of conducting the polling, what was your experience with the voters and the common rolls at the polling stations?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – Common roll is the only issue that we always experience during our elections.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – When you say ‘elections’ you mean every single election you have conducted?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – Every single election we found out that –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How many elections have you been involved with?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – This is my 30<sup>th</sup> year with the Electoral Commission.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That is about six elections, right?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – Yes, that is correct; six elections.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And at all six elections, there were issues with the electoral rolls?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – Yes, that is correct; issues with electoral rolls. So, we have been trying our best to fix these rolls. Despite the updates there are still people missing out on casting their votes as they don’t have their names in the rolls. However, reactions from the

voters and scrutineers and candidates are reasonably okay. Not like in other provinces. In Kerema or Gulf for that matter is a very peaceful place.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But people were disappointed that they weren't on the roll.

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – Yes, that is right.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – From the estimates, what percentage of the people there weren't on the roll?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – I would say about 20 percent, because there were plenty people whose names weren't on the roll.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Did they register at some point?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – That is the thing we are trying to work out. That is what we are trying to find out; if they did register their names during the last enrolment that went around their village. They say they did but their names did not appear. So that is the only thing they were telling us.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you for that. So, the behavior of the candidates and scrutineers during the counting; was that peaceful? How did that go?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – Very peaceful.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So your most significant difficulty was with funding and logistics, but the conduct of the elections was okay; and of course, the issues with the electoral rolls which everybody else faced.

May I now ask the PPC; in your brief, are you able to tell us about the security situations during the polling period.

### **Provincial Police Commander Gulf**

**Mr JEFFERY LEM** (PPC – Gulf) – Yes of course; I'm Chief Inspector Jeffery Lem, Provincial Commander for Gulf. During the elections in Gulf, we had a manpower of 48.

Outside forces meaning counterpart forces from CIS and DF, we had about 60 of them and we had to include our reservist and community-based police so that brought the number up to 350.

I will touch a bit on funding as my administrator has discussed. The funding for Police was centralized meaning allowances and hired vehicles were paid from the Police headquarters. We were allowed to hire vehicles which were limited to only 10 vehicles to serve the whole province for the duration of the elections and all those service providers were paid from the headquarters. But when we found out that we needed more vehicles to cover the entire province and that included the other allowances.

The reservist and community-based police allowances were not covered in the headquarters budget so the provincial government had to come in help with funding as the administrated had said they helped with a million police security and also to the electoral commission which helped a lot. On the ground, we found that we exceeded the cost that we estimated in our budget so when the government assisted it was helpful and it allowed us to go through the elections.

The conduct of the general population towards the election was quite normal and peaceful, we didn't experience any serious issues with the election starting from the campaigns up to the voting and counting as well and we concluded in time.

That is all.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, would our two PEC Members want to add anything more? Mr Eho'o.

#### **Church Representative -Gulf**

**Mr WARI EHO'O** (United Church -Bishop) – Thank you, Mr Chairman. I would agree with my election manager in terms of the common roll because my family and I were some of those who missed out and we have been in the province for 21 years. In the last four elections, we were able to cast our votes but last year we were unable to cast our votes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, you and your family were removed from the roll even though you were there previously?

**Mr WARI EHO'O** – Yes, and it is very disappointing.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, you are a Ward Member or are you an appointed member? Am I correct?

**Mr WARI EHO'O** – I am the Bishop of the United Church.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, you are the church representative of the province assembly?

**Mr WARI EHO'O** – Yes. So when that happened to me I just had to walk out of the polling area. Not only did it happen in our province but I think this was experienced right throughout the country where many people were missed on the common roll.

Secondly, another issue we experienced in our province was the weather. In the months of May through August, we experience bad weather and it really affected the movement of the election teams. I think that that is one area that we have to look at. I am expressing that because I have seen the problems we have gone through over a period of time.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Let's explore that. I think we had a similar situation with Milne Bay expressing the same concern yesterday. Let's just say if we had the powers to amend the dates for whatever reason, and you know we are going into unknown territory here and a fairly difficult territory, let me just say that. But for the sake of the exercise, when would it be a good time to conduct your elections in terms of the weather? I'm keeping in mind our discussions with Milne Bay.

