



Special Parliamentary Committee on 2022 General Elections

21st February – 23rd February 2023

Inquiry held at
National Parliament State Function Room

Inquiry into
2022 General Elections And Elections In General

Committee Members

Honourable Allan Bird – Chairman

Sir Puka Temu – Deputy Chairman

Honourable Robert Naguri – Committee Member

Honourable Jacob Maki – Committee Member

Honourable Keith Iduhu – Committee Member

Honourable Elias Kapavore – Committee Member

Honourable Saki Soloma – Committee Member

Honourable Charlie Benjamin – Committee Member

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DAY ONE

21st February 2023

Transcript

Time: 10am

Venue: State Function Room

In Attendance

Committee Members

Honourable Allan Bird – Chairman

Sir Puka Temu – Deputy Chairman

Honourable Robert Naguri

Honourable Jacob Maki

Witnesses

Mr Simon Sinai – Electoral Commissioner

Mr John Kalamoro – Deputy Electoral Commissioner

Mrs Margret Vagi – Director operations-Electoral Commission

Mr Paul Barker – Director- Institute of National Affairs(INA)

Mr Yauka Liria – Senior Project Officer-Consultative Implementation &
Monitoring Council(CIMC)

Mr David Manning – Commissioner Royal Constabulary PNG

Opening Remarks

Mr CHAIRMAN– Good morning everyone, welcome to the Parliament and its precincts. I like to do things on time. Papua New Guinea time does not apply to some of us. We said to start at 10 o'clock and I am pleased to see that the Electoral Commission is here. You are the most critical to these proceedings.

Before I start, by way of welcome, let me first of all thank the ladies and gentlemen who are here and for those of you listening and watching the proceedings from outside the capital or who might be in parts of Port Moresby and wish to take part in the proceedings over the next few days, you are most welcome to attend. As Chairman, I would like to declare the Public Hearing of the Special Parliamentary Committee into the 2022 General Elections and elections generally, open.

I am the Chairman of the Committee; I am also the Governor of East Sepik. My committee members include, our senior, Member for Abau and the Deputy Chairman, Sir Puka Temu, Honourable Robert Naguri, Member for Bogia, Honourable Jacob Maki, Member for Mul-Baiyer, Honourable Charlie Benjamin, he is indisposed today, he should be joining us later in the day or tomorrow, our committee members who are attending to duties elsewhere but who should be joining us over the course of the proceedings. Honourable Elias Kapavore, Member for Pomio, Honourable Saki Soloma, Member for Okapa, Honourable Steven Pim, Member for Dei Open and Honourable Keith Iduhu, Member for Hiri-Koiari.

This Committee was appointed by this Parliament to inquire into the conduct of the 2022 General Elections but to also look back into past elections and to bring forward some of the learnings that have occurred and that we have not taken note of.

Elections in Papua New Guinea have become very problematic as we know for many reasons. All these problems are home-grown and we need to resolve those problems ourselves. This Committee was appointed to find solutions; we are not here to prosecute people who may have done questionable things during the elections, that is not our job that is the role of the courts.

Our role is to look at the elections and to find potential solutions that we can incorporate to improve future elections. So, I just want to make it clear to the public because many times people do not understand the roles of parliamentary committees.

I think over the last 40-odd years Parliamentary Committees have not functioned in Papua New Guinea so many of us who have been born in the last 30 years are just beginning to learn of one of the other roles of the Parliament which is to have Committees that hold the National Executive Counsel, and the Public Service accountable. We act on behalf of Parliament; we do not act on behalf of the National Government so I just want to make that clear so that Papua New Guineans understand what this process is all about.

Hopefully, in the future, all our Parliamentary Committees will begin to function as they should and the role of Parliament is to hold the Executive Government and its institutions to account.

I believe in the last term of Parliament you have seen some Parliamentary Committees beginning to step up and I am happy to say that this current government is keen to support the work of committees and you will see a lot of our committees begin to function through this

course of Parliament. And, I am hoping that future governments will continue to support Parliament so that it does its constitutional duty.

Several different important entities will be called to seat before the committee, we will be asking questions and the members of the public will also be given the opportunity to contribute. This is the start of the consultations and the inquiry and we will then move to all the provinces.

Let me make it clear that we all understand what the problems are and there will be many that would have felt some sort of injustice during the proceedings of the elections and they may wish to elaborate on that for the committee and we will accept that but we want to look beyond that because we understand what the problems are also. We will provide an opportunity for people to air their grievances but more so we want to find solutions, I think we have complained enough and this is an opportunity for the people of Papua New Guinea and the Parliament to find solutions.

This morning, we will be hearing from the Electoral Commission and I thank the Commissioner and his two deputies who are here to present before the committee. Hopefully, we will have IDEC and if we don't have IDEC then we will look for people to fill in the gap as we go through, of course in the afternoon we got the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary.

I would like to remind everyone that this is a properly constituted parliamentary proceeding so this means that any document provided to the committee and anything that is said before the committee is protected under the privileges of Parliament. I want to make that clear. We all want to hear what is being said so I want to ask those who are attending to put their phones on silent and if you do need to take a phone call then you can step out anytime to do so. There is coffee and tea provided but as people are speaking, I ask that you be respectful, if you disagree with what is being said we will allow you later on to have a say but I ask that you be respectful of all those who are presenting.

Our democracy is not perfect but it is worth protecting, no Papua New Guinean wishes to live under a dictatorship and therefore it is our duty to find ways to make our democracy and our processes of democracy better, not just for us but for our children. This is why I urge all the Public Servants and ordinary citizens who will be appearing before the committee to utilize this committee as we have never had a committee like this since independence to look at elections. We now have one and I want to state very clearly my deepest gratitude the Prime Minister, Honourable James Marape, for agreeing to have this special committee to look at the election, let me put that on the record to improve this fundamental element of our democracy, our elections. All our institutions of state, all our service institution, they are all under pinned by democratic elections.

Every Papua New Guinean must be able to express their democratic right in a free, fair and safe manner. That is why this committee is here, to ensure that subsequent elections guarantee that right for every Papua New Guinean. I thank you all for listening. I now defer to my deputy if he has any comments to say before we proceed with the Electoral Commissioner.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you Chairman, members of the committee, the electoral commissioner and the team, and members of the public and those who are viewing or listening throughout our beautiful country.

Welcome to this important committee's beginning today. Some of you may have heard my comments through the radio last week and I want to reiterate the importance of this important

process that parliament has allowed. I think all of us will agree with the chairman, our prime minister, and the parliament which eventually decided to set up this important parliamentary committee on looking at what happened in the last National General Election and also others before that.

Let me firstly say, that we as a nation actually have never had a failed election. I think that's a commendable action on the part of PNG Electoral Commission, all the officials that always have been involved, our people who enthusiastically participated in voting whichever way but let us also look at the positive side of things. And one thing that I can say with confidence is that as a young democracy we have never failed an election. That's a testament of the vibrancy of our democracy.

I think our challenge emanated from the many commentaries that the last election was probably one of the worst that we have undertaken and therefore, parliament agreed to establish this committee to inquire into why what happened and therefore the important agencies both of state and friends will be asked to come and I'm really happy that we have already attended right on time. 10 o'clock, we have begun and I'm really thankful to the chairman who has started us on time. And also thank you to the Electoral Commissioner and the team, the three directors that are here and those of you who are here. I'm very, very pleased and the last point that I want to raise is for those of you who are listening out there, you may have heard that the written statements that you want to present to the committee, a time limit was given but we want to say that we want you to continue to submit your written requirements, particularly your recommendations.

I think we are all aware of the many issues but we really want to hear what you believe should be the way forward, what are the improvements that we need undertake in the many areas like the common roll, campaigning, voting counting, under the LPV system, how have we experienced LPV system. We've had four elections on LPV system now. Good experiences, 20 years of experience and many of you out there listening and watching, you have many other experiences. Even if you don't come here, hopefully we will see you when we visit the regions in March and April but please continue to submit it. While we have agreed in our discussions was, please if you can submit your written submissions by April, preferably end of March because we would like to record everything and your contribution will be recorded and then the committee will present the report hopefully by June or July so that's the target.

So we would request everyone in this country to please feel free to send in your observations and recommendations to the committee. We can then, at the end of the day say, this is what the people wanted; these are the changes that the people want to see. If we are quick enough, beginning in the LLG elections, or some of the bi-elections, but focussed mainly on the 2027 Elections.

God bless every one of you, and thank you everyone for coming and we look forward to you all participating with the committee. Thank you, Chairman.

PNG Electoral Commission

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you, Sir Puka Temu, Honourable Robert Naguri; do you wish to add anything? Thank you, Members; I will now proceed straight to the Electoral Commission; before you speak, I want to assure you that we are in receipt of your written presentation so I

would ask you to speak broadly on these issues, but particularly focussing on things like the Common Roll which our people are worried about.

As we know, the voter rolls were problematic in these elections and I think in the past elections as well. Speak also about some of the concerns that the public may have heard in relation to things like counting of votes, your logistics, etc which are already in this report, just to focus on what you think. We might all have our views about how the elections should run but you people are the ones that have the most experience about running elections. It's your bread and butter. So, I think, you would be more aware of the potential solutions than perhaps those of us who just come in and participate every five years.

These are the sort of things that I would like to hear from you, and of course, as you do your presentation, I'm expecting that it will be a dynamic event. So, as you present and if members have questions, I would like the members to post those questions to you so that we can improve our understanding of what it is that you are presenting to us. Thank you very much, Commissioner Sinai, I now give you the floor.

Mr SIMON SINAI (Electoral Commissioner) – Thank you, Chairman of the 2022 General Elections Parliamentary Committee, Hon. Allan Bird. Deputy, Sir Puka Temu, and all the honourable members who are members to the committee, the electoral commission staff, public and reporters, and citizens of this country.

Let me at this first day of enquiry, for and on behalf of the Electoral Commission and the good wishes and voters in the provinces and council wards, and as citizens of this country, I would like to thank they government and especially the Chairman, the Deputy and the team, the elected members who have decided to take up the responsibility to enquire into the Elections; how elections have been run and how we need to improvise the elections systems in the country. As we reflect back, as you rightly said, we have never had one of such committee in the past. We have just been running elections.

For me, with the Electoral Commission, as we endure to manage elections in the country, I appreciate that this committee, the Government, the people and some of you, have now come to realise that elections and the democratic process of running elections in the country is far more important, and that now you have come out to help the Electoral Commission and our people to manage the elections in the country as we wish and would like.

I don't wish to dwell any further, but thank you very much for the opportunity that you have given us and to share the things that we have been experiencing, especially from the Electoral Commission so that we can work together towards improvising the process.

As you all know, by law, elections are run every five years. Most importantly, the Electoral Commission is mandated to conduct the elections and do the preparations. Now, trying to get together the operations, conduct and appreciate the democratic election process in the country to give the opportunity to the people right across 6000 plus council wards and local level governments is a mammoth task. And, yes, although it is a mammoth task, it is our responsibility; we've got to manage and deliver the elections as we wish to and decide.

The Electoral Commission's responsibility is to make available the necessary voting powers. The voting power is with the people but getting the voting tools to the people to make their choice or exercise their power. Our goal is to make available a polling team to the people to cast their vote, and that is the call, by law, for the Electoral Commission to do.

There are critical components that are managed within the Electoral Commission, as the Chairman rightly said.

There are some areas of concern that are to be managed by all of us. We are managing two particular sectors of the election process; the external environment that involves the people, and the internal environment where we are managing. Within the internal environment, we need capacity, we need to equip the commission, we need to plan and we need time and resources. The external environment is cooperation; working together and respecting the process. Government systems have to be respected at all times and people take ownership. Those are the main things that we expect from all of us.

The election cycle in the country, as we all know, is few. We conduct awareness, prepare an electoral roll, accept nominations, conduct polling and then we conduct the counting. And the last bit are the election petitions. Those are the main components that the Electoral Commission manages. Very importantly, as the Chairman rightly stated, the electoral roll needs to be fixed and the voter list must be corrected, listed out and get the people prepared to cast their vote. Now, according to law, the Electoral Commission must prepare an electoral roll six months before the next general elections.

So before any other operation can take place the electoral roll must be fixed first and the voting population must be prepared in order to get into elections. Now we have tried many times to update the roll and since election time up till now no perfect roll that we found. We have people living in villages and council wards defined and structured to that level, however, we are finding it very difficult to collect an honest data and it's a big concern now. How do we fix that? Who is the responsible entity, department or the government agencies?

Electoral Commission before any elections like I said six months we need to prepare electoral roll. Now we take it as it is by law and start to prepare budgets and even carry out awareness in various districts, electorates, council wards and LLGs collecting information and trying to identify the 18 years plus and the voters in justifying or qualify them by way of roll cleansing in identifying their names. That process must be conducted before the next election commences.

From previous experience electoral roll is done six months or 1 year prior to the election period commences. And collecting five million electoral data for all the voters in the 6,375 plus council wards and five million voters is tasks and we use the base roll that we have to go and do verification and target all the 17 years old and those who will be turning 18 years old before the next election. And that is our primary task, now we used our existing roll as one of the bases.

If you can remember before the 2012 elections late Sir Andrew Traven, discouraged the old roll because it was faulty. And so he wanted us to create a new one and in order to create that we decided not to depend on information supplied by the agencies but start up fresh by enrolling it commencing from the council wards and list all the voters as our new roll and we maintained that process up till today and we continue to update. Now during the process, we see the differences of some of those voting population does not agree with the number of people in each wards against the roll that we have and its huge. The process that we are using is because Electoral Commission does not have the capacity to reduce to that level to capture the information that we need. Instead, we hire people to do that for us because within the short period of time like six months for instances, and the next election commences.

We preferably hire public servants in the provinces like provincial administration, LLG managers, district administration staff, village court officials, councillors and committees in the ward areas to support us identify the voters for cleansing and enrolling them. That has been the process that we have been using all this time because there is no better way to do any roll. The only way to some extent if you like is need to prepare much more in advance to come up with a better understanding of the real number of people living in a council wards who are voters that need to be enrolled and prepared for the elections.

A short term or few months' work to identify a voter is not a way forward. That is the role and we need enough time. We know the council wards and we are working and basing polling schedules, awareness in team work and identifying the voters. We have a structure that we use, it's just that we need timing to prepare ourselves properly specially to identify voters.

The Papua New Guinea structure is very good; we have LLG, council wards, village court officers and peace officers there and they can help to assist in maintaining the records and we can capitalize on that but we just need to do it properly. But the Electoral Commission is only targeting the voters from 18 years and above. and that is something that we need to do according to the law. Figures coming from the census and from the Office of NID will be what we can use and work together, that will come after, the list is done and by law the Electoral Commission will still have to prepare a common roll based on the information that we gather from those entities and that is if they have a complete and comprehensive data base of the country, otherwise to prepare elections we will still need time to do up the common roll properly.

I appreciate the committee that you have started now and if we can start discussing and doing up the common roll from now, we can talk about looking at something closer to accurate and from this roll we can do verifications and identify the voters properly. For instance, going from village to village, spend 30-60 days and check against the list, confirming and enrolling. After this we have to have a plan to do an awareness where we get voters to come in and check if they are registered on the common roll, in that way we have people who may have missed out on our door to door visits get registered and those who are registered confirm their registration, so we have a periodic check twice or three times a year to make sure the common roll is well updated.

In 3 to 6 months before the elections it is totally impossible as we do not have the capacity in terms of manpower as we only have one or two officers on the ground and we will have a shortfall entirely to update. People may want to discuss about biometric but that can come later as I do not wish to dwell on it because biometric up to this day we have to do some in-depth check, by checking all the systems and how people can trust the system. Everybody must learn to trust the system as to how its outcome will be. We have to know how much time it will take to do awareness and understand the process.

I will not come back to any recommendations here but as we have discussed; we have tested photo-rolling at Kupiano and also in Keasu in Moresby North West, Gerehu.

And we started doing patrol at the Motu-Koita at least trying our best to cut down on some of the unnecessary ghost names to identify the people. So, that's why started doing patrol.

(2) Personal visitation to the villages and house to house survey is the best but we need time. Voter rolling is the next and issuing ID or just one paper card and give it to them, which is the

voter ID. We already have ID for the voters on the roll and that ID will be converted into voter ID and issue it on the time of voting. Those are some of the things that we are expecting to do now.

The second problem that we faced is the logistic. Because we have an attitude problem, we try to manage all those attitudes and we need a lot of things to run the election. We have tried one-day polling in the highlands because we cannot allow for two or three days because of people double voting and fighting. Those are some of things that we wanted to do but logistic issue is very serious in PNG. We don't have the helicopters, ship, and all the vehicle that we need so we hiring them to assist us.

A lot of our places are very remote but if we can plan early and identify those places and create some incentives we can cut down on the logistic aspects.

Mr Chairman, I don't want to dwell to much but we need advance planning on the logistic. PNG don't have helicopters, last election we have never had any helicopter companies willing to assist and I don't want to talk about challenges and negatives.