**Mr WARI EHO'O** – Because our bad weather periods starts in April and goes as far as August. So for us it would be better off between September and towards the end of the year. That would be okay for us.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That is something that we will note, but anyway you continue.

**Mr WARI EHO'O** – I just want to raise that concern because of the experience that we go through as a province. It affects many of our programs and activities. Not just the elections but other programs are also affected by the weather.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So that's rain, wind –

**Mr WARI EHO'O** – Yes! That's what I wanted to raise in the light of what other members have said.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you. Mr Torea?

**Mr POSA TOREA** – All the issues have been mentioned by the members. My concern is on the transport for the hinterlands. In most of the elections, the teams that go up to the mountains, on their return they usually carry their patrol boxes all the way down during times when there is no transport provided.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is that when it is affected by the weather or some other issue?

**Mr POSA TOREA** – Some other issues like logistics. My concern is we need to improve the transportation for the hinterlands. Thank you.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**– Thank you Team Gulf for coming. We appreciate your presence. Mr Poevare, Election Manager, can you please go through the process of your common roll update.

I understand that there are three phases; roll inspection and updating, new and transfer enrolment and then display and objections. I want you to explain to the committee what happens when the frontline identification is done and then it comes to the headquarters; tell us what happens there at the entry level and who is involved? All the names are brought in through the first process, then you bring them to the headquarters and enter them into the computer.

Can you explain to the committee in your knowledge being there for 30 years? Do names fall off at the computer level? Why is it that people say, yes, I did sign the form, I thought my name will be here, but on this certified common roll by the Electoral Commissioner, my name and not only one name but hundreds and hundreds and in your case, 20 per cent did not enrol. Those who filled the forms, maybe out of your total votes they all filled the forms right at the ward level but when it came to entry, something happened.

I want you to explain to the committee the beginning and then coming through entry into the computer and how it is processed, certified and displayed and then the Electoral Commissioner signs and then we use it in the election period. That has been the main area of complaint, mi sainim tasol computer ino includim.

Explain to the committee in your knowledge, being there for 30 years, what happens at the headquarters.

**Mr TORE POEVARE** –The process in the electoral roll has two phases. The first phase of the program is to get our officials appointed and issue them with the necessary stationary

such as forms, and using the old roll as the basis for updating the common rolls and they go out with the summary form for us to register those people who are not on the roll or who has transferred in, or who has turned 18, we use those forms to register them. After that first phase that form is brought to the office.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That is called form 11.

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – It is brought to us to the office to check and for me to sign as the RO or election manager and then we forward that form into headquarters.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How does it go from you to the headquarters?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – We register all the names everything, scan them on the machine and transfer them through the computer system to the heard quarters.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – From there where does it go to the electoral commission?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – It will go straight to our IT section where it goes to the electoral commission where all the forms are there. According to the number of people we registered on those summary form requesting for form 11, so they will give the form 11 according to the list that we sent in. Not all of these names will have the form of their own. That's the percentage that commissions three or twelve per cent that they apply on the forms when you send the list in.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – 15 per cent.

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – Yes sir. They will work it out from the names that we send in and they will not send all the forms that we requested for. They will send less from 15 per cent limit for us to work and when we receive the form 11 we'll go out to do the second phase of the program. So all those teams we registered on the summary phase one we've started entering

them into that form 11 and that form 11 when it comes to the headquarters for us to check verify and sign.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Who does that in the headquarters?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – This goes back to the provinces.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Do they send you a list?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** - Yes. As soon as I send them the list requesting for form 11 they will give the form according to the list I send, but it will be 15 per cent of the list.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So they do the data input at the headquarters and send you the electronic file?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – Yes. We ask and request for form 11 only.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – No I am talking about after the form 11 process which you already covered.

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – After the form 11 we register everything IT system at the provincial level and that's been transferred into the headquarters.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Let's correct that. Initially you said that the data entry is done in Moresby so can you just clarify are you doing the data entry in Moresby or is it done in Headquarter at Gulf?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – The data entry will be done when you get the form 11 from out stations. We do it in our own set up there and we transfer in to Moresby for final entry that's when it's completed they started printing out the rolls.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That's not the same thing you said earlier, so what you said earlier was incorrect? Everything you are saying is being recorded so I'm just trying to clarify.