But when people see that there's trouble fighting during the election many of the companies don't want to lease their helicopters. Do election promise when we go into election and people become rowdy down there, they turn back so how do we get back there. Because of the remoteness, we maybe create some incentive like double the polling officials, carriers and go back to the patrol community government and conduct polling's and increased their allowances or some kind of contract to outsource, we can look at that.

But logistic is real a problem until all our places like West Sepik, Milne Bay, Western, part of Madang, even Central-Goilala, Oro, Western Highland, Hela, Enga and there's a lot of places that road need to link so we can maximize the election operations smoothly, if we like.

But we are doing fine the government's is talking about connecting PNG and eventually will get there but for now is just logistic issues.

But those things we can manage with the resources that we have but identification of all these things and if we are going to outsource it from outside base on basic or specific needs then we will need time to like for instance; if you need a helicopter or companies from Australia to come then we need advance planning and arrangement so that they can come in time and start helping but not later.

All in all, Mr Chairman in 2017 to 2022 we were proposing that we should have a five-year plan for the 2022 General Elections. I've done some plans and submissions and presented to relevant authority but for this case, let's say, for instance in 2023, we should do some planning for the roll and in 2024 we should do some logistic arrangements and then in 2025 and 2026, we should confirm all the logistics and enrolment and finally in 2027, polling and counting should be done. That is the kind of approach we should take.

I thank the Chairman for taking the opportunity to ask this question. We need a lot of time to prepare for a national election.

For the Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) system, all of us have run and participated in an election and we are aware of the good and the bad sides of the LPV system. If you could remember me back in the past elections during the First Past the Post, we had a lot of problems and LPV was incepted to give an opportunity to the people because there were fighting because of one vote so we gave them three (3) chances to cast their votes and that worked very well. It

has cut down on a lot of election violence, but in terms of polling and counting, there is a work load to manage the process. However, I think that the LPV system helped in many ways giving the opportunity and cut down opportunity for the runner ups and cut down on problems and troubles that was faced by the people but we have to go back and start developing the place again. There are different views about this but for Electoral Commission, we have enjoyed trying to manage the LPV system and that we also feel safe with running elections with the LPV system.

For the management issues within the Electoral Commission is just the processes, but for the counting in LPV system, we need a lot of awareness. The people must know the power of these three (3) choices. We had an instance where there was a bill that was going to be presented at the Parliament thinking that there is a different understanding in the LPV system and people say their voting power. People were given the opportunity on double voting by 3 choices and we say no as their single vote is transferred to the rest. These are things that people need to understand as to why the LPV system is and how the power works and transfers from 1st preference to 2nd and 3rd.

Mr Deputy Chairman, I think, we have LPV system many times and a lot of people are getting used to it and in many ways we are applying this system but the idea for the LPV system was to get this person and this person contesting the same area should give the 1st preference to the relative and the 2nd preference to the leader that is preferred and if he does not, then go to the third.

That was the idea to get prepared and majority rule for a leader to be voted in. I think now the approach and the way we are using the LPV system is probably different out there in the field. Those are most important things unless there are some queries or questions that may arise. But our way forward to looking at the enrollment is we need ample time and an advance plan spread out to three years to plan.

With polling we are looking at centralizing it. To elaborate more on centralized polling, is it possible to centralize polling for one electorate in the three LLG's that we have. Meaning this particular LLG goes back to their own chamber areas and conducts polling there and the people from the ward level goes to their location and start casting their votes so we don't spread out the police manpower, stretching out and causing a lot of damages and destruction out there in another polling place when some are doing fine and the other ones are getting into trouble. So instead of doing that we give them an opportunity of thirty days or sixty days is still alright. To allow them to come and cast a vote and we divide them into their council ward areas.

For instance, now with the LLG according to record and the management structure as per LLG, an LLG Manager is managing 14 minimum and maximum 35. We are within the manageable bracket of the LLG and that twenty to thirty thousand population that can come forward to cast a vote in a centralized location and that can be allowed.

Before we do that we issue them with a card, we get them on the portal and with an ID card. When we issue them with an ID card and they come to the centralized location they are free, this environment is locked out by police and the polling team are in there. When the voters get into the polling team and you are free now, no one can see you or intimidate you, you are called in and providing your identity and when identified by the porter roll you are now into the polling place and you cast your vote without having being intimidated or influenced by any factor. Because of the police and everybody there, the LLG there and count there. we tried it

last election 2022 because we had no time so I said go ahead and count LLG by LLG. We tried that because we didn't have the time and now this time we can concentrate on doing it properly.

To get the police to lock up those LLG's, no need to move around, voting time make it our business if we can hire vehicles, whatever way, people come and cast their vote and they go and we lock there and start counting and then we match them and do eliminations.

That's the roll for ID and ward roll a longer period of time to do verifications. Polling centralized polling, present the ID and do the vote. Count by LLG put them together do the elimination for one electorate and for the province same.

So that's the kind of picture that we are imagining now towards the future elections going forward in terms of elections. We are talking real issues now the roll and the polling and counting. The people must take ownership and if we are not going to change we are going to change the system. If we are going to change the system, they have to come to the centralized location if you are spoiling the ballot box there.

So what do you expect me to do? I bring the ballot boxes and papers to you. You come to the location and you cast your vote there. We must put some control into the system and control the elections. Instead of leaving it loose and they can have easy access to the ballot boxes and causing trouble.

For this election, there was not enough police man-power. We have to concentrate from district to district, and allocate police officers there and the surrounding areas so they can concentrate there.

Firstly, before they do that, the voters need to be properly identified so that they are aligned to council wards, and they can then be called by their names to cast their votes. The police will then be able to take control of the environment so that we can freely count. There will be less issues that can be controlled to some minimum level.

Mr CHAIRMAN – You have done a significant presentation. I am really happy to hear you as the Electoral Commissioner, speak very candidly about the issues that you faced. Obviously, from the way that I listened to you, a lot of the issues are caused by us. You are trying to manage the process but when it runs away from you because of expectations from the voters, candidates and everyone else, I can see your frustration.

I am happy to note that you are willing to explore and embrace some changes. Let me commend you on that. Let me start with some other questions. I was really happy with your last comment. In engineering, we say that you try to fix someone's attitude and if you can't, you bring in a mechanical solution, which means you hard-wire it. You try to deal with the attitude issues by locking out the attitude.

Things like centralised polling sounds like a good idea. If our voters are going to be difficult and resort to bad behaviour in order to get their results. Then, the idea of having a central polling booth with machine guns and everything else to protect the voting system, doesn't sound too farfetched. If that is what's going to take to allow our people to have one vote each to make it free and fair. If it's going to be cheap enough to do with armoured vehicles, then perhaps, that is what we are going to do to protect our democracy.

It's refreshing that you as the Electoral Commissioner is telling us about the difficulties that you encounter, like difficult voters and candidates. We have been thinking of you unfairly. I as the Chairman, I was happy to hear you mentioned the issue of trust. Our people need to trust the process and given the many breakdowns, the trust element is currently missing. When it's missing from the electoral process, it's missing from every other state institution. It is important that we restore that.

Coming back to the voter rolls, you said you are not able to trust the data. When you are collecting the data from the ward members, you admit that there is a level of dishonesty in that data and that creates problems for you. You also said that if you could go back and check it two or three times, the cost involved will be astronomical. As a member of Parliament, I can say that you will not get the money. If you have to continuously go back and check dishonest data. That is a bad starting point.

I wanted to also ask about things like NID. They have only one fingerprint record. The same person cannot have five different NID cards. I know the law doesn't allow it. But if the State was able to provide a mechanism, where we can have one individual identifier for one person. Would the Electoral Commission be willing to use that for electoral purpose? The way that you talked about the electoral roll, going back to when Late Andrew Trawen was involved, this tells me that the problem stretches back 25 years.

So we are not going to fix it doing it the same way. You can't trust the LLG Manager to do the right thing if he supports one candidate and decides to add another three thousand voters into a particular village that has only a population of five hundred so this is the sort of thing. How do we build integrity into the system if we're not going to; coming back to the point of, hard wiring it. Should we move to fingerprints for instance in order to identify a voter because I think, that's the thing, if we're going to guarantee women the vote, for example; many women are complaining. They say that when they turn up somebody else has already voted for them using the common roll. Now, how do we allow it so that these women can actually get the chance to vote? Or you know, those who are not so strong, or weak in our community. How do we guarantee them, the vulnerable people so that their votes are brought in to count? So, these are the sort of things I wanted to ask you. Would you be willing if there was a hard-wired solution? Whether it's a fingerprint or so that's the other point, see, in my village in the last election, I think 20 percent of the people couldn't vote. They were on the roll previously. Someone adjusted the roll, they fell off. In one part of East Sepik, they got angry and smashed the ballot box. Not because they supported a certain candidate, but because they could not vote, they were not on the roll. So, to me, coming back to that, I think that is the lowest common denominator of the elections, is the common roll. So would you be willing to explore hard solutions? And by hard solution I mean a fingerprint coupled with your idea about a centralized polling station?

So yu tok stret ya, yu karim olgeta supporter blo yu, hamaspla kar kam line up, we do that for campaigns anyway, we bring all our supporters to a central location. You know, if you have to bring all your voters there and they all come line up and fingerprint, fingerprint and vote, vote, vote. Why can't we do that? But it comes back to the voter roll. So, what are you willing to do as the Commissioner? What would you be willing to accept as a fix for the Common Roll? Because I put it to you, you're not going to fix it the same way you've been doing it for the last 25 years. That's already failed us many times and you know that. From your own words, you cannot trust the LLG manager and the Ward Member to give you honest data. So how do we ensure that you get an honest common roll? an honest photo roll Commissioner?

Mr. SIMON SINAI – Thank you Chairman. The voter roll, that's the same thing I'm referring to now the fingerprint. We did that in Kupiano and Motu Koita so finger prints and photo roll has been tested and we have produced a roll for Kupiano Ward 5 and it worked. We came back after the test run and we did the submission. We went to Loloata, spent some time there and came up with 5 models starting from bio metrics. Biometric is a big name but you know, computer system or hard drive system.

After testing that and we made a submission and you would remember with me that we submitted that to NEC to Chief Secretary and they formed a committee and the budget was K311million for the whole pack of identity, finger print and photo roll. It goes together and then we can also issue ID card. We did that. We tested all of them and we got the NID office to work with us. We went as a team to Sir Puka's place and we did that because NID has detailed information. Ours is just short cut so we tried to identify those ones and they've adjusted some of those...

Mr CHAIRMAN– Can I just come in? I mean, as you know, the government has spent, I don't know, K100million, K200million, K300million whatever, on NID. My numbers are not up to date on that one. Is it possible for you to just utilize that instead of us spending another K300million to go and, in essence repeat the same exercise again? What is preventing you? Just say the government spent another hundred million Kina and complete the NID. Would you be willing to utilize that information? Assuming we fix all the things in NID anyway.

Mr SIMON SINAI – That's the missing thing we are looking for right now, Electoral Commission and everybody else. We need the identity of a person. So when the NID card is placed, what I am saying is as we are going into NID, the answer is yes. We can use NID, it is the thing we are looking for to identify a person and they have identified that already so we convert that using the provisions of the Organic Law to make it a roll, that is possible. When the NID in the five to ten years' time the NID roll should be rolled out and all the citizens if they are identified we will have no issue with that, so we can work with them. That is why we went together to Kupiano. They also attended our workshop at 17-mile to work together to get the identification on the NID. Our operation is to do identification of the voters. When a voter is identified and the age group that we wish to see, it is because of the organic law. Just to comply with the organic law but, identification of a citizen is a must that a country needs all of us feed on that information. I wish now the NID system is in placed already so that we have no issues, this is what we are looking for. While we are going into preparations now before the NID is, how soon they are going to complete it and all of that we are doing our own plans going forward.

Honourable JACOB MAKI – Can I intervene please? Commissioner thank you for your well prepared presentation. We are the people here now; we will change it. Thank you for the groups here, from the Electoral Commission, Chairman, Deputy Chairman, and the Members. We are trying to fix a problem that Papua New Guinea has created. You are discharging the roles and laws and rules regulated by the Electoral Commission, putting it to the floor and then we create our own electoral rules in our areas. Coastal people created their own, Highlands people created their own so that is where we caused a lot of problem during our elections. I stayed in Madang I went to Highlands and I experienced a lot. So, as a former policeman I have seen it I have observed that and then now we are here to discuss and then come to solutions that we can fix it amicably. Thanks again for the well presentation, I accept that and got more things to talk, but especially, I would like to talk more on this ID.

Identity election process, I have put something on the News Paper on Friday, may be some of you might have sighted it. Because I am more a bit interested on this particular one. So nau mipela toktok em mipela toktok long dispela, so yu toktok long ID na Central location voting place na ol dispela em moa isi, em i gutpela. But mi laik askim yu, yu bai ok olsem how long bai yu putim wanpela month, a month worthy could be okay, because the policemen will be there, will be taking guard, taking control of that particular voting place. Like in a district, in an electorate there are two – three district made up one electorate. So policemen bai stap long wanpela central location na bai lukautim ol man, ballot box na ol electoral officials. Ol bai stap long same place nau so ol man meri i ken i go i kam vot usim NID cards. Em i gutpela idea, taim yumi putim ol man i go, na police manpower i sot, yumi usim ol Reserve, ol Army em ol go long sampela hap ol attendim, sampela ol i no go na ol boxes i go lus long namel. Ol pulim i go.

Bihain pait kirap, ol ino pinism polling so, mipela putim polis man, ol security personnel, we put them in one place, they can come in and vote using the ID card. We give them ample time. One-day polling is causing us a big problem. There are rules and regulations being created at home. The candidates are creating it, supporters are creating it, everybody down the line, they are creating their own avenues to cast coted for a particular candidate. So what you are putting across now, Commissioner, I respect that. You extend the time, one month elections or two to three week elections so that people come all over, that the supporters, so how they bring them, they bring them with their ID cards. So they can come and cast their votes in one central location which serves everything. Like, if you have three districts, you send Policemen and electoral officers to each district to conduct elections within a time length of two to three weeks.

The other thing, I noted, is the election nomination fees, we should all talk about these things so that we can come up with solutions and move forward. We are representing the parliament, you are representing Electoral Commission and the observers who are in attendance represent the public. So this is the place where yumi toktok na displa ol toktok iken kamap law na bai mipela presentism. Yu putim nomination fee blo general elections, mi lukim yu putim lo hia em K5000. Mi olsem memba tu, mi bai toktok on behalf of yu but, mi ting olsem K10, 000 should be okay. K2000 for LLG Councils em orait. Yumi tingim kainkain man na yumi tok democratic rights na yumi putim go olsem na kainkain samting kamap na planti samting kamap tu. That's what mi putim kam long yu so yumi olgeta toktok na bai yumi mekim ol displa samting kamap. Planti hevi tru kamap and planti ol samting kamap em mipela ino stretim yet. Bifo ol samting bin kamap long ol election mipela ino bin fixim yet. Nau mipela kam lo nupela samting so mipela laik stretim bblong 2027 Election mas kamap gut. Olgeta man mas vote. Olgeta man mas satisfied.

Common Roll at this stage now, common roll updates is not done properly. So I just want to give an example, I have witnessed that in some places that people voted, the total population was around 1200, the ballot papers issued were less than 1200. They were given 700 ballot papers and they couldn't do anything. I witnessed them distributing the ballot papers. Ol countim na tok 15 go lo dispel hap ya, 20 go long displa hap ya, 30 go lo dispel hap ya because ol tok, sapos yumi tokim ol long vote, ol bai fait. Ol tok olsem na mi lukim ol countim. Na mi toktok emo l bai paitim mi so mi ronowe go. I have seen it happen. So we have to fix that. Mipela ol lain mipela stap lo hia yah, mipela makim maus blo Parliament, makim maus blo Electoral commission na ol Public so yumi mas toktok na fixim dispela.

Mi intervene lo taim blo em lo ID voting. You have any plan on implementing ID voting? Mi putim olsem so mipela olgeta ken save whether em orait or nogat. So then we can go further on this.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– Thank you, Commissioner Sinai and Deputy Kalamoro and Director, Mrs Vagi. The issue that you have raised as I understand it is timing. But you and I know Commissioner Sinai that we have elections every five years. What happened? Can you tell us what happened and you are telling us, you did not have time? But you knew and everybody knew that we were going to have the election in 2022, after 2017

This was not the first election we have been having elections for a long time, 48 years of Independence. Now what happened? Why are you telling us that you did not have time? Obviously, the conscience of that is that you are preparing for 2027 this year, you don't wait. That is just an issue I wanted to raise. Now, I am coming back to the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission's constitutionally mandated role that you are the only body that carry out elections in this country.

You are telling the committee you did not have time, that has to be explained to us. What actually happened? When you basically alluded to the fact that all of us must have responsibility, I have been saying to myself because I have gone through a total of six elections, including one bi-election in 2002 and the LPV System was used as a guinea pigged on my bi-election 2003 in Abau.

My observation is that I do not think that the Electoral Commission and other partners have been able to do and carryout major awareness. You may be making awareness on the LPV System or on the right quality of leaders to vote for. This question is alluding to the fact that, "Sapos yupla no senis em Elektrol Komisen bai wokim wanem", I did not hear any awareness on for example; If the Electoral Commission see that yupla vote lo ol tribe bai mi declarim displa eleksen failed or sapos yupla kukim box yupla gat pawa lo declarim displa eleksen failed because yupla no bihainim law. I did not hear anything and therefore as a conscience what I did not see was that every issue that was brought to the Electoral Commission was told to wait until the Court of Disputed Returns but the issue has to be solved during the polling and counting period.

I believe that you have a lot of powers given to you, you have got a Constitutional Law which created the Electoral Commission. You and I know that we are not going to perfect the Common Role and the ID System by 2027, unless we make a big commitment by allocate you the right level of funding to achieve some of the recommendations that we will come up with but we will try our very best.

Now, on the preparation to the election, the Common Roll is a big issue and one area that the awareness is lacking. We failed to manage those who claimed that they actually voted last Election and why their names were not on the Common Role this time. How can you allow that individual citizen who has the right under the Constitution to vote to be sent away? Did you not train your Returning Officers (RO's) and Election Managers on the ground to manage a process where –

How can we confirm your identification? Can the Pastor, or Ward Member identify you. What process can we take so that legally, you are the right person without being on the common roll without an NID. Reading your comments here you are alluding to that. Why didn't we do that type of thing? In some instance 20 percent and 50 percent were sent away because their names

were not on the common roll. Those are some of the issues and I want you to comment on those issues because we are looking at a solution.

My view, Commissioner Sinai is that I don't trust the common roll anymore, for example, in the last common roll we used politicians called Ward Members to be in charge of the updating of the common roll, that got me worried. My experience in the last election was those people who were assigned to go to the ward to do the update, came asking me for fuel money to go and update the common roll saying, "we are your voters, so we will make sure your voters are all on the common roll". I said sorry, I am not going to give any money and I am not going to follow your advice. You are a public servant and I don't work with corrupt public servants and so I chased them out of my house and they never came back. Those are the types of things. So in my opinion I want us to find a new solution. I don't think we should be really talking about the common roll here. Your views on the Kupiano experience, I fully supported the Kupiano program because I think that is the way forward and our challenge as we all know is the processes where there to identify the funding, we did not process the funding that was required.

Mr Commissioner, we have a problem with the common roll and we have to find a solution. You propose a solution. Awareness to me is a big issue because I think we are not carrying out awareness on what the law requires and the powers that you have. On the preparations, people know who they want to vote for and they know how to vote now. Our problem is when they turn up at voting booths they are turned away and in many parts of the regions we all know things have not worked out very well, we had big issues with cultures. How do we manage that? We really have to find some solutions and I am calling again once more for people to come forward and bring whatever you believe is the way forward. I was a strong supporter of the NID program but I thought that we would have sufficient time and conclude the NID process so that 2022 Elections were going to be based on that but we didn't have time.

There are obviously IT opportunities we have now and we can harness cheap and more effectively manage and maintain the systems. I am just focusing on preparations I think we did not have time. I understand the politics that came during that 2017 and 2022 where we had a lot of vote of no confidence issues etcetera and you were appointed later in the process. But the PNG Electoral Commission is an institution despite the politics the deputy and directors are there and they should have all prepared all this way before the 2022 Elections.

Some of us were very worried that, why have we left things too late? Why have the Common Roll preparations come out very late again, like in 2027? We much not repeat that. The committee will make very strong recommendations after these consultations. I got a few others on the other areas but I will leave them for the time being. I will allow the other members to ask questions.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Perhaps you can respond first and then we'll.

Mr SIMON SINAI – We will get a team here; you are rightly emphasising some of the things that we all know about and we are all part of.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Perhaps Mr Kalamaro would like to respond, because I see you jumping at the beat there.

Mr JOHN KALAMORO – Thank you Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, and members of the Committee. In responds generally to the questions raised; yes, there is an election law that specifies elections cycle as five years in Papua New Guinea. The LLG Elections concurrently runs with that; which we have never done. Now most of the preparations for Elections, and the conduct of Elections, happen in the provinces. They do not happen within the Electoral Commission here in Port Moresby.

Hence, we require a lot of resources to penetrate into all the remote villages to identify them, and to correctly enrol each individual voter. And as the Commissioner has stated, that is a big job, which requires consistent, adequate, timely funds. Despite the law of five years, we are given a year to prepare, in all elections, which is quite inadequate. So, saying, why you have five years, and you have so much experience: yes, we do but that is the sad truth.

In 2022, we started asking for funds in 2019 for the roll. In 2020, we got nothing, in 2021 we again got nothing. In 2022, some funds came around October 2021.

(Interjection)

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – How much did you ask for and how much did you get?

Mr JOHN KALAMORO – We got K40 million, then the financial system crashed, so no one had access to money until February 2022.

(Interjection)

Mr CHAIRMAN – So in a sense there was no time to update the roll.

Mr JOHN KALAMORO – Essentially so Mr Chairman. Simply, the process couldn't be carried out in full, roll update, roll display, as to say, build some trust in the communities; that could not happen.

Mr CHAIRMAN – If I may ask; I don't understand your process and I suppose, generally, most Papua New Guineans don't. Say you want money and you want it in 2019; who does your proposal go to?

Mr JOHN KALAMORO – Sir the proposal we do is guided by the annual budget process. So that's done annually, so our submission goes to the Department of Treasury, normally.

Mr CHAIRMAN– What about CACC? Does CACC have a say because I would assume that as a public service, it should be taking ownership of this. Does the CACC Chief Secretary, or your big five; do they have an input or do they step in and support?

Mr JOHN KALAMORO – The inclusion of IDEC was to help assist with that process of negotiations and –

(Interjection)

Mr CHAIRMAN– Did IDEC help?

Mr JOHN KALAMORO – IDEC actually came in quite late...

Mr CHAIRMAN) – How late?

Mr JOHN KALAMORO – very late

Mr CHAIRMAN– 2022?

Mr JOHN KALAMORO – Yes, 2022; for example, Electoral Commission could not procure the ballot papers in 2021; Electoral Commission could not procure indelible ink in 2021. We could not even procure the helicopters

The Australian Government funded the ballot papers and the Indian Government funded the ink.

Mr CHAIRMAN – That’s a very shameful thing that you are telling the whole country.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So, Deputy Commissioner, you think the problem is because we have a highly centralised system? Everything is done here through the Commissioner and yourself. The structure of the Electoral Commission – I see what you are saying but the Minister responsible for PNGEC is the Prime Minister. It is under the Prime Minister’s ministerial determinations and so you report directly to the Prime Minister. But your comments on the current structure, we seem to be struggling with the current structure where you have to go to Waigani and you have to go through the IDEC, which was lately formed, I’m sure the Prime Minister’s office was informed, the Treasurer also was informed, but nothing happened.

Mr CHAIRMAN– Let me put it another way. In your experience, given the most recent one, how were your submissions received by the various agencies. Was it given top priority, medium priority or just sort of tossed into the paper basket sitting near the desk? How was it treated?

Mr JOHN KALAMORO – I cannot speak for them. I guess they have their own processes but –

Mr CHAIRMAN – I’m asking you to be honest here because obviously bai yu kaikai wanpela buai wantaim ol na yupela stori na kain olsem. Be candid with us, we’re not here to protect anyone. We want to fix the system, sir.

Mr JOHN KALAMORO – The budget process is there and we simply follow that. And if we are successful or otherwise, we can talk to them, which we do given the priority of elections two years down the line, but it is an entirely different process.

Mr CHAIRMAN – As a fix, obviously, I don’t want to dwell on the issue, would you be willing to submit to this committee to form part of the recommendations, a timeline of when you would expect your funding, so that we could include it in a set of recommendations to Parliament. So, when Parliament adopts the report, we force Treasury and other agencies to begin the funding in a timely manner that would suit your schedule. Are you able to give us that, sir?

Mr JOHN KALAMORO – Yes, Chairman. In the submission before your committee, we’ve looked at different arrangements– with the roll as a key priority – as a continuous process

within the five-year cycle as opposed to two years, which is already very short. And I see the element of trust between the communities, the Electoral Commission and the wider society as something we need to build over that period of time rather than in a very short space of time when a lot of questions are still being asked. And I am happy that the opportunity is here now to see if we can address that.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Honourable Naguri.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Thank you, Chairman, for giving me this opportunity to ask a few questions to the Commissioner.

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Honourable Maki. I want to go through this as a question and answer session. You answer then I ask the next question. There are about three issues I need to raise with the Commissioner.

The ultimate aim of the Government and the nation is to have free, fair and safe elections and you are the person that is in charge to deliver that, is that right?

Mr SIMON SIA – Yes.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Whatever happens in South Fly, in North Bougainville, Samarai-Murua and Tari must be uniform, it must be the same. That's how elections are conducted, would you agree with me?

Mr ALLAN BIRD (Chairman) – Could I have a verbal answer please.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Would you agree with me?

Mr SIMON SINAI – Yes!

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – OK! We all know that elections in PNG are not conducted in that manner and that's the fact. We have areas where one person to two ballot papers; one open and one regional ballot papers, we have areas where we have one person to 300 to 400 ballot papers and we all know that and that's the fact. So, there is two different kinds of elections and in every election, it's happening and we shouldn't push this under the carpet. We should talk about these issues openly. Would you agree with me Mr Commissioner?

Mr SIMON SINAI – Yes!

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Thankyou, in my electorate in Bogia in the last election we had to vote with one ballot box each for regional and open, one ballot box. I don't know whether that happened in any parts of the PNG in any ward area or polling station. Would you advise the Committee and the public if everywhere in PNG everyone voted with two ballot boxes, one regional and one open? Or there are places where they voted with one ballot box both open and regional into one box? Did that happen only in Bogia or everywhere else in other places to your knowledge?

Mr SIMON SINAI – I think we have given opportunity to manage this as to how they can manage in their provinces by given the geo-sets and the difficulties that they faced. One box was the option but some other provinces they wanted two boxes.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Thank you Commissioner, now you are talking about centralising polling stations in the future to avoid all these law-and-order issues, which I agree with you. In your reports you know very well in which areas are problematic and which areas are free, fair and safe elections conducted. My opinion is that in the future if you want to centralise polling stations you might want to look at areas where we faced with law-and-order issues. And areas where we don't face serious law and order issues let us follow the normal use of polling team going to each area, because already now we have two different kinds of elections, one person with two ballot papers; one open and one regional and we have areas where they are voting with one person to 200 to 300 ballot papers and that's the fact that everyone knows. So, in the future you want to do centralise polling stations. We might want to look at each area separately because some of our areas we don't have issues at all.

In Bogia we voted without presence of police personnel and everyone voted freely. So, you might want to look at each area separately in that regard. Now the other thing that I know and heard Members of Parliament raising this on the Floor of Parliament before the elections is that there are wards that have two or three different common rolls produced in your department. Are you aware of these issues such as duplicated common rolls and some are normal ones coming out from your department? That's the knowledge that public knows about it. Are you aware of these issues from your department, Electoral Commission?

Mr SIMON SINAI – We are not and before we release our roll we certify by signing and stamp it before its circulated and its done in council wards so we are accountable for it.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – So there is no way you will have duplicate rolls flying around in the hands of the public.

Mr SIMON SINAI – No,

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – So you are not aware of that, my final point is on funding. Would you agree with me if this Committee decides in future elections that instead of the National Government paying you all the money to manage an election. What about giving the monies to individual's provinces to conduct their own elections and you oversee or supervise it here, what would be your thoughts on this recommendation?

Mr SIMON SINAI – It's not an issue because the budget comes from the province; this is not an issue.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI– In this instance they give you K300 million instead of giving everything to you; let us break it up and give it to each province so that they can manage because already in the last election several provincial governments had to put money upfront to run their own elections.

If you agree this committee will recommend to the Government that we should look into each province managing their own elections and you oversee the whole operation. Would you agree with that?

Mr SIMON SINAI – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What is the total number of staff employed by the Electoral Commission?

Mr SIMON SINAI – 104 most likely.

Mr CHAIRMAN – 104?

Mr SIMON SINAI – Yes

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– In the report you had said that with that staffing level you cannot manage every election. And in the report that you have submitted to us; you have made some recommendations and one of them that I have read is that perhaps the Election managers, the Returning Officers at the provincial level could be by law made to be permanent staff of the Electoral Commission; is that right and have I read it correctly.

Mr JOHN KALAMORO – Mr Deputy Chair; let me clarify that point. Election Managers are permanent staff of the Electoral Commission but for the purpose of common roll update, they need to be made delegated authority to be returning officers to update the roll. For continuous purpose over the five years, they should be made or given that power by law so it's not questionable and they do not have that power under the law.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - They do not have that power and given that you do not have enough staff, your role has always been that utilizing public servants which is under the law, to call them up on for elections; what process do you go through to appoint provincial election managers, returning officers, and polling officials? Have you got a clear-cut process?

Mr SIMON SINAI - There is a process of engaging officials, we sign agreements and contract. They actually show interest and apply. Also, the Provincial Election Steering Committee makes recommendations to us to say, these are the people who are identified within the public service in the province.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - Some experiences show that some candidates say that that particular Returning Officer is a supporter of this candidate and they recommend to you to change them during the process. With that Commissioner Sinai, did you watch the Bougainville Referendum Election closely and carefully? What lessons do you think you may have learnt from this election that we hosted? In terms of its preparation and its efficiency, it was outsourced and an outside authority was established. What lessons do you think we as a nation could learn from the Bougainville experience in the election process, administration and management.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Any of you can respond if commissioner Sinai is taking his time.

Mr JOHN KALAMORO – Let me make some clarifications; there are two different sets of organic law; one for the Bougainville Election and one for us, but in terms of the operations, one of which is in our recommendations is for the enrollment forms, so we can accommodate both Bougainville and Papua New Guinea as part of our national elections. In terms of procedural arrangements, we have actually incorporated a lot of lessons from Bougainville in terms of building trust at the community level.

As you have rightly said people there like the enrolment agents, the ward committees, they could look at the roll and supervise the roll as well as carryout additional task of awareness for example; which is very critical.

So, we've got that from the referendum here accept that we wouldn't applied that consistently across the country for 2022 given the timing and resourcing but otherwise, I think we could have done something more substantial to build the trust.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Now I am looking at the way forward in future for example; the Referendum Commission was separately established. I am looking at for example; can it be possible in future rather than the Electoral Commission actually managing a particular election in 2027, that we outsource this through public tender and competent bodies apply for it.

So, we have public tendering process where a competent body regional or globally comes and administers the entire election for that year, it may not be the same for another year given that we have capacity issues, wantok system is very rife and etcetera.

I for one admire the way the Bougainville referendum structure was. So, we have outsiders coming and managing it. Can that be an option? That's the observation that I thought rather than building up the Electoral Commission because of the numbers of levels of funding which are limitations. Can there be a possibility? Can you recommend that, we could have for the next election, we prepare next year after the report is submitted. We go for public tender so that a competent body in the region applies for it through a bidding process and we give them that responsibility under your supervision.

Can that be an option?

Mr SIMON SINAI – I have observed the Australia-New Zealand elections and the outsourcing concept is good in terms of logistics, human resource management training component within the commission they outsourced it to certain specific specialized people.

In terms of running election, we will now visit the law to see if that can be possible, it's not a bad idea, we just need to consult the law. Like you said, the Electoral Commission is the established constitutional office mandated to run election so can that be outsourced to someone to do it, we just need to check on that.

Otherwise, I was thinking like LLG by LLG or electorate by electorate people can do it because actually people are linking their association in PNG's. We have contacts and link to certain people so, we can do that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – My last question of this committee hearings. Commissioner as you said under Section 126, Subsection C of the Constitution. It gives you very clear powers and I quote, 'PNG Electoral Commission is not subject to direction or control by any person or by any authority'.

It means that you have the constitutional power to exercise that authority, however, the experience has been that some people interfere to determine your election managers, polling officials and returning officers. They recommend that you change him and move him there and there.

Or they recommend that you change the date of the issue of writs, they influence you.

Mr Commissioner, the reality is that during the election, the two arms of the governments out of the three are out, the executive and the legislative. The only arm that is in operation is the judiciary and, in that process, my strong view consistent with the powers granted you by this section that I have quoted, we should allow the executive and the legislature as lamed dux during the election. That means, in the 5 months of your operation in conducting the national election that you as the constitutional body take charge for that 5 months.

The executive should never make and executive directions during that period on anything. Nobody will have any power to come to and say changim dispela election manager na dispela returning officer. You don't listen to anybody because you got a power granted to you by Section 126 (c) of the Constitution.

Tell us your experience while you were appointed the Electoral Commissioner to manage the 2022 National General Elections. Was there any interference?