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – I'll make it clear again. Phase one, we send the list of names of people who register to request for their form 11 to come. As soon as the Headquarter gets their request form they give us 15 per cent of the list we send and they send it to us when we are ready then we go out for the second phase of the program that's actually when we register. We fill the form for the people whose name is not on the roll. When these form 11 are completed they give it back to our office at the provincial level and we'll put them into our systems and after that we send them to the Headquarter and then they will do the final checking and register or include them in the roll and printing the roll according to our list.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So in the case Reverend Eho and his family falling off the list. Does that happen in the Gulf province or that happened in the Headquarters. Who does the data cleansing? Do you guys do it or does the Headquarter do it.

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – We do it and then we send them for final checking and register everything in preparation.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So how does Reverend Eho and his family fall off –

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – If he has registered himself while we were doing the common roll update and we send information to headquarters, they could have missed him out at the headquarters so, that's what most people have complained about during the last common roll updates.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, someone at headquarters has the discretion to take people off the list long laik bilong ol.

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – That, I don't know.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well, I mean obviously him and his entire family got taken off so someone unless you know wanpela tewel i go na mekim. There was a human on the keyboard.

**Mr WARI EHO'O** – Chairman, if I can come in. I think we are talking about individual families. There are communities that are actually out of the common roll.



**Mr CHAIRMAN** – The whole community.

**Mr WARI EHO'O** – Yes, I've been to a village in Malalaua inland and they told me, we are out of the government common roll. I raised that concern.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How did that happen? I mean coming back to you now?

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Did the process come to Malalaua and they enter the form 11 or no?

**Mr WARI EHO'O** – I think they did but some of the communities were not reached. He would know.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, if you don't reach a community then that whole village is taken off the map?

**Mr WARI EHO'O** – I went there myself and I've witnessed people talking to me.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Even if they registered in 2017 common roll.

**Mr WARI EHO'O** – I think this particular community has been missed out on government service many years back. They don't have any services.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That's in Kikori.

**Mr WARI EHO'O** – I have seen them and raised that concern.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – And in this specific issue Electoral Manager, that form 11 goes to your IT and then you transfer it to the headquarter IT. And then finally the common roll is printed and signed by the Electoral Commissioner. But what we are saying is some people fall off the system. Form 11 is filled, you enter it, it comes to the headquarters but it's not entered in the system so when they turn up they complain, I already fill the form but why is my name is not on. Have you experienced that in this election or other elections?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – Yes, we did. What normally happens is when we are filling form 11 for those people who are registered and right at the bottom of it you can tear the slip. When he comes during the polling period and finds out that his name is not on the common roll, he can produce this as an evidence that he has registered his name and how comes his name is not the common roll.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – And then you filled the form.

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – That’s a proof that we filled the form out but we missed him out during the actual printing of the Common Roll.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So no slip, no Form 11 filled after the writs are issued.

**Ward Councillor - Gulf**

**Mr POSA TOREA** (Ward Councilor) – Chairman, can I come in. I am the ward councilor

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Good, give us a snapshot of what happens. You would take part in the actual process.

**Mr POSA TOREA** – I have been fighting with my people for this common roll. Sometimes when the officers are there to update the common roll, the village people or youths come in and say ‘yupela mekim wanem long mipela’. ‘Why should we enroll ourselves for the election?’ These are some of the very issues that affecting the common rolls because most people their names are not on the common rolls. They are the ones who don’t want to submit their names.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – They didn’t register in the first place.

**Mr POSA TOREA** –This is my concern; next officers going out for common roll updates, I want a regular policeman to accompany them because most of the times they use auxiliaries and community police. Those reservists who stay in the village and live among them become part of the village.

They will stand and say we won't but time for election they would want to know why their names are not in the common roll. And because of this attitude from the village people, we need security personnel to go with the officers to update the names in all the villages.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – One of the strategies in the common roll updates was to use ward members to take the lead in the update of the common roll. How did you engage yourself in your ward as the one tasked to help update the common roll? What did you actually do in your ward?

**Mr POSA TOREA** – Sometimes when officers are there, I go around with them. Okay, most time those officers who are engaged in the common roll update don't stay in those villages that long and that's another problem.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So it's incomplete

**Mr POSA TOREA** – Yes, it's incomplete and this are some of the areas where –

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Do you have a ward recorder book in your ward?