Mr SIMON SINAI – Actually, interference in terms of dictating to me to do anything of this is no. I was consciously trying to manage the elections because within the short period of time, I was given the responsibility in 3 months and funds were allocated so that was a challenge.

Mr CHAIRMAN– Let me intervene. I'm aware that in my province, two district returning officers were replaced. Now, I'm also aware that the Members of Parliament were involved in objecting and getting replacements. So, I think this continues from what the Deputy Chairman is asking. Would you regard that as interference or not and if it is interference, without considering that the person you have originally appointed could have been corrupted or whatever, would you agree that that is interference and is it usual for sitting Members of Parliament to influence the Electoral Commission to change an appointment?

Mr SIMON SINAI – What we are doing is managing the process and the appointments are made through a process like PAC and its recommendations like I said, the public servants on the grounds are recommended by the district and the provincial administrators. So, in the headquarter, we have limited knowledge of the people on the ground. So, the processes are that they have complaints and they are following the procedures by saying this officer is involving in corrupt practices so they make recommendations.

Mr CHAIRMAN– – So, what you are saying is you have a process for an objection?

Mr SIMON SINAI – Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN– Okay.

Mr SIMON SINAI – They write and object.

Mr CHAIRMAN– – Who can write and object?

Mr SIMON SINAI – The Provincial Election Steering Committee and the Election Advisor.

Mr CHAIRMAN– – In this case, certainly in the East Sepik case, the provincial election steering committee never objected to the appointments. The objection was done by the sitting Members of Parliament. Is that usual?

Mr SIMON SINAI – That should not be the case because we received letters returned and signed by provincial administration because we are engaging their staff not our staff. So we follow and for the good of the elections we thought that those were the recommendations made to us.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So you are saying you are not subject to outside influence

Mr SIMON SINAI – We have a system that’s not directly talking to us but if they are playing some influence within the system. It could have happened but when it reached

Mr CHAIRMAN – So how much control do you have over these appointments. Because again this is critical, if a list is published that says these are your returning officers and then suddenly two weeks before the election or a week before one of them is replaced by someone else is appointed that is going to create a mistrust and consignment and agitation amongst the candidates. Would it not?

Mr SIMON SINAI – That not only comes from the candidates or the members but from a respected person in the provincial administration.

Mr CHAIRMAN – what I can assure you is that I had objection from the steering committee as well to these changes that were made by your office. The provincial election steering committee did not agree to them, did not recommend them but the changes came from your office. What would you say to that? And continuing on from what the Deputy Chairman has asked. How often do these things happen? If it’s happened in two districts in my province.

Mr SIMON SINAI – It happens everywhere, but in the last minute they are probably working with people that I don’t know. But we are communicating with the provincial administration and certain people who are managing the province.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Is that wrong, is it wrong for someone to come in and say that at a level below you have a returning officer replaced.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– He is questioning your process basically

Mr CHAIRMAN – Yeah, I’m questioning your process

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You did not follow the process, you appointed somebody else and somebody else is agreeing

Mr CHAIRMAN – We were talking about gaining the trust of the people, that’s what this whole process is about and I want to know, because for me personally I will not interfere in processes, I don’t do that. But there are people within our community, as you said ol man e gat attitude problem.

So some people will stop at nothing to abuse our systems to get what they want and I need to know. Let’s just say I’m not a member of parliament, let’s just say I’m a person in the community and I’m curious to how these processes can be stacked to help certain individuals. how do you prevent that? I know I’m putting you on the spot so maybe I’ll ask Mr Kalamoro because you looking at me a little bit funny. Na yu blo Manus too so maybe you can speak.

Mr JOHN KALAMORO – Thank you Chairman, as the Commissioner has said there is a process of appointments and we have

Mr CHAIRMAN– And also a process for objection

Mr JOHN KALAMORO – Yes. Now we have in the provinces, the provincial election steering committee. Now let me qualify it. We have no other staff apart from the Election Manager that is in the province. And for returning officers, we need knowledgeable people

from within the province who understand and know and are able to help us quickly. That we do not have, so the Commissioner delegates that power to the returning officer. Now we are limited by knowledge of those people and we sometimes have to accept what's coming from the province. That's why he said there is this process of consultation and I think that's where some of this communication breaks down but it should be consistently and applied honestly across the country.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Moving forward, are you able to provide to this Committee this process and recommendations. because for me, I come back to this engineering, I want to hard wire the process and if it means you get your funding two years before hand, well I want to hardwire I want a fix. I think the people of Papua New Guinea want a fix so all of the things that we need to do to full proof your system so that nobody interferes.

The whole idea is about it being independent. For example, if we need five commissioners, all of you will be equal. You will all have a vote so that it will not be a one-man decision. I as the Chairman and the Committee, we all want to see this. I want the people of Papua New Guinea to be confident, that the system is working in their favour, not against them. You can include that in your subsequent presentation to the Committee because we will re-call you after this.

I want to follow up with some other questions. There were some concerns by the Executive Government, one of them was based on funding. I am now moving to your administration.

- (1) How much money did you actually receive for the last election?
- (2) Are you able to give me a ball-part figure?
- (3) What was your budget that we passed in Parliament?
- (4) What did you actually receive?
- (5) And, when did you receive it?

Mr SIMON SINAI – Our budget estimates cheque to the Treasury was for K463 million.

Mr CHAIRMAN – How much were you given?

Mr SIMON SINAI – The appropriation that came was K300.11 million to conduct the election. And to date as I speak to you, it is all gone and we still have outstanding.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Did you receive the full K300.11 million?

Mr SIMON SINAI – No. We were a short of K163 million. We only receive K300.11 million.

Mr CHAIRMAN – How much was the appropriation, K300.11 million?

Mr SIMON SINAI – Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Your request was for K463 million?

Mr SIMON SINAI – K463 million.

Mr CHAIRMAN – What you were given was K300.11 million. Of the K300.11 million, did you get it all?

Mr SIMON SINAI – Yes. Thank you.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Your recommendation was for K463 million. The budget approved was K300.11 million.

Mr SIMON SINAI – That is correct, Mr Deputy Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Are you able to provide to the Committee, the full account of how you spent the K300.11 million against the K463 that you requested? I did not see that in this report. Are you able to give that to us?

Mr SIMON SINAI – We will definitely do that in the next few days.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Another follow-up question. One of the things that a lot of candidates complained about was, under what conditions can they stop the polling? *Planti taim, taim ol man pilim olsem samting em ino stret*, they want to stop the polling.

Are they allowed to stop the polling and under what conditions can polling be stopped? *Taim bilong kaunt*, *planti kendidet* wants to stop the counting for whatever reasons.

Is that allowed within your processes? Give us a response, especially *ol kendidet harim stap ya* or people who wants to be candidates in the future.

First of all, can they stop the polling? Is that legal or not? Do they have rights to stop the polling and under what conditions? When the counting is actually going on and candidates are aggrieved, when they feel like something is not right. Under what conditions, can they request that counting be stopped, if it is allowed under your processes? Can you elaborate?

Mr SIMON SINAI – The process in fact is a fair operation that's happening because all of us are participants. They have representatives who are the scrutineers in both polling and counting. The allowance in that particular process is that, the scrutineer raises an issue against the process that the returning officer is behaving and acting within the polling or counting centre. It then becomes something that needs to be resolved as soon as possible within that time. It will then be discussed and resolved. In terms of candidates, they can only come and observe.

Mr CHAIRMAN – That's fine. Let's go to the scrutineers. If the scrutineers are objecting, given that the candidates have given them instructions to object. When a scrutineer is objecting, they are obviously doing it on behalf of the candidate. For instance, there was an objection, either to polling or counting, under what conditions would you allow the process to be either delayed or stopped?

Mr SIMON SINAI – Certain areas where there are concerns raised, need to be assessed and identified and to see the level of concern they are raising.

Most of all, typical of questioning the serial numbers and the ballot box and polling not happening and all of those so the returning officers start making the decisions based on the concerns they are raising.

That candidate directly cannot be allowed to come and stop any of the processes but when the returning officer makes the decision based on their concerns and then they clarify those issues.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, moving on, fair enough. Failing an election. I think in this last election, you failed one election?

Mr SIMON SINAI – Yes only Lagaip-Porgera.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Only Lagaip-Porgera. What conditions do you require to, I guess to tick off, in order to fail an election?

Mr SIMON SINAI – Failing of elections is something that all out destruction happens in an electorate or in a polling. So, there is a lot of problems that happen and affected the whole entire electorate.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So in the case of the two in Morobe, these conditions did not apply?

Mr SIMON SINAI – the case in Morobe and...

Mr CHAIRMAN – And I know one has already had a court decision...

Mr SIMON SINAI – Ok, the Morobe situation was different. I made the decision based on the reports that I received from the returning officer, the election manager and the security personnel on the ground.

And then the elections were in progress and I think the aggrieved party or a candidate according to the report, I see, was not happy with the trend of voting that happened in the past during the polling time and as the ballot boxes is going through the processing of counting now realized that they have not got the vote that they were supposed to get, those are some of the things that people get aggrieved over and for Markham and Kabwum was similar. They planned to destroy the elections because the counting was already done and the figures were posted on. And they see that the one or two boxes that are remaining belong to the incumbent candidate, according to their locality, and so they started destroying them now.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, fair enough. Now moving on. What penalties do we have for people who interfere with electoral processes like burning ballot boxes, destruction of the counting centre, are there any penalties that are imposed? Are they criminal? Or do they come from your office? How does that work?

Mr. SIMON SINAI – Those are acts of violence and can be treated under a separate law but under the Electoral Commission is election offences. Offences are different offences. But this arson and destruction and all of those could be treated as criminal.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Are they treated as criminal? Is someone following up and investigating, arresting individuals?

Mr. SIMON SINAI – I think in Southern Highlands, they did and Markham I've seen some documents coming from the police where they started to do some investigation.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Who would be interested in pursuing these offences to its conclusion? Would it be yourself? Who would be the main complainant?

Mr. SIMON SINAI – Oh yeah well because the process was that we report to the police and the police now set up a team to see the election offences.

Mr CHAIRMAN – In the past, where other electoral offences pursued by your office in terms of investigation, arrest and prosecution?

Mr SIMON SINAI – Oh yeah, reports are reported but not very much of a...

Mr CHAIRMAN – So you've never prosecuted in the past?

Mr. SIMON SINAI – No.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Would there be an interest now given that these incidents are beginning to escalate? Would you be within your powers to pursue legal actions against the individuals?

Mr SIMON SINAI – There were series of offences, destructions and everything related to directly and indirectly but the direct ones were treated as election offences but when we report to certain agencies, we find it very hard to prosecute. Those offenses are getting bigger and bigger.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Precisely. If you are not prosecuting them then who should be?

Mr SIMON SINAI – well we are reporting to the police and police should carry out now to start doing investigations.

Mr CHAIRMAN– My concern is that, when bad behaviour is not penalized then we are simply encouraging more bad behaviours. I want to see someone take ownership of prosecuting electoral offenses and if the police are not going to do it then perhaps we need some kind of recommendations from you. Because again we want to protect the process, we want to assure our people that there is recourse in law or there is an institution I mean. Not only you should be conducting election but you should be interested in protecting the entire integrity of the process. Which includes or should include prosecuting bad practices and illegal practices immediately.

This is now what almost seven or eight months after the conclusion of the elections and you know we should be seeing people behind bars. I mean, as you have said in the case of the two in Morobe province where the losing candidates instigated the violence and there is evidence to that effected. I would assume someone would arrest that candidate and all of their supporters and line them all up in front of a judge, get a conviction and send them where they ought to go. In that way we indicate to all our people that, look we are taking these things seriously and you know you are not going to get away with this. If there is some recommendation from you to this committee that we take to the floor, then I want to see that. Any further questions?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Commissioner Sinai, coming back to the Electoral Commission's structure and the powers that you have. Like what the Chairman has asked we would request that you make a recommendation to the committee on the right structure including perhaps decentralization. The powers that are asked for whether the provincial government should participate in taking charge of the election including budgeting at the Provincial Budget, supplemented by the National Budget and the Districts too with their DDA funds. Because we also have been asked to help too, but sometimes we feel scared why should we help and I am standing again and I am the Chairman and I am approving something for the election to take place. So we need to look at it and make recommendations and from your institutional memory of the commission you really need to come back to us and say what would be the right structure we should have now going forward beginning in 2027.

Another little thing for example is, I think, before is we have provincial governments to conduct LLG elections, why can't we give them back rather than you and have your Commissioner there take responsibilities of provincial electoral commissioner for example. Like what we have with Bougainville has its own provincial electoral commission. We can change constitution to allow for this delegation of powers right to the government on the ground and they will be accountable for the budgeting, accountable for the mass they created in their own provinces during the election.

You know what I mean. So we need to look at the new laws or from the institutional memory of the Commission can you provide us with a set of recommendations including the one that I am personally very passionate of and that is the powers as you as the Commissioner has. Em traipela pawa turu yah. You will never listen to instructions from any Member of Parliament to Change the retaining officer. You will say no you are interfering and the law must allow you to refer that person to be prosecuted. Then if a Member of Parliament is writing to you interfering with the Gazetted Retaining Officer and em i askim yu long senisim and you are going through your so called process. The law must say no interference; I will refer you to be prosecuted. If the Prime Minister of the country is interfering with you.

The powers that you have, couldn't we have the laws change to refer that prime minister to be prosecuted as well. Displa kain samting ya, yumi mas wokim yah, because we have been too slack and too slow in doing these things and we got 48 years, and two years, time it will be 50 years of experience. So Electoral Commission as an institutional body em traipela experience istap but we have been doing the same old things no wonder Albert Einstein called it 'insanity'. We can't change. And so we want the change. We need to look at these new laws that will give you powers because you are the body. If it means getting the right number of people etcetera. So think outside the box. We need to have a smart structure for the 21st century. We are in the digital age now. All these ballot papers maski yah, these ballot boxes maski yah. Too much security cost.

In Abau, I carried them from way up in the mountain and when the soldiers marched up, two of them fell ill and injured their legs so the villagers have to carry them down from the mountain. Our country is not fully covered by roads and we don't have enough helicopters too. So we have to have a structure to accommodate the logistic challenges that you highlighted in your report. The greatest challenge ever is the logistics. So is every other Government service delivery, the greatest challenge is the logistics in this country. Health, education, transportation, etcetera and the election also comes into the logistic challenges but IT is now on. We need to be smarter now.

I want to call upon all the IT expert in the country, our bilateral that are listening in here, come up with a smart IT solution for us so that the next election can be free fair and safe for all of us. And then after the election, the people will trust the leaders, they will respect the Government. That is what the nation needs. That's the spirit that we need to create in this county. So that citizens will be able to say, lida mipela; a votim ya, em nau em lida yah. Ol I votim Prime Minister yah, em, prime minister ol votim yah, mipela respectim decision blo ol lida ya. To me that's the greatest challenge that we are facing all the time so let's move into IT now – digital age. One day, election time, I don't want to carry common roll. I think its 19th Century stuff, we are moving into 21st century.

So Electoral Commission right now Commissioner and Deputy Kalamoro, all of you have the greatest opportunity to make the recommendation that you really want to see to this committee.

Please use the opportunity. Noken givim mipela liklik pepa olsem ya. Bring the evidence, we want to attach it to our report to Parliament. The biggest recommendation I want to see must come from the Electoral Commission, no this five-page report that I have before me. Planti issue istap yah, you haven't covered all of them.

As Deputy Chairman, I want to see a set of 21st century recommendation, legislations, your powers, the structure, budgeting, assurance of financing, preparing. Soon after the election, you are starting again preparing the whole country for election in five years' time. So every year, you need that amount to prepare for that year until the year before the election, you receive the K400 million and you conduct the election.

So I am really looking for IT solution personally, because it will cut down the logistics and security cost etcetera.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you Deputy, those are the closing remarks I think, but before I suspend for lunch, I would like some closing remarks and some commitments as well from the Commissioner. This is your opportunity and as I said in my opening remarks, I expect you to utilise it because there may not be another Special Committee on Elections.

This is an opportunity we have to fix things so Commissioner any closing remarks. And knowing fully well that we will probably call you again at some point in the future.

Mr SIMON SINAI – Thank you Chairman, Deputy Chairman and the team and observers. Like I said, I am very impressed at the earlier time when we started that we have now come to a point that everyone is beginning to realise that the Electoral Commission and the election process of the country to elect our government is important. How the process is managed to make a credible government? Over a time in the past after colonial era we have never seen, we have adopted colonial era time and systems. I think we have come across an era where these changes should and it is a must. It must happen for the fact that we are experiencing the external environment within the internal environment as well as all those things that need to be upgraded and acceptable for the current status and the changes that are happening before us.

From the internal environment as an Electoral Commissioner and management body we consider the law and also the inputs that you are implying to us. We will now go back to make the putting the meat to this bone, as we were not too aware as to how this presentation was going to be. But we have recommendations and all of that so it was just a tipoff that we have identified the issues and with recommendations we are going to go back and –

Chairman, you are right in saying, this is an opportunity that will never come again for the Electoral Commission. And that is a true story in the election history. We have to create some new ways as to how we can advance further going for the country in terms of protecting and managing the election process.