**Mr POSA TOREA** – The system has been abolished, we don't have a village recorder in the village now. So it's one of the areas where we need to get back those ward recorders because they are the ones who will be recording all the daily happenings in the village. At the moment we don't all these in the wards.

**Hon. ELIAS KAPAVORE** – Mr Fosa, you mentioned that the system has been abolished but there are many other provinces who are still using ward recorders as an important part of record keeping at the ward level. When was that abolished and who gave the instruction to abolish the system?

**Mr POSA TOREA** – Well, I don't see ward recording system in my LLG that's why I am bringing up this matter.

**Hon ELIAS KAPAVORE** – Thank you long East New Britain em important part bilong recording system and its still really useful tool.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** - Election Manager, what was your budget when you submitted to your bosses in Moresby?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – When I submitted my budget was K2.8 million.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How much did they give you?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – They only gave me K930, 000.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How much did the provincial government give you?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – K2 million.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – If the provincial government didn't give you the two million and say no gat em no wok bilong mipela, why na Electoral Commissioner kisim budget. If they didn't give you, what do you think would be the outcome with just K900, 000?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – No use for that K900, 000 because it will be used for the first activity that we carried out.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So election would have failed in Gulf Province. Administrator, what made you to help him?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can you press the green button, sorry?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** - The province was obligated to help

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What do you mean obligated?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – We thought it was our elections so we should assist the provincial election manager.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So it was your moral ethical mindset that forced you to help

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – Because of the shortfall in his budget.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – You were told of the shortfall so you went to PEC.

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – We are part of the Committee and the issue was brought to us that the budget that he estimated was not given the full amount. The Chairman decided to do a submission to provincial executive council which we did submit seeking their approval of support funding to *(audio recording cut)*

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What do you think of the view that provincial government really should take charge of the election management including funding and procurement processes and everything rather than waiting for police headquarter or Electoral Commissioner here in Port Moresby? Would you think that would make it more effective and efficient?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – Yes, the honest thing to do is we have a provincial election steering committee in the province and all sorts of funding with technical input from election manager falls into that committee and the committee decides.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Including the Police and the security funds?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – Yes.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So you manage the funds transparently and accountably?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – Yes, Sir.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well, that is a good track that we on because I think our friends from Oro and Milne Bay have expressed similar sentiments and I know in the case of East Speak, our provincial administrator actually carried elections and in my province we spent K4 million to support, but they are all these issues of transparency like even us, we are sitting here as a

committee we are wondering. You know, there was almost 600-700 or 800 million kina or something like that for the elections and we are hearing that you got K900 000.

In the case of Milne Bay, I think they got different amount, maybe K2 million or something. So, we are hearing all these different numbers and it would be nice to or it's probably something else we need to investigate because we want to understand with all of these monies going all over the place and now we understand. There is K75 million for lawyers and all these sorts of things.

So, it would be nice for us to not just as a committee but for the whole country to understand so it's good to have your opinion that you should be managing it as the provincial administrator with your counterparts and your team and of course, being fully accountable for it. I think in most cases the provinces have contributed a significant amount of the funds for the elections that we can from our initial funding.

**Mr WARI EHO'O** - I think one of our problems is after an election is over, we have our people coming because we owe it to them. Some of them provide transport and they have not been paid and many times they put up challenges to the electoral manager because of non-payment of the expenses.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – There is another question if I can interrupt. Who makes the commitment in the first place to obtain those services? Is it the election manager in the Gulf Province or is it you as the PPC or is it the district administrator or is it the steering committee? Who actually makes the commitment to obtain that service on credit? Who commits the state?

**Mr TORE POEVARI** – Chairman, in fact, when we do our program, we involve these service providers like motor vehicle owners, dinghy owners and other services that they provide.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you make the commitment; over and above your budget, you still make that commitment?

**Mr TORE POEVARI** – It's already included in the budget, but when they do the cuttings in the allocations they give, that's where we find these people coming and asking for their payments. And we cannot when there is no money.

They give us to offset the service they provide.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Hang on a minute, in your planning you take these people into consideration. When your money is cut, you don't cut down the services, you continue to obtain their services even though you know you don't have enough money you still do that?

**Mr TORE POEVARI** – Yes!

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is that illegal? I mean how can you commit to pay someone when you don't have the money?

**Mr TORE POEVARI** – It's already in our plan for the actual conduct of the elections.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is that a normal practice for you and election officials?

**Mr TORE POEVARI** – If we miss them out during the actual polling or operations the service providers will not provide service during the election so what we do is even if there is no money coming we still engage them just to get our work done quick.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So on top of the K2 million that you got from the provincial government and the other K930 000 you got from your head office, you still owe money?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** - The Provincial Election Steering Committee decided to help the Provincial Election Manager, especially to build a counting center in Kerema headquarter because we had two centres that were marked out for Kerema and the regional seat. Kikori Open didn't have a counting centre. So out of what the provincial election steering committee assisted through the provincial government, we sort of tried to build a shelter that we could use as a counting centre for Kikori Open

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, fair enough. We appreciate what you did, but back to the question. You said that it was uncoordinated, how do you mean by that? What does building a new centre have to do with the lack of coordination?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – If election manager came back to the Provincial Elections Steering Committee he said this is what I have, I don't have this. I have problem with regards

to budget, when you bring the issue up at the Election Steering Committee meeting. That is why I said it was uncoordinated. He was doing his own thing, PPC was doing his work relying on the police department to give him the money. But he had an issue we all had to address. So if we all had it together at one centre, then we will go out with blessing of the Provincial Election Steering Committee Chairman's signature to advise the Electoral Commission to put in all our resources together; this is our expenditure and this is how we need to go out.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, but the fact that you gave K2 million to the election manager and you gave K2 million to the police. It says to me that there was coordination because you knew they were underfunded on the other side and you provided the resources for them to complete the elections for them and from the report that you have given us you did so quite successfully.

You are probably using the wrong word because I don't see a lack of coordination, you coordinated well, and you knew their needs and you provided for it. So maybe you are trying to tell us something else. Because that doesn't seem to me like a lack of coordination, it looks to me like good coordination. But you want a proper structure, is that what you are saying?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – I would like to recommend a proper structure to be established so that all coordination is done from one centre.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Mr Poevare, we understand that there was a provincial election trust account established. Have you done and submitted your report to the Electoral Commissioner as of today or not yet? It is already ten months.

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman. Yes, we have opened our election trust account for the 2022 National Election. It is the responsibility of the provincial treasurer to submit the report of our provincial election trust account expenditure during the election period to the headquarters. And from that time up until now, I did not check up with him about the status of the report because he has been here in Port Moresby. When I return back I will.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Is there a due date for all the trust accounts report to be back to the headquarters?



**Mr TORE POEVARE** – I did not hear anything.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – You did not have a due date. When do you think you will provide your report because throughout the provinces because the majority have not submitted their reports yet. We are talking about transparency and accountability; you have used close to K4 million for the election. The public wants to know how was the money spent and why are there still outstanding to be paid to service providers and allowances for officials. You need to be accountable. When do you think you will submit that report?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – I will provide the report by the end of this month.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – This month will end in three days. Do you mean the end of May?

**Mr TORE POEVARE** – Yes, the end of May.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – If you do produce it at the end of this month, you will be the first province to submit your report. We urge all the provincial election managers to submit your financial reports. As we know, the Budget provided a lot of money. The provincial governments also helped in the elections. The Police and the Defence Force also received their own budget allocation. The provinces saw the gap and helped.

The country needs to know how much was spent in the 2022 National Elections and how can we do better in the coming election. We urge all the provincial election managers, as well as all the provincial treasury staff to take charge and complete these reports and submit a copy to us before this Committee submits its report in the June-July parliament sitting.

**Hon ELIAS KAPAVORE** – The PEC member said something about people not wanting to register on the common roll. He said there were some people that do not want to have their names on the common roll. We cannot run elections without the common roll because it is very important. What do you recommend for the people to make sure that their names are on the common roll? Do you think that it should be compulsory to have everyone register their names on the common roll in order to participate in the elections?

Nau em olsem volunteri, ol man ilaik putim nem bilong ol, oli putim, and who doesn't, emi laik bilong ol. But when it's election time, they come back and ask why their names are not on the common roll when in the first instance they do not want to register.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Let me clarify. The law says that every voter must be registered but to vote, that is not compulsory.