Our commitment as the Electoral Commission, we have endured to manage free and fair elections, we have been limited by many factors and we have identified those now. And with the comments, we have tried the local way and we have also tried the IT way and it's just a start, we can go into that eventually when we conduct the awareness and say this is the way forward and this is how we say it's got to be done.

We have a lot of things that we think about and we thank you for allowing us and now we thank you for allowing us and giving us the opportunity to put those recommendations and our wishes together and present to you.

I really appreciate the Committee for mentioning two things I picked up here, the support level from within the five years, budget plans. I didn't want to be too open to these but timing as you said, you have already realised, we need timing to manage all these things. If we plan much we can deliver something that we wish to see. Thank you for all the inputs for all these things. As you said you have already realised, we need the timing to manage all of these things.

If we plan much we can deliver something that we wish to see. Thank you for all the inputs from all the four members that are present here and that was so encouraging and the best way forward to accept some of these because we are talking Elections. You have been involved and we have been involved. You are managing and now we are collaborating to put together the best way forward and you are in a position to help. And we are in a position to manage so together we can work and I agree and I am so thankful that we are able to do this today. We take responsibility to see the bad side of everything that happened and we are now focusing, like we have said in the last debrief, we are facing new look PNG Electoral commission with a new vision and way specially to maintain and regain the integrity of the election process of the country. Thank you, very much.

Honourable JACOB MAKI – Thank you, before you conclude, I want to add that most of the election cases is still pending, no one has been arrested yet but they have committed offences under the Election Law.

I just want to ask the Electoral commission and his deputies if they have put a committee in place to arrest the Electoral Offenders? There were a lot of buildings being burnt and assets destroyed that are still pending so do you have a committee in place to follow up on all offenders of the 2022 Elections? We have raised this in on the Floor of Parliament, in our Government Caucus but yu gat sampla committee I stap wantaim mipla na bai mipla follow up because people can't do it and they will get away with it. If it is caused by a winning candidate that is in Parliament, they are liable to be prosecuted. If we put something like this in place then people will fear that a member, a candidate or a leader will be prosecuted but now they are still free. Yu putim wanpla committee in place lo wok lo displa or nogat? So that mipla stap lo displa komiti will support and follow up on that.

Another thing is there was so much talk about the changing of RO's and Electoral Managers, there are some things that I have notice when RO's are appointed to control an election; you appointed them but within this period they are carrying another bag around. Your bag is the green bag and there is another yellow bag they are carry around that is why you have to change because you have got good reports from the men on the ground whom you are supposed to get the report from. Mi toktok bicos mi harim planti komplem blo ol man, ol ples man, ol voters and then ol memba komplem lo senisim RO. So dat is why mipla givim gutpla toktok go lo yupla na taim yupla laik sensi mol RO's bai yuploa mas gat proof that now bai mipla lukim ripot why yupla senisim ol.

So displa presentation yupla makim em liklik tumas bikos displa komiti nau yumi stap bai makim senis. Displa elekesen proses mekim na planti dai i kamap, sumla gutpla ol lidas no go lo Parliament na sampla stap lo ples painim problem. Now this is the committee that will make sure that 2027 Elections will be peaceful and successful so we all are here to contribute ideas to make better decisions. Then I mentioned about the time length of the elections and centralizing the voting zones. Yu mas toktok so time length yu mas givim, yu laikim mipla lo givim tu or tripla wiks so taim polling ol Police na Army mas presen lo hap na ol ken kam na vote. Ol candidate's mas mekim responsibility lo karim ol voters blo em kam lo voting zones yu putim lo em. Ol disisen yu putim lo em bai mipla behainim; ino mi tasol but olgeta man bai

behainim. Yu putim zone, yu analyzim ol problem na makim law na bai mipla bihainim. Tenkyu.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you, Honourable Maki. Okay closing, I think a good summary was already given by the Deputy Chairman but I just wanted to response to one word that you used and it was eventually we will resolve these issues.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Eventually it's not acceptable to us. We expect that after the processes are completed by this committee, there will be fixtures put in place so that the issues that the PNG public have been complaining about for the last 20 years are not repeated; that is why we are here. So, if there are certain resources that are required in order to provide a fix, it will be the responsibility of this committee to get those resources and to bring them to bear.

I think Papua New Guineans have been put through too many trials and tribulations and crisis; I thing Papua New Guineans are tired. We are all tired of having to bear with shortages of fuel, electricity issues, no water, elections not running as they should – the story of Papua New Guinea is one calamity after another. If it's an election, we have a problem with it. We seem to have a problem with almost everything. Even getting kids into school, we have a problem with it. Trying to get people arrested for domestic violence, we have a problem with that too. So I thing Papua New Guineans want solutions, I want solutions, the committee want solutions. So such languages like 'eventually' should not be in our vocabulary going to the future.

I want to encourage all of us; this committee is not going to waste people's time; we are not going to waste the public's money. I want to ensure that when we come out at the end of all of these, the Electoral Commission can confidently say, we are going to run a free, fair, and safe election for the people of Papua New Guinea. That is what I want to see at the end of these processes. I don't want to waste my time here as a chairman. I call for this committee, and I don't want us to say that the fix is going to be 15 years from now. I expect that the fix is going to be within the next six months, we have recommendations, which we will present on the floor of Parliament to be adopted, because I can assure you that, every single member of Parliament, or at least the vast majority, want these issues resolved.

A lot of members do not wish to be going around and be labelled as having stolen mandate during the elections. I don't want people to question my mandate. I do not like that. It makes me feel bad. And all of us sitting here, we don't like that. We want people to know that we had been fairly elected through a proper process; and everybody that tries to take advantage of the process – I want to see them jailed. I want to build bigger prisons so that we can put a stop to such practice. It is time for us to draw a line and say this is enough. Therefore, the electoral process is the lowest common denominator, which we all need to sort out. If we sort this out, all things will start to fall into place.

So, I just want to make that clear to you; I'm not here to waste your time. I'm not here to waste public money, as Chairman of the Committee. I want us to bring some fixtures, and I want you to bring some fixtures. That is why we have given you the first opportunity. When you go back, as pointed out by the Deputy Chair, give us something we can use. We are not the experts, you are. So, when the committee makes its decision, if we can, I want to see those fixtures working. I want to see, one person, one vote in the LLG Elections, if we can do that. So, we rearrange everything to achieve that outcome. Whatever we need to change here, so that we achieve that outcome, so that we can test it out during the LLG elections or some of the by-elections. By the time we come to 2027, no one will have a question in these processes. They will agree with

the processes and whichever leader comes out victorious would have come out the right way. So, we can regain the trust of our people.

Let me just say this; I'm a bit of an idealist. I don't want us to come and start using phrases like 'maybe' etc. No, no, no! Let's just say that we are going to fix it. Let just say that everything that we are going to bring to the floor, and the Parliament approves of it, will sort issues out once and for all. So maybe later we can go fix the electricity or fix the fuel problem and all these other problems that we have.

With that, ladies that gentle man, I now suspend the proceedings until 1:10 PM in the afternoon. Thank you very much for your attention. I release you, the Electoral Commissioner.

(Suspend for lunch)

Institute of National Affairs

Mr CHAIRMAN – My apologies, we will now call the session to order the hearings program we could not get the IDEC so we will probably schedule them for some other time. Our Secretariat is making attempts to confirm that. What we will now do is, we have Paul Barker and his Institute of National Affairs (INA) team, we were going to have them at some future point but we decided to bring them early. Thank you Paul for attending the hearings.

Mr PAUL BARKER – Thank you Chair.

Mr CHAIRMAN – What we will do is to let you make your election observation, obviously INA has been asked to be part of the team but you have also been observing in the present and previous elections. So, if we could just have a report from you in terms of how you have observed past and present elections and some of the recommendations that will be coming later? Thank you Paul

Mr PAUL BARKER – Thank you Chair, and let me first commend the Committee for the work by coming together in a timely manner. I think it's really crucial to try and address this and timeliness is of the essence. I don't think we can minimise the problems we have but, in each election, we tend to feel that the system has deteriorated when it should have been improving. As you have said earlier on there has been enough time to learn the lessons and to address the problems and yet we don't seem to have done so and despite some comments that have been made earlier that much was conducted fairly effectively. We saw in the field as one observer observed to me every single possible misdemeanour occurred in terms of the electoral roll, timeliness and the process in the field. If you like, one could say issues that relate to the roll, multiple voting in some cases, to scrutineers not basically being inside and sometimes filling in the ballot papers for voters. And issues to do with the planning and training are real questions related to the management and shifting of the boxes and in some cases women folks especially in the highlands were saying that they were unable to vote; certainly, we got the issues of block voting but it's not because yes there may be a consensus for block voting but in many cases people did want to have a change to vote but we never given the opportunity to vote for the second option or the third but not for all or not at all.

We also saw money politics in its worst form so we saw clearly money being used in different ways to be effectively buying votes. But we also saw on the other side voters effectively demanding rewards to be able to cast their votes in certain ways.

So I don't think we should minimise the concerns related to electoral conduct that involves the Electoral Commission but it also involves some of the other players. There were concerns about some of the police who seem to be functioning on behalf of certain candidates' and some people even made the comment that if you had the police on your side you were the winner of the election. But all of that led to a level of distrust and as you have been highlighting earlier, trust is what it is all about.

And how does one gain trust; clearly that has to be achieved earlier on in the process so as soon as one is leaving everything to the last minute and obviously as the Electoral Commissioner highlighted, there can be a lot of factors which caused the election process this time and in some previous occasions to be at the last minute. Finance is obviously a major factor there but nevertheless when it's done at the last minute when people are not registered on the electoral roll and also when new electorates get created at the last minute that sort of adds to some of the complications.

You have already got issues where people in 2017 were able to check the electoral roll earlier on and look at details that weren't available until the last minute and then people were finding that their names were on at the last minute they were not on. And extensively people found out they were not going to vote as they were not listed in the place where they voted the previous time.

And then they would say who are all those people? They are not from this electorate but they are all voting. This all adds to level of distrust. One wants to be positive and the other wants to look at ways to address the issue and timeliness and transparency in the whole process are critical. One official observer told me that he had travelled to some other country and participated in electoral observation in those countries and he said people had gone well in advance to the election so that they could see that their names were there.

I know that sometimes that happens in here and people then borrow someone else's name and say that is who they are. But again, if one can have a clear mechanism for identification that certainly would help. Of course, that is not going to stop all the abuses if you are going to do block voting, then identity becomes rather less relevant. As highlighted by your committee earlier it also seems that the practices in every different location was different. So, you could go to one place and you would not be on the list but then they would add you on the list.

One district in central province I heard (not your district deputy chairman.) had a very nice arrangement which was probably quite fair but which enable people who were not on the list; go to one corner, register it was semi-official and join the electoral roll on the last minute. And certainly, I know that when people are given an opportunity to register on the electoral roll at the last-minute including teenagers who had become eligible in the latter period, then the officials were not present to do the registration in any case so they wasted their time.

In terms of credibility; clearly now is the time to come up with the reforms. As seen in the last elections a lot of issues got erased after the 2017 General Elections; some major reforms were proposed and suggested through the CLRC and the Registrar of Political Parties. Time went by and nothing happened, then I noted that we in the INA held a seminar mid-term because if we

are going to make some significant reforms now is really the last opportunity but that actually did not happen. So, it is crucial that if change is going to happen; there were approvals for biometric system that occurred in 2021. Again, that was far too late for 2022 elections.

So now it's the time we go for major changes. I know it's better to do incremental changes but have significant incremental changes.

Personal identification would be really valuable it's not the solution to everyone and everything. But certainly, if one can use technology and internet there are so many more 4G towers all around the country now so one can do it spontaneously in terms of identification and so on. One can rollout NID type system not with those large unwieldy contraptions but with small digital devices. But if, one's going to make that decision one as to really do it and commit to it and make sure its rollout. Because some people do need awareness and some people are nervous, I mean rather like the vaccine hesitancy. First round everyone was willing to be vaccinated and then the wind went around and stories got told people then got nervous about doing it. So, you get people who were nervous about the NID because they think that will result in them losing control or someone else can access their money and all kind of things. So, credibility is going to be crucially important recognizing that it is a window of opportunity for multiple purposes but that has to be done as soon as possible.

The lack of trust related to the electoral commission, police, and between candidates so we need to have all parties trusting that the other person is not going to be abusing the system or if there is it goes back to what committee was highlighting earlier the need for penalties. So, those penalties have to be applied and we must have a proper mechanism in place.

In the same way to make the appointments of the returning officers and other crucial staff in the timely manner. And if they are going to be changed that it's not because a member or a candidate lobby to remove someone but there is a due process that is transparent that everyone accepts it.

Clearly the returning officers are crucial players and they have all powers as it where at the local level and it often perceived well that they probably the local district officer who is local CEO and probably heads of the sitting member. So, it's absolutely crucial of those positions are trusted by all the candidates and the process of selection does occur and we can have a mechanism where these roles were contracted out as an alternative. But otherwise we really have to stint long regular appointment not someone who is appointed last moment and affiliated in any way to sitting member or a candidate unduly.

So, transparency across the board is really preparing in a timely manner. All the way through the returning officers was identified earlier, we were hearing of some appointments and training occurring in some instances; if on the morning of the actual voting.

Again, it goes back so finance is crucial the systems that are going to be determined and used credible transparent and if anyone going to make a change of system like using electronic mechanism that they are tried and tested in a timely manner. But finance, we know there are pressing things that come up in 2020 and 2021, there was pandemic and money got redirected in all kind of manners. But it is an imperative to recognized that the Budget for the election process covers the entire five-year period.

It's not something that done at the last minute prior to an election, obviously there's the process for the local level government election that's also very important.

The Deputy Commissioner and the police highlighted to me the other day that it sometimes involves more violence then the actual national elections. So again, Transparency and all those

processes relate to the LLG elections as well but it's a 5-year process and the government has to bite the bullets and recognizes as to allocating budget allocations throughout on a timely manner and not just in the final 24 months or even 12 months. That relates to all the places and that relates to Electoral Commission, police preparation. What we did and what we do see is sometimes with the lack of preparations and summit in the last minute when calls on the development partner, Australia notably to please plug the gap.

So obviously, all the players need and again with high debt it needs to be working through that whole period and full preparation and it needs the independent observers as part of it as well as relevant government institutions. But maybe, I can say penalty is just going back. Penalty is crucial because if there seem abuses occur across the board and if seen in a way abuses that were happening in certain provinces extending across the country and the use of threats and intimidations and money politics and so on.

Under the different mechanisms, there shorts of being monitoring because we are hearing of very large amounts of money being shifting from provinces to provinces during the election process. So that brings back to the issue of election financing of candidates and party financing.

There are rules but it's difficult to police and monitor those rules. One needs to make sure that clear-cut people are there to interpret these rules in different ways. Overseas businesses are not meant to be funding election campaigns but we know that there are different ways that can and does occur. I know in some past election events we've heard that after 2017, I was at UPNG and people were asking how many of the political parties are funded by Papua New Guineans and there was a general feeling that bulk of funding was coming from other sources and again, clarifying and making sure and ensure that the public are fully aware of these elections rules are and then the mechanisms to make sure that they are transparent and they are actually applied.

Maybe I can ask Mr Yauka to add some details on the security and the policing aspects.

Mr YAUKA LIRIA – Thank you, Chairman for giving me the opportunity. I had probably more than 2 experiences with the elections. Firstly, I was a candidate myself 20 years ago or so and more recently when I was working with the Foreign Embassy, I was part of the EU's 2017 election monitoring team. We participated and contributed to that and produced a substantive report. More recently, for this election, as part of the INA team we did not participate as an observer team but we did monitor closely what was happening.

So, generally, I'm aware of what has happened and all the divisions and the problems that arose which many members of the public including members of your Committee are fully aware of so I will not get into them.

Firstly, I think the Electoral Commission had a lot of difficulty in conducting their operations in a timely manner by facing it or station it over the 5 years and that depends on funding. So, funding has to be assured and obviously government policy -

We will support Electoral Commission and we will release the funds but it doesn't follow through with that. So you got to look at a mechanism where you can find some ways to assure security of funding over the five years to stage the preparation operations and funds will be released in a timely manner. If it was at all possible even lock that in by a legislative Act. If it was possible, because policy alone is inadequate, we've seen it. We have seen that happen already for various reasons the policy mechanisms are commitments by the Government its inadequate to ensure the funding is available to the main body that is entrusted to carry election preparation and administration in the country. Perhaps the Committee wants to look into the

possibility of ensuring funding is available to carry out the preparation and actual administration of the elections and lock it in if possible by law.