**Mr POSA TOREA**- Dispela emi olsem, it is an attitude problem with our youths because many times they do not receive government services so they want to receive the services. Yu save em ol mangi yah sapos ol lukim sevis kam lo ples blo ol nau ol bai kam na enroll lo common roll. They will know that the government is looking after them so if a member goes and delivers service to them then they will want to enroll and vote for that member. These are just some of the attitudes voters in the villages portray but for us councilors as the community government we force them to enroll on the common roll but this is what they always tell us.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well, the simple straight forward answer I have for your young people is this, “Sapos yu no putim nem blo yu lo common roll u nonap lo vote so sapos yu no hamamas lo member blo yu na yu laik senisim em go na putim nem lo common roll.” Make sure you are on the electoral roll then you can have a say and change your member if you do not like them.

I think that is the simple advice I can give to your young people; you have one opportunity every five years you want to use that fine but if do not want to use it, it's your choice but do not come and complain after, take the opportunity when it arises.

**Mr POSA TOREA** – They can say that during the common roll updates but when elections come they will come and force to cast their votes. These are issues that we councilors in the villages face every election.

**Mr WARI EHO'O** – If I may come in, I think one of the problems we have in terms of trying to update the common roll is actually having funds that can reach these rural communities so if they are not reached they miss out. When we are trying to update common rolls we must have adequate funding because Gulf Province is an expensive province. An example would be if you a going to build a classroom that is worth K100 000 you will have to

budget for K200 000 to bring to the remotes part of the Gulf, this has always been a problem for us for many years.

The remote area that I was referring to is about five to six hours on a dinghy up the river, it is very narrow and sometimes logs pile up and it is very difficult to go through. People rarely travel up there. So it takes a lot of effort if we really want to improve our electoral common roll we need to reach the remote parts of the province, they are included and they have a say in the elections. Just like what happened last where these people did not cast their votes because no one went up to see them. But even if people went up there they will be told that their names are not on the common roll. It is a full community unable to cast their votes.

So, I think it is really the national and provincial electoral offices to coordinate together to ensure that our people are reached and given the opportunity to cast their votes. If both responsible organizations fail, then we fail the elections.

### **Closing Remarks**

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, sir. Well let me say this in conclusion, there are several provinces that have indicated that they want to take over the management of their rolls – Milne Bay, East New Britain, New Ireland, Northern, definitely East Sepik, and a few other provinces who are not going to leave it to the National Government but they want to take it over and there is already a strong move from many governors. For example, as Governor of East Sepik, I do not want my people to go through what happened in the last election so my province will definitely be taking over this responsibility. This is one of the reasons why I am tasked with this inquiry.

So, I want to say to Gulf Province, that community is your responsibility Mr Administrator, that is my advice to you.

I want to thank you all for participating this afternoon. I'm sure the people from Gulf Province have tuned in to see you give your story about how your elections went.

To the Administrator, I want to commend you for stepping up to support your national agencies to deliver the elections in your province. Compared to some of the other provinces I have heard from, in terms of proportion of contribution, Gulf Province contributed more to your elections than the others.

For example, Milne Bay only contributed half a million while you contributed K3 million. It was because of the Provincial Government's efforts that your elections were successfully concluded. I want to commend you for that, and to say that this are the sort of things you need to do into the future. Because as I said, some provinces only gave K500 000

while you gave K3 million. These are the sort of discrepancies that we want to reconcile as a committee, and that is why Sir Puka Temu said that we want the reports from all election managers from around the country.

May I repeat that, we will be sending a letter out to all the election managers, that we want those reports by the end of May. We want to see a copy of that report and we want to understand the different commitments from the different provinces towards this process.

At some point we want someone to own the elections, right now there is no one to be truly be in charge of and take ownership of the elections. We are just trying to understand what happens what happens with the update of the electoral rolls.

You do it in your respective province, then you send it to Port Moresby, then you have a huge of list of names who get dropped off the list. We've got to prevent those sorts of things from happening, and we've got to plan better, all of those things that you have suggested; start earlier; all those things will come in the report to the committee.

With that, I thank you all and I release you from the hearings.

*Adjourned at 2.23 p.m.*