Secondly on security matters, I'm a former military officer, I noticed what was happening in various places but I will just refer to the four major incidents. One in Markham, the other one in Finchhafen and the one in Mendi and the one here at the counting center close to Sir John Guise Stadium. The question that came to me was where was the intelligence? As a former military officer and intelligence officer that was a clear intelligence failure because when you have the troops on the ground combined forces of the security forces already deployed on the ground, you already know the various stakeholders, the candidates, the villages, clans, terrain, you know where they are living, you know their plans because the intelligence system is already in place. So you getting word of various activities and plans and so forth. How come in these four major incidents, the intelligence system didn't work. Because it's the job of the intelligence

Mr CHAIRMAN – Is there an intelligence system? I think that's the other question based on your knowledge. Do we have an intelligence system? Is it working?

Mr YAUKA LIRIA – Yes Governor and Chairman, there is an Intelligence system in the country which I think you know. They are the PNGDF Intelligence branch, the Police Intelligence unit, the principal one for the country the NIO who reports directly to the Chief Secretary. But for the elections, I would assume the intelligence operations were some of the early operations that were earlier conducted because you need information on what's happening on the ground and then you feed that into the field commanders to be on top of the game. So the intelligence operations are the integral part of any operations and in fact they deploy well ahead of the main team to feed into the decision making process of the security force commanders and including daily and weekly operations decisions based on the intelligence that they receive.

When I watched all these mayhem unfolding in those places I was asking myself what happened to the intelligence operations that were already on the sights receiving intelligence and feeding it to the local commanders to take corrective actions to mitigate to fight to disrupt various tools that were at their disposals. So Chair, that was a very big disappointment for me personally. But I think it was a big letdown for the country as well. Because we saw serious disruption causing much damage and in some cases loss of lives should have been mitigated, fought, disrupted before those external entities conducted their illegal operations.

The third item I am raising for the Committee is the data that is available with the NSO and NID entities. Would there be a possibility for these data to be merged? The Committee might want to look into that, because it's very costly to get the data from the NSO which costs us millions of kina, and then we have to fund another major operation for NID which will cost another large chunks of money. Both enrolment programs which will cost another lot of money for us as well. Would there be legally a possible avenue where the statistics data available in those entities can be legally used?

I am aware that the Electoral Commission is legally mandated to use its own enrolment figures. The Committee should explore the possibilities of using data already available with the NSO and NID, if they are credible and usable, can it be merged and used. Of course, that is together with the suggestions that I have been hearing about using technology.

Mr PAUL BARKER – I can add on to that. We have a problem that we haven't had the census since 2011. There was meant to be one in 2020/2021. We just have the defector satellite-based exercise which has come up with some revised figures having put in some further details which is going to be substantially different from the figures that got revealed or leaked a month or so ago. They are going to be rather more accurate.

Nevertheless, you might not want to wait until a national census occurs. Logically, that's the way to do this. Of course, the Electoral Commission is meant to cross-reference the census and the Boundaries Commission is also meant to use the census for determining the breakdown of electorates. That is another challenge, but you will get some reasonably accurate figures coming out of that satellite-based sample in the near future.

It is useful to cross reference because I am afraid the census staff do not always get right out into different areas. Lot of locations and communities actually relocates between censuses, so you need to do that ground mapping as well.

In relation to related issues to do with the Electoral Commission, a lot of people have discussed the issues as if it were fit for purpose. Is it as it should be? Many people have argued in favour of a three-person or five-person having a team. It is a big burden on one person. If you can have a collegiate arrangement, so that major decision making is shared, it may actually enable decisions to be made. Otherwise, it may be avoided but it will also enable bringing to mind together of several minds.

You also have an Electoral Advisory Committee. It has been a useful tool to advice the Commissioner but it's not been used at all during this election. It wasn't effective until the last minute. It was barely used in the 2017 election.

But clearly, there is a need for a mechanism that will more effectively support the management, so that they can actually make informed and timely decisions during the process and not leaving decisions that relates to abuses. For example, the courts of disputed returns which is obviously a very costly and disruptive mechanism for all involved, including for the court which really have got an enormous backlog of other work that they need to be doing.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Well, thank you both. I think that's given us some new insight to be honest. I made particular note of the intelligence failure and the issue around merging data. We did have a very good conversation with the Electoral Commission, the Commissioner and the deputy during the break and unlike in the past, this particular election team is interested in merging data. So, I'm not sure to what level of detail census figures are collected but certainly with NID. NID collects personalized information which is what we need for an election. So, all those things will be investigated. I think we intend to fix it. We're not just here to do some cosmetic exercise and you will have noted our conversation with the Electoral Commission earlier on we would like a fix and I think when you sit down and talk to them, they also want a fix. They've borne the brunt of a lot of criticism and I was surprised to find out that they got their 2022 elections funding in February, 2022.

And I think members of parliament are, we're all members of parliament and we're surprised. Obviously while we passed the budget in November, so that was already too late. By the time the accounts are opened and everything else, there's really no time. So, they've highlighted that fact and I think we've got to get the heads of those in the CACC, the NEC that we need to be funding the elections two or three years out, not the year before.

So, I think these are the sorts of things and these are practical changes, they're not anything that requires a lot of highly intelligent thinking. Just needs some discipline as to what to do but further than that, I think we all accept that that there's got to be some kind of fix where the individual voter is able to get to that point where they can vote. And where there are instances of them not being on the common roll, why does the common roll have to be a piece of paper? Why does it have to be a piece of paper? Why can't it be an electronic record? And why can't that record be available twelve months out so we can all see?

I think those are the sort of things that we all want to see and if you listen to the electoral commission staff, I think they needed our help. That's the sort of thing, you know, listening to them today. They didn't know who could help them. They kind of felt like an adopted child that nobody is interested in and they've been orphaned somewhere in the corner and we only call on them every five years. So, I think that's the sort of feeling you get when you talk to them, which is probably fair but having said that, we've all got to take ownership and we've got to fix it.

But I wanted to ask you Paul, particularly based on your earlier comments, why do candidates feel that a returning officer or a police man can affect the outcome of an election? How did we arrive at that? Because everyone seems to be worried about the role of the returning officer, that that person can affect an outcome and I'm not sure if there's been any instances aside from the Room 32 or whatever it was that occurred in the previous election. And the Police. I mean, how can they affect an outcome? If such an event has perhaps been suspected of happening, Paul?

Mr PAUL BARKER – I think that's, in part, relates to just that overall distrust and uncertainty. People can see that something is wrong. They can see that often the Electoral Roll is distorted, they can see that their village seems to be short of voters but that other village across the valley, where some candidate is from, suddenly has inflated numbers and someone is responsible for that and who puts the roll together. Is there a sort of a central role manipulation happening in Port Moresby? Is there a local manipulation?

So the people don't know, they just conceded that something is wrong and I think the Retaining Officer is going to be the first person. It is the responsibility of the Retaining Officer to actually put the roll together and update the roll for the local area but off course in many cases Retaining Officers are appointed at the last minute. So they are not even in the position to be performing that function. That is an important function throughout the entire term. The influence of the police or many police will say they have very little influence that they can barely try to maintain law and order let alone make sure there is proper conduct that actually occurring as well.

Certainly, just tales young police who want to take firm position and are advised by their older colleague. You and I are going to try and stand up to that large crowd that is descending down the hill towards us. So and why is the crowd descending down the hill, well maybe it is a strong loyalty to someone. But often it is because they don't trust that someone else isn't going to do something. So lot of it is about the scrutiny, often come together and they all sometimes are distrustful of the police. They think the police are going to take the ballot boxes away and they are going to go in a different direction. Certainly, they have told the observers, please do not leave, we want you to be there observing the entire time because we don't trust whoever is going to be carrying those ballot boxes. It is just distrust of each other, of all players. Many times is the scrutiny actually hold together and taking the same position of concern and distrust.

Sometimes we heard situations where defence staff of express concern and the police then will go and ring the base camp. But base camp is actually mend by political players so they are getting instructions whether they are going to work on Sundays or whatever it happens to be from staff who are not electoral staff. I mean in previously in 2017 we had really the electoral staff in one particular province barely have any authority of the whole process at all, it was a hijack for them, so yeah.

Mr CHAIRMAN– Deputy?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you Paul and the team, I really appreciate your input into this process. Couple of issues were raised and one of the ones that was raise was the funding issue and I was thinking about amending the electoral laws and whether we could put electoral funds as constitutional grants. That will guarantee the funding like what we have done with the, District Support Grants as a constitutional grant. Whether that option would be okay if we process it then we can look at securing the five-year budget for the electoral commission. Every time the budget is passed constitutionally that must be passed too.

Perhaps that’s where the National Economic and Fiscal Commission should also come in and do the minimum requirements. Whether electoral commission inflates the funding required and that this committee could give the job of the National Economic and Fiscal Commission to make sure to go and do the job and come up with the unit costing of an election. So come up with a minimum standard that must be guaranteed under the constitution so that the constitutional office does its job on this important event. Think about it.

Mr PAUL BARKER – Sometimes some of the different constitutional offices holders have raised that concept, for example, the Auditor General. That is always inadequately funded to cover the 1400 or so government institutions that exist. They have raise the idea of look you have a special appropriation, which is for the Parliament, you get the appropriation for the executive and maybe you get one for the legislature maybe there could be a specific designation for the Auditor general and the Election process.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Yes, I think we really need to look at it. And I think probably this is the way forward to secure the right level of funding on a timely manner and so the issuing of warrants and all that by Treasury are done and there’s a legal avenue for us to do that. The second issue, Paul, I was interested in was, we need to promote political parties in this country. How do we achieve that because any State needs state institutions to prosper and in politics, it’s the political parties that we really have to properly structure and organise? One issue in this election process is, who is legally funding the political parties? How much are they giving? Is one party that is in Government at an advantage over the party in the Opposition? Those are the issues.

My observation is, people have recognised the commerce of elections. It’s become a big commercial enterprise so we really to look at it and particularly in my view as Director of INA, in terms of promoting and building strong parties in this country not only strong parties but the minimum number or right number of parties for our small population. How do we achieve that and bring the equation for women? How do we allow women to participate through the party processes? Should we have designated number of women seats on the floor of Parliament? So that women can compete for those seats until we have that level of cultural maturity over time that we accept women as equal partners like in other countries.

Should we look at capping the number that each organisation support party like what they do in New Zealand I understand, and so those are therefore under the return of writs you then submit those to the Registrar of Political Parties and the Ombudsman Commission. We really have to look at all those things. But I was interested in our views on this Political parties, building them up, donation levels etcetera. And after the election, if a party only wins one seat or nothing, they are automatically dissolved permanently and therefore we move towards, in the future only two or three parties.

And then the big issue is, should we look at the issue of independent candidates. There's so many of them because many times in the formation of Government they really do not have the mandate but they dictate the formation of the Government on the Floor of Parliament. So those are some of the election issues that I thought that we really need to seek your views on as you have done the research.

So the conversation that is going around, how do we really do that and obviously the outstanding OLIPPAC amendments. those are some of the very important issues. But the merging of the data, we really should have a national data base managed and then the subsidiaries come and draw from that for Planning Department, election etcetera.

Political parties how do we make policies; those we draw from the database or national information system. Chairman, those are some of the key election advisory committee, this one either came in a bit late.

There are issues that we have to sort out. And, thank you for outlining some of the key areas like the data, the parties and the funding issues. Those are the key areas that we have to look at. One of the points that I have picked up from Paul is that, the access that we have to recommend will also require some major reforms. These are not small things.

In our report we have to emphasize on the must. There are major reforms in the process. I want us to do that right because it requires surgeons and blades to cut through that tumour and clean it out. Thank you.

Mr PAUL BARKER – Thank you. To discuss the whole issue of women in politics and the other issues that you have raised, would be a pretty big agenda. To discuss certainly the role models from around the world.

People often quote the Rwanda situation, but domestically we have the models that have applied in Bougainville where they not only have the women seats, they also have an arrangement with the local level governments where there will be a woman and a man and the alternate years where either can chair it.

At the moment, most of the chairs of the Councils of Chiefs are chaired by women. But then, subsequently the women getting the women's seat, they also have the open seats, and ABG also have one by women. This creates openings once one establishes those opportunities. I know that in the past, there have been different ideas. Certainly, it's an improvement that you have two women in the House, though two is a very small number. In terms of perception, women need better representation.

Some people were saying that the two have demonstrated and it can be done. It must be said that particularly in major parts of the country, it is a lot harder than in those two provinces. There may be some factor that can tilt it, and provide those opportunities for women to be in the House for different roles.

Some people have suggested different mechanisms including, maybe a shift to a double House arrangement. You have an upper and lower House. The governors can move to the upper house and also women in the upper house representing each constituency but different models can be applied. But certainly, when people say it's already a level playing field because some people cannot make it. It's still is not a level playing field and certainly for the last election, we have been hearing particularly from some highland provinces. The women were eager to get out and vote but were chased away by gangs. Law and order, and respect for everyone having a right to vote is going to be crucial but maybe other mechanisms to even the balance is possible.

In terms of other issues like the parties. It was something that late Sir Mekere Morauta and team were trying to address with the OLIPAC. It was a challenge. At the time of independence, you had more basis for some of the parties in terms of their ideologies. For example, the Melanesian Alliance stood for certain things, BPP was more private sector, PANGU Pati took a particular line, a sort of link where Melanesian alliance with African socialism perhaps you had other parties at that time.

Over the course of time, there was very little to identify one party from another. Some of them had original basis while others have something else. That makes it difficult to form governments that have some retentions, which makes it expensive to form and sustain government. Then you have to use all these devices which are disruptive to government and the economy, sometimes distorted when it comes to the Budget as well.

Frankly, the DSIP growth over the course of years, partly relates to the political factors. One needs money to go to the district level. But one doesn't want that system to evolve where it relates to a substantial patronage and then distortion of funds away from some of the priorities in the Budget. How you create party structure and allegiances that actually stands for something and then can market that, you do not necessarily create artificial ideologies. There is a lot work to be done in achieving that.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Mr Barker, you have been around long enough to see how elections are conducted in this country. The general perception of the 2022 General elections is that it is the worst that we have gone through.

According to your observations, let's go back three or four elections, what have you seen are different? Are there any improvements in the electoral system or everything just fell apart? From your general observation, are there any good things that have happened or only bad things? Can you share with us from your experience if there is any improvement in the system or the security forces?

Mr PAUL BARKER – Elections are a part of a society. You can't single it out exclusively, and if there has been a deterioration in the respect for the rule of law. Then, that's going to be extrapolated in the election process as well. I am afraid that governance and governance system have tend to weaken over the course of the years.

Corruption has gotten worse. We have never really talked about it. Yes, there was corruption in the 1980s but it was relatively discreet. When one has gotten new results progressed and new expectations and opportunities to control resources and corruption grew. Unfortunately, that's reflected in the political and governance manifestations as well.

There are things that are constantly improving as well as well as things that are problematic. We obviously have a lot more. Informed education system has been a problem but we do have more people in schools, higher levels of retention, and telecommunications have improved. That has given a lot of opportunities to having electronic systems for elections and reaching out to communities. Obviously, social media gives opportunities but it also gives hazards. It gives opportunities for a lot of nonsense to be talked and a lot of rumours and bad rumours. It also gives opportunities for those who are being responsible to get good communications across.

The LPV system gave some improvements in the first years because it gave, instead of just whoever was effectively from the largest tribe automatically winning unless you could subdivide that tribe's vote and so you ended up with people with just a couple of votes more than another clan winning. It gives some opportunities and it probably, at least in the initial years it gave some reduction in levels of violence. Unfortunately, some levels of violence have really picked up again when it came to 2017.

It is really important to make sure that those constitutional offices, the police, etc., the Electoral Commission operating independently performing their functions. The trust is established; I think the credibility of those institutions is crucial and restoration of the credibility of police and so on.

Obviously, they are small in number; the population has grown more rapidly than the number of police but you need both the number of police on the ground, but you also need the discipline in the whole system.

We see some reforms; we see some very capable police commanders in certain place. You see some systems being adopted by the police; we have highlighted deficiencies in intelligence but we have also seen capable officers trying to design effective systems using technology and so on. I think there are improvements that are occurring.

The other key issue is really the public; trying to engage with the public; trying to inform the public, because the public and be strong critics but they can be very strong allies. And as we do know, PNG does remain a strong committed democracy.

People from many countries, you get very low voted turn outs and a high level of despondency and negligence of the political system. People in Papua New Guinea do want to vote. They do want to have their say; they want to engage, both at the local as well as the National level. But they want to be credible and that is a big assert, and we all can agree to that.

There is this despondency – there are lack of jobs in the economy; the economy has not really been picking up. But the more people feel ownership of the electoral system of the government, they feel an ownership of the whole process, and the more they can ensure that the outcomes, including economic outcomes and accountability are functioning.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – I have a few more questions which I would like to seek your comments on. Firstly, is the issue of some electorates with lots of candidates, some 60, even 70 or 80. In my own electorate, it has been increasing from 13 to 20, to now 24 in the last election. With these big numbers of candidates, how do we handle this is the question. Number one is, should we have a primary system where 80 candidates do through a primary process eventually only two or three do get in; what's your comments on that?

Mr PAUL BARKER –The first thing one would ask is; why are there so many candidates in the first place? Ok there are not so many jobs in the economy but there should be people with a range of different skills and there should be jobs that they are pursuing. Are the rewards in politics seen to be so great?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– That is a subject that the Research Institute will have to do research on.

Mr PAUL BARKER – Absolutely! Are the rewards so great?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Because they are standing, whatever the reason. How do we handle it? Are there options that we should look at? And I just came up with maybe going through a primary process so by the time the writs are actually released, we know that out of the 65 only five qualify to contest a national election and, therefore, the numbers of ballot papers, the cost thereof and you know, all those implications, therefore, can be managed.

Mr PAUL BARKER – Yes, you don't want to undermine the constitutional right to seek office in the same way as you want everyone to have their constitutional right to vote.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That brings us to the next question on the qualifications, therefore, their rights. I mean, we are here to amend the Constitution and part of the reforms may be to go back to the Constitution and say, 'this is our 50-year experience under your mama law, we are going to change you now.' So, because of these experiences these are the reforms that we would want to take, so part of that would be the qualifications.

The third one, Paul, is your observations on the LPV counting – I think it is very expensive. I think, as you say, the first lot of elections in 2007 and 2012, the intentions were there, but people have become smarter. The second-best candidate is not necessarily the second best in the line-up because of the elimination process.

The question is, are we giving the same weighting as in preference one, two and three. Is that in order? Should first preference be given a higher weighting and second and third be given a lower weighting. These are the type of issues and so how do we manage it? The 50 plus 1 – have we pitched that too high? All these things we really have to do maybe through proper research and then come back to it.

Mr PAUL BARKER – Many voters, the first time around, didn't understand and were thinking, hang on, I voted that person first, so that person should carry more weight. And that is the system that is used in Germany. So, your first preference does get 10 points, the second preference gets maybe 7 points and it trickles down that way. Even so, yes, it is a very complicated and logistically demanding system that we have at the moment. We have to go through all these different rounds. Yes, it might be able to be simplified and reflect the voters' aspirations better.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – The last question is, we've got the non-election memberships at the National Parliament, provincial assemblies and the LLGs; the three levels of legislature. Should we have a look at that at the national level, given that women are really struggling to win votes in the last 50 years? Should we increase that number? At the moment it is only a handful under the constitutional provision. Or should we go back to the assembly and say,

under our Papua New Guinea, Melanesian culture, the chiefs and every recognised leader, rather than going through the election process at the provincial level or the local level, can we have a non-election process? Those are the things we may have to re-think.

Mr PAUL BARKER – That would work but then there is a concern that some would say, I'm not as equal a member as others because I wasn't elected. So, one has to work out where you don't want to have it in a way so that it is unduly seen as patronage. But there are different models and as was stated from Rwanda, yes, they had an opportunity for women for a certain number of seats. And after that was adopted, they actually got the majority of the seats because then people recognised their skills and capacity and they voted for them anyway. So sometimes it is a case of 'breaking the ice.'

Once the ice is broken and the recognition occurs but it has to be set across the board in government offices. In the early days after independence you had many of the senior public servants, public service commissioners, Secretary for Planning, Secretary for Labour and the Transport Department and several other departments had women. There were women Governors or in those days Premiers in Morobe and several others in the Parliament. But it seems like we have not gone forward like one would expect a lot more women in senior public sector positions. They are getting recognised in the private sector but inadequately in the public sector and it would seem to me anyway. And that's a stepping stone because once you see people in differently leadership roles in doing a good job and the recognition is there and it would be good to balance things up. In private sector in some countries, they have actually mandated it in saying companies' boards have to be equal and hopefully one doesn't need to sort of mandated like that but it happens naturally. Sometimes one need to apply rules to move things along.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Chairman just one general comments from me is that when it comes to funding to the Electoral Commission moneys that the Government pays for conducting elections, it will be also interesting to find out how much money do they make from all the nomination fees that they collect. And how do they use those moneys and that's a very vital information that we need to get. So probably in the next appearance of the Electoral Commissioner we would like to know the history because obviously huge sum of money would have been collected in every election conducted. And now they are telling us that they have outstanding payments to be paid and they still want more money. What about the money that they collected from all the fees and how did they utilise these funds? It's just a general comment on that, Chairman, thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN– Thankyou Paul, final comments.

Mr PAUL BARKER – No I don't.

Royal PNG Constabulary

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you very much Paul, we will excuse you and your INA team, thankyou both very much for those insightful comments. I am pleased to see that the Police Commissioner is here. Are you expecting your team or not? you going to do this all by yourself? Alright please take a seat Commissioner thank you. Thankyou Commissioner and welcome to the Committee hearings I note we have called you to two hearings so far and I want to thank you for your quick response in such manner. And I know you are dealing with some serious issues up in the Highlands and we are grateful for you to make time for us. As you know this is to do with the elections generally but more so with some of the happenings in the 2022

Elections. We have had the Electoral Commission here in the morning and obviously yourself and the Defence Forces representing the security forces are important to the all process. And you are aware of a lot of the goings on and the complaint from the public obviously about the conduct of the nations. We are grateful for the work that the RPNGC did during the elections. There may be one or two incidents where certain members may have gone on their own and done things but I think generally comments made from someone was that less people died in the last election than they did in the 2017 Elections. I am not sure if that data is correct or not but and I am hoping that we don't use dead bodies to determine the success or not of an election. In any case I felt that the police did a pretty good job and the other security forces as well.

Mr CHAIRMAN – I want to state for the record that we are grateful for that effort and to start off perhaps give us a background on your understanding as you conducted the elections in terms of the security aspects of the elections. Your general comments and anything that you feel that you should be providing to the committee, in terms of how we could improve going forward.

Mr DAVID MANNING – Thank you Chairman and committee Members. As you are very much aware the elections are quite big in terms of its scale, operationally and financially as far as provision of security is concerned. Traditionally the police have been the security provider in direct support to the electoral process as well as to the Electoral Commission. Of course, you have seen in the recent election, the increase in support from the PNGDF and the Correctional Services. And that is indicative of the challenges that the elections present to the constabulary.

I am with you Mr Chairman and yes, the success of the elections should not be measured by the loss of lives, whether it is the members of the security forces or those that are directly involved in delivering the elections as well as our people. Unfortunately, the trend is that as far as we see in the security space it is becoming more and more of a security concern. The last three elections have become more significantly security operations than as actual electoral operations itself.

Why I say this is because we had to deploy more assets and more personnel to deliver what should be a democratic process that everyone should deliver as efficiently, effectively and responsibly as possible. It has been noted and last year we did a debrief as we usually do after an election and a number of key recommendations that came out of that debrief and one significant one that came out was that greater collaboration, not only in the security space but also with the Electoral Commission itself; both at the leadership and at the ground level where the coordination and movement of ballot boxes to ensuring there are conducive environments to vote and re-collection of those boxes and the process of counting votes.

And that has become quite problematic as of the last two elections and am not just saying during the actual period of the casting of votes and counting and declaration but the time that was spent in preparing and leading up to the actual deployment of our personnel; also, during voting and counting and declaration. One would safely assume but we have our reports to justify our position that there has to be greater collaboration. And in fact, we insist on it. As if we are to ensure that not only our support is as effective as could be but also the electoral process is as fair, accountable and transparent as it should be.

Last year, we made a budget submission of K190 million but we ended up spending K240 million. And that captured all our expenditure from preparations, deployment, voting, counting

and till the last declaration was made and writs returned. Can I just add that and it's not privy to what the Electoral Commissioner and his people have shared with this committee but we went into this election wanting it to succeed.

We make public messaging and conducted ourselves, we make sure take the time out to tell our people that we are here to make sure that election succeed. Unfortunately, as far as I am aware we are giving the message out to people and to ensure that there's a greater collaboration and coordination in how we plan, prepare, and deploy on the electoral process.

It was extremely challenging; I've been involved in numerous elections in the past just as much as you have but on the other side providing the actual election process. But, I can say this quite frankly that election has become more challenging. We just manage to be able to maintain control of the national general election 2022 in terms of the process and ensuring everyone was able to have a greater freedom to vote and participate in the electoral process.

Things needed to change and I am more than happy to share this afternoon session day brief note on the elections. There as to be some significant reform in how we do things in the election for 2027, will be extremely challenging for those of us who responsible for providing security environment and securing electoral process.

Thank you, Chair.

Mr CHAIRMAN – I am very pleased with your forthrightness in saying things as they are and it is quite concerning that from your perspective as chief provider of security for the elections that you would like to see significant reform. Otherwise we could have absolutely terrible outcomes in 2027 elections.

Is there anything specific you would be thinking of can that be in the security space or electoral commission or some other agencies?

Mr DAVID MANNING – Thank you, for the questions. I did mention greater need for collaboration across all the agencies. The electoral commission is the lead agency to conduct the elections but it has to be unforced in the political and social climate that elections are expected to be delivered in Papua New Guinea. As we have greater collaboration on the security organization such as police and PNGDF to ensure that we can deliver this election as safely as we can.

So, collaboration is one joint agencies agreement as what needs to be done, who should be responsible and off course sticking to task and budget. That will give us more clarity as to what we need to do at any given time in the process of delivering elections.

The other is the actual natural conduct of the election. I know many moving parts in conducting or preparing to conduct elections, we need to have census and off course ensuring that the common roll book is up to date, identifying eligible voters as well as those who unfortunately or unable to register their names. Those things need to be done 12 months in advance at least at very minimum, we would prepare probably three or four years at least we capture the majority of existing voters in those will come of age to vote.

The voting process itself, I know probably back in the few elections surely after the independence the ballot papers and boxes where used extensively and continue to do so. But I think it serve its purpose.

We can't continue to deliver the elections on that. Yes, its relevant for the rural population. Where possible, they really need be some serious showed around how we can deliver, especially during the voting part of the electoral process.

Well, I'm pretty sure that the Electoral Commissioner has mentioned that the other alternative matters of voting and I strongly support that. Those are the alternative matters of voting that really rely on technology and that's available all across the country or in a specific targeted area like urban centers. Maybe, this could be a good start where we could just focus on delivering voting as what our people are used to so that ballot papers in the rural areas so that ballot papers in the rural areas where there isn't stable internet connection but in the urban centers it really need given some considerations to start going into the electronic voting systems. This is the many options that are subject to many discussions since last election and even in the previous elections as well.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you, Police Commissioner.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you Police Commissioner for coming and I appreciate your input and contributions to the last election and for me and Abau I was very thankful to the combined security forces that did an excellent job. Obviously, my electorate is different from the other electorates but I commend the combined security forces for an excellent job.

In the earliest sessions that we had before you came in, the Institute of National Affairs raised a very important issue which we felt was very important in the four areas that they mentioned are Markham, Mendi, NCD and Kabwum. What happened and why those things happened? The advice was where did the intelligence go? Why didn't our team pick those teams up and therefore prevented them escalate to death and burning down of property and homes and fighting. As you show on the streets, people went out killing people while police were around and everybody was there and they ran out and started chopping up people. What happened Commission, why was this allowed to happen and where did our intelligence go?

Secondly, those are culprits and they are criminal acts. What's happening to them. Are you investigating and they going to be criminally charged or are they going to be just part of the electoral matter? Em work bilong electoral commission or where are we now because those are the issues that really made this Committee to be established. Ol plenty die na properties bagarap, but you have to tell us what actually happened, where there not enough numbers? You were funded K190 million and you have spent K240 million but these things happened. Tell us why that happened.

Mr DAVID MANNING - Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Yes, there were significant lessons learnt from those four specific incidents that you raised. As to your question whether did we have intelligence reports, in front of us to suggest that those incidents were about to occur or did occur or were plan to been executed in terms of disrupting the whole electoral process.

With Mendi, yes, we do have an intelligent task matrix that highlights the hotspots the possible areas that we need to ensure that adequate personals are on the ground to make sure that we mitigate the risk of delivering elections.

Unfortunately, the Kabwum and Markham were not on there on high risk or even medium risk. We did take note of potential risk, but when these potential risks were assessed and were low at that time when we deployed our manpower throughout the elections.

Going back to our manpower, we went into these elections with the lowest numbers of personnel, especially in the constabulary that's why we had to draw on the Defense Force and the Correctional Service to assist. Prior to 2022 and 2017 our numbers were draining. We are an aging force; our numbers have shrunk in the absence of constant recruitment. It was a significant concern for me as to how we were going to deliver the elections on a nationwide scale with the lowest possible numbers that we had and of course that caused some significant

critical gaps in our security plans. What we had was again based on our intelligence tasks that allowed us to create a greater appreciation of those areas that we assessed that we needed to indicate more resources to. Mendi was always a high risk situation and we did take note that NCD both the Governor's electorate as well as all the other open electorates were becoming more and more of a challenging for us, because it's a very dense population, multi-cultural multi-ethical population that it does come with its own set of challenges and that's what we saw in NCD. Could we have done things better to avoid this? Going by the de brief notes, yes in the absence of clear and concise directions and leadership as to how the elections should be conducted, how counting should be done, unnecessary delays were just a recipe to create such a situation and that's what happened.

With the investigations into the election related violence especially in these four electorates, four counting centers that you mentioned we had quickly responded to Markham and Kabwum we did make some arrests and as I understand the criminal proceedings are still on with Mendi. The investigation task force still exists and is still investigating some of those incidents across the country. so we have not dropped the ball. There has been in the course of the investigation we have found that there's other cases that were reported at that time. They have now come to light. And it's unfortunate that similar cases have popped up in different parts of the country and in may electorates. Where we thought that we were only dealing with the incidents during the elections that we knew off. We now have later found out that there are more incidents that have occurred that we were unaware of or was not reported during that time. So yes we are doing our very best to ensure that there is a critical response and that we respond appropriately to those things.

Of course it is a short term solution to otherwise the problem will continue to exist and has existed for some time. Our voters should be educated on how they should behave, that needs a lot more work. Investigating similar incidents and we are arresting and prosecuting a handful of people will not remove that type of behavior from the elections unfortunately. There needs to be a whole lot more done to prepare our people to understand electoral process, how to conduct themselves, and what it means for them, should the election fail.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – My last question, Mr Commissioner, is that people have the perception that certain policemen are close to certain leaders. So, in the election process, they communicate with each other, etc. For example, during the last election in my district, when the ballot boxes are coming, we had to go and look after them at the Kupiano police station. My scrutineers had to sleep there for 24 hours with the police because we were scared that the police will be siding with the other leaders that were competing against me and change the ballot boxes in the police station. Those were the type of concerns and allegations, etc.

For example, some people buy a lot of police vehicles for policemen. Therefore, they themselves are aligned. In my province, our former governor bought lots of vehicles. My questions are as follows;

- (1) What is your personal view about this?
- (2) Shouldn't we have the police to be fully a national function?

From my view, politics have come in and during the elections, some of us have feared of some of this things from happening.

- (3) Has your intelligence picked up some of these things that some of us have been concerned about, and the connections between leaders and some key police personnel in the force?

(4) Are these just rumours, or how we are doing things that should not be done and therefore, it's compromising the actual work that our police personnel are mandated to do?

(5) What has been your own observation and experience about these matters that the little people are complaining about?

Mr DAVID MANNING – Thank you, Deputy Chair. I will give my professional view, if that will be of any help to the Committee. Any assets bought by any sitting member of Parliament in their term or any given term, it should be given or donated. Firstly, there should be genuine reasons and the intent should be genuine and why they have procured these assets to assist police to deliver services, and it should be just left as that.

I am pretty sure those of you on the Committee have done this, and there is absolutely no expectation for police in their conduct during elections. Unfortunately, to answer your questions, I am aware that certain policemen have misplaced loyalty to former members. For example, when writs are issued, there is a misplaced loyalty to former members of Parliament but we continue to ensure that we support them as best as we possibly could to have a desired outcome.

What we do to manage that, is we move the commanders around during elections. Unfortunately, we don't have the financial resources to uplift 100 or 200 people in one command and swap them to a nearby province. In my view, that is not a solution. There should be greater emphasis on operations integrity. That is why any major operations like the national elections is no different. We stand up provincial affairs director and they are often shoulder provincial police commanders ensuring that our people behave in a transparent and professional manner during that time.

We won't have all the information for them to commence investigations but where we insist, especially during elections, where there's much at stake, that every single member, whether it's a police officer, a defence force member or even CS member, that we've always impressed that there has to be on the back of their minds, they have to do everything possible in their powers to ensure that there is operation integrity. Unfortunately, as I said, some do fall through the net, but we aware that is a practice which we are working on eradicating in the force, especially during elections time. Whether by design or by default, I think members need to understand that when you do use public money to buy public assets, that's all it is, its not your own personal money buying police vehicles.

Therefore, it's all our responsibility that we use these to the benefit of our people or the communities that the vehicle is expected to serve.

Mr JACOB MAKI – Commissioner, thank you. I would like to on behalf of my people, I would like to say thank you. You did, the tremendous job well done, security work with the limited resources like money, K190million, at these hard times, you managed to control the election to where we are now, so I would like to say thank you. And thank you for coming.

I know after everything, department heads have meetings like in the section of police department, electoral commission. We have meetings or debriefings after everything to discuss about something whether good or bad and problems we face and all these. I know you have briefings with the section heads and commands so I just want to know, not me but all of us here, if you discussed about something regarding the LPV system is best or not best?

2007 we should invent something new for betterment of security and public and good outcome of 2027 election. You have discussed and come up with election we can conduct in a manner

that what you saw previously, a lot of elections have been conducted and we are still way back in our traditional times or our ancestors' times, like voting.

We are living in a modern world so you have had discussion come out with a strategy you can put out so we can present it and then we can bring out for 2027 elections? That's one.

Two, about the mass killings and destruction related to electoral offences committed during election period, after election period, who is the real complainant into all these matters now? Whether Electoral Commission or the Province or the winning candidates? Who in particular, should be representing the people and become the complainant and the police become the investigator so security personnel become the investigator? Who is the person who is supposed to become the complainant to clear every view so that we can conduct fair election in 2022?

If we leave these things, then we have the blame game here – the Electoral Commission will do it or the Administrator will do it or DDA will do it or? And then things are still prolonged and is still there and then 2027 will come and we still continue. They might take things as killing is normal, burning down of houses is normal or blocking is normal or killing police man is normal, killing defence force security personnel is normal. They will do it. So, we should now have some people responsible for this.

So, police are the investigators so who is in charge of all these, who is the complainant and how are we going to go about it. Do you have any plans, like when you come for the proving? Because yourself have witnessed and some of the divisions that you have detected during the election time. And then how can we change it?

Mr DAVID MANNING – I'll answer the first part first Sir. So especially day brief questions on whether or not we should strongly recommend that we go back to the first past the post. I think there are some critical issues on what my understanding is and is taking my commissions hat off and talking as a normal Papua New Guinean. I think there are some significant issues that are impeding on the rights of having fair representation. It doesn't mean that you i gat namba na u votim man na em win and that is it. There needs to be at least an opportunity. I am talking about the first past the post system, there are some things that we need to take into consideration for decision makers to the transition to the LPV system.

Many would argue that the LPV system is far more encompassing in engaging the wishes and desires of a particular electorate as to who their leader should be. It is not for me to argue the pros and cons of both but from an operational stand point. I think we return as far as start of count of two to declaration, first past the post system was far quicker, LPV system off course you need to go to the process of elimination. As far as security concern the only impact it has on us with the current LPV system is that it takes a lengthy period of time when counting commences to declaration and off course return of writs. During election anything that takes long period of time to do can build frustrations.

When we faced with certain challenges from within the electoral commission to be able to consistently count until the end, starting and suspending and restarting counting off course it invites a lot of hill feeling as well as suspicions as to whether or not the counting has been conducted as transparently as they would like.

Sorry your second question as to who should be responsible to lay complains and who should investigate? My answer says that anyone, and as far as any offenses or any information relating to later offenses being committed under criminal court and summary offense act, anyone, all our citizens have the right to lay complaint. As to electoral offenses we agree that the electoral

commissioner and his representatives and agency should be only ones that should bring a complaint for investigation. It has allowed us to separate the responsibilities of ordinary citizens and those who are responsible for delivering the elections. Again there are arguments for and against then. But all happens is we will have numerous complains relating to a specific election and we will spend the whole lot of our time in courts trying to get to their bottom of those investigations. So that is where in the interest of ensuring that we are able to filter through who is responsible for electoral offences then that allows us to concentrate on the task and that is delivering the elections itself.

Of course, as a I said earlier, we have an investigation task force that takes on both criminal complaints as well as those complaints that sit under offences on the Electoral Commission Act.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Thank you Chairman. Good Afternoon Police Commissioner, just a quick question for you. As you are aware, normally in every election, we have a pre-election operation, election operations and then after the elections we have police operations.

In the last elections, 2022 General Elections, I did not see much of the pre-election operations. Police were deployed during the election time only. I just want to ask you, are there any reasons why there were no pre-election operations conducted? If my statement is correct. Thank you.

Mr DAVID MANNING – Your observation is correct Sir. The two key factors why we didn't a robust pre-election operation, one was the funds for that particular operation weren't forthcoming, did not come on time. And we felt that whatever funds that we had was best utilised and this is the second reason, to train up our personnel and prepare them for the elections itself.

Mr CHAIRMAN– Could I just interject. When did your funds arrive?

Mr DAVID MANNING– So we had two funding requirements, the first one was for the preparation of the election so a lot of planning conferences, our financial management conferences to ensure that, our PPCs their responsibilities are twofold; one is to deliver operation plans for the elections and the other is to ensure that whatever funding that is given to them to assist them in certain activities they need to be financially literate to ensure that they are able to provide that.

In answer to your question Sir, we planned for a scaled approach to this, starting from 2020, this was to be in this tranche of funding that was to allow us to prepare, 2021 was the procurement of assets and 2022 was the funding of the election process itself, deployments.

There were significant delays in the release of our funding for the elections itself in line with your question. We were unable to meet our deadlines and timelines as far as when we are supposed to be out in the provinces for pre-elections because it was delays for about 8 to 12 months.

Mr CHAIRMAN– So when did you actually receive the funds? When did it physically hit your accounts.

Mr DAVID MANNING – Sir, I will get that information to you.

Mr CHAIRMAN– That’s a follow-up question because just to give you a bit of background, when I asked the same question to the Electoral Commission, they said they received their funds, the first K40 million in February 2022. So that was of significant concern to us and I am keen to understand when your funds began arriving.

Mr DAVID MANNING– I will provide the details of that, if memory serves me correctly, it was unusually late compared to other previous elections.

Mr CHAIRMAN– Just privately speaking to the Electoral Commissioner, he said that he had to use strong-arm tactics with someone in Treasury in order to get his funding in February 2022. Did you experience similar difficulties?

Mr DAVID MANNING – We took our time as far as all our preparatory activities to ensure that when we did go to Treasury, we ticked all the boxes

This has been a long standing understanding between both Treasury and the Police when it comes to the elections. We did tick all those boxes some six to eight months prior to halfway through 2021 and even earlier. As to strong arm tactics with Treasury, I probably didn’t have the challenges that the Electoral Commissioner had. I think we were met with a more sort of delay in warranting but the process itself was with a lot of cooperation from Treasury

Mr CHAIRMAN – Just some follow-ons now. What suggestions can you make to the Committee so that we can improve the safety and security of 2027? I ask this question because you said you didn’t have the manpower in 2022 and I’m not sure what actions you’re taking to ensure that you have sufficient manpower not just for elections, but for your overall work providing security for our people. what concerns me is that we are going to deploy so many people for election work. Obviously we’ll pull them out of their day to day work. Is there any way we can do this a little bit smarter in your professional opinion so that we don’t need so many police man? Just some background, the Electoral Commission suggested an interesting concept. They suggested centralized polling as a post to polling all over the place. Obviously that would indicate that you have a centralized polling station. All your policemen and everyone else there protecting a battery of polling devices or polling places. I’m not sure what you think about that and I don’t know how much interaction or engagement your organization has had with the Electoral Commission in order to maybe progress some of the thinking in that regard.

We did discuss to some extent the electronic portal rolls and you have kind of mentioned that so perhaps that’s something worth investigating and that may reduce the need for a very significant deployment of security forces and what’s your opinion in terms of tougher penalties for electoral offences. These are the range of questions I’d like you to give us some indication on Commissioner

Mr DAVID MANNING – Thank you Chair, I will start with the last question. Sir, you said that all indications are that there will not be a significant change in the attitudes of the candidates or their supporters. I think you would serve in our best interest in our intent to ensure that we protect the integrity of the electoral process that there should be tougher penalties under the electoral laws. Of course we see that that would be a significant deterrent ensuring that the candidates and their supporters behave and conduct themselves in a lawful manner. Just looking across all the complaints that we have, it’s all been from certain candidates and their supporters it’s not the whole province

Mr CHAIRMAN – Let me get that straight, in your security assessments you focus on certain candidates and

Mr DAVID MANNING – What we've seen in the complaints that we now have before the ITF, that it is very much certain candidates and their supporters it's not the whole province where they have decided not to respect the democratic process

Mr CHAIRMAN – So you know who those people are?

Mr DAVID MANNING – Yes sir

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay please continue

Mr DAVID MANNING – so I suggest stronger penalties are great. And as far as centralized counting is concerned.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Centralized polling

Mr DAVID MANNING – Centralized polling

Mr CHAIRMAN – Voting in one place as supposed to and not voting all over the place. Concentrating the security, concentrating the vote.

Mr DAVID MANNING – Yes, you can appreciate Sir, as you all have large rural populations in your electorates.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Let me qualify that. I suspect that is a proposal for, shall we say difficult electorates. This is obviously not going to apply in East Sepik where the people are a lot more compliant when it comes to Elections.

Mr DAVID MANNING – We can't remove an element of risk from that, if it's designed because its reduced in our numbers as far as the place is in direct support of electoral process, I don't believe that would cause us to reduce our numbers. And I say that because you would have tribal enemies converging on a single point. And of course that would be problematic for everyone, let alone us.

Moving away from polling, counting was strongly suggested to the Electoral Commission that it should be centralized so we are no longer required to have 80 to 100 officers travelling to an electorate to provide security for counting. Centralization of counting was where we saw better use of our limited resources, but unfortunately for polling I don't think as a country we are there yet to be able to do that.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So –

Mr DAVID MANNING – Sorry Sir, if I may just add, I am with you. Our elections should probably have very minimum involvement in it. It should be the Electoral Commission alone. We just provide some guidance on how we should assist in terms of providing security or a response to a particular incident., But of course again, we are not there yet as well.

Mr CHAIRMAN – The question is, how long is it going to take us to get there. We have obviously regressed in terms of how we behave at elections. Twenty-five years ago, people were much more compliant going into elections, fast forward to today it much more terrible and in 2027, do we plan for it to get worse? And if we are planning for it to get worse, what do we need to do to make sure it is safe for women and other vulnerable groups to have the right to vote without intimidation and of course all of the associated risks from moving ballot boxes, to counting, starting from voting all the way through.

I know it's difficult and I appreciate that from a practical standpoint but we can't just say look it's going to get worse, lets buy bigger machine guns, more armoured vehicles. For goodness sake, it's a democratic process we are talking about here, we are not going to war but it seems like we prepare for war every time. That is not a good look to other democracies around the world. We are probably the only democracy where you need heavy guns to protect a few ballot boxes, so I guess in seeking to improve that, you guys are on the frontline, you and your personnel. What can we do? Do we just resign ourselves to the fact that it is going to get worse or are there things we can do to make sure that it starts to get on the track of getting better?

Mr DAVID MANNING – Thank you Sir, I don't think I have sufficient time this afternoon to go through to sufficiently answer those questions.

Mr CHAIRMAN) – We will stay here the whole afternoon if you want us to, we got to find the answer.

Mr DAVID MANNING – Yes Sir, I agree. First and foremost, we will never have sufficient manpower whether it's the Police or military or CIS to deliver the elections in the rate we are going in terms of the trend that we see during the elections. So that begs us to ask the question as to how do we make it better and how do we best maximize our efficiency and effectiveness during elections. And that, the answers a cross multi agencies....

I've just said that we would not, even if I had the opportunity, and thankful to this government that we now have an opportunity to recommence recruitment again. Even 12,000 by 2027 will still be insufficient; 20,000 is insufficient because it is not the numbers that is a problem, it is how the elections are delivered and the preparation of our people; not necessarily the Electoral Commission but our people to understand that this electoral process is for them and it is in their interest, just like everyone else, who are interested to see that it works with minimal disruptions and of course criminal activities and so forth.

We really need to look at the prerequisite for running elections and they have to be taken seriously; the census has to be done without fail; the voter registration has to be done without fail, two years before. So what if we don't capture those who come of age in the two years leading up to the elections. There is a difference where they can come in and register during that time. But at least we have an updated common roll and voter registration roll, so it allows us to go into the elections with some confidence that there will be an increased opportunity for our voters to vote, and no one will be left at the eleventh hour wondering why their names are not on the common roll. That contributes to the whole instability and volatility of the elections when people turn up and their names aren't there.

The actually voting processing itself whether we stick to the ballot papers, but again it will take some time to transition away from there. But I think out time will be best spend and invested in ensuring that those that have the right conditions to transition to biometrics should do so.

Especially in the city and other electorates that have great connectivity. Those should be identified early and have them prepared.

The more we carry on with our current voting system, whether it be first past the post, or LPV, we will still have these problems. Are we assessing high risk electorates of provinces? In 2017, there were some provinces that were in green, some in amber, some in red. In 2022 most of the provinces were in the red, and those who were in the green before were now in amber; and that includes NCD, even Kokopo and Alotau.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So we are getting worse?

Mr DAVID MANNING – We are getting worse, yes, sir. In as far as we can be more effective in how we deploy. Of course, security is not cheap; but money aside, we need to make sure that we protect the process. At some point if things don't change, we will run out of manpower to make sure that electoral process protected as best we can throughout the country. So there needs to be some significant consideration for a change in how we conduct our elections.

And the biometrics is one that we would strongly recommend that it be explored, and if there is an opportunity to use it, and again as I said, so it then allows us to divvy up the country insofar as how quickly we can conduct the whole electoral process and get it over and done with and then we can go and concentrate on the difficult ones.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– Yes, very good, Commissioner. Of the 2017 'red zones,' did you have special strategies, and did those 'red zones' improve? The areas that were marked red in 2017.

Mr DAVID MANNING – In 2017?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What strategies did you deploy?

Mr DAVID MANNING – Yes, as the question was asked about pre-election deployments that were done, it was easier. Well there is no such thing as easy during the elections but we were able to achieve the desired outcome because the 'red zones' were in a particular region. In the last threat analysis, it is pretty much across the country. We just don't have the capacity to do that. And of course, that is where we were left significantly challenged to deliver a safe and secure elections.

In 2022, again, there were similar challenges and of course depending on who you consult or talk to, they will tell you the same that we were significantly challenged in ensuring that the electoral process was as secure as it possibly could be.

For 2027, of course learning from our lessons in 2022, we are committed to ensuring that we play our part to reform how we do things to best support the electoral process. It would go a long way to hear that from other partners in the electoral process that they too are doing the same thing.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– It would be good if you can give the committee a detailed expenditure report and whether, for example, if you received funding outside of the Government such as from our bilateral partners or others. If that could be included in a submitted report.

Mr DAVID MANNING – Yes, sir.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Of the expenditure, what components were the most expensive apart the personnel? Were the issues more problematic during the campaigning phase, polling phase or the counting phase?

Mr DAVID MANNING – We have all that information for you. In fact, we have insisted that we not only analyse our operational performance but our financial performance as well. We have both the operational and financial debrief and it does depict the information that you require. But, yes, it did ramp up during the operations itself. It purposely is designed to do so, obviously, when there is more manpower on the ground and more logistic costs involved. But outside of allowances, logistics took up a lot of our budget, especially air support. For air support, we were tracking well until at some point during the elections we had to make the decision to release our air support, because we paid well in advance, and of course it pays to plan for these things. We planned for and paid for the number of helicopters required to deliver the elections and deliver the security support to the elections. It was only after we finished from Enga, and that was the first province to finish from polling when we had to make the call to release all our air support to support the Electoral Commission. So we had to move our security funded assets, we only retained two and the rest went to polling team for dropping off and pick-ups and they were struggling to secure that service and that actually came out from the security and not Electoral Commission because we saw it was necessary and needed to be made otherwise the whole electoral process would have collapsed

Mr CHAIRMAN – Interesting revelation.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – K240 million for securities definitely have big exercise in your opinion. How do we reduce that right down? Not just the security but to get these K240 million to buy health, education and so on rather than spending on that one three to four months' period of security, your observation please.

Mr DAVID MANNING – I agree Deputy Chair, these monies could be best spent elsewhere, you are preaching to the converted –

Sir PUKA TEMU – What will reduce your cost and interventions can we take under the reforms in your opinion to reduce the security cost?

Mr DAVID MANNING – So we went into this election with very strong financial guidelines. In fact, we actually sorted out our outstanding bills before we went into the elections and we used that money to do that as well. But otherwise from the last financial report very few service providers their bills have been sorted out but unlike previous elections we had not outstanding bills. But apart from that the only way where we can reduce the election cost is based on the duration and the number of personnel engaged in it. But the best answers would be from collective efforts across all the agencies involved and not just us.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Any comments from the Members? Nogat a? Before I excuse you Commissioner I just wanted to thank you on behalf of the Committee and the people of PNG for giving us an insight into the difficult work that you and the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary had performed during the election. Just by way of rounding up by talking to the Electoral Commission and talking to yourself now. The Electoral Commission has told us that they need about K300 million to update the electoral roll and they need about K460 million to conduct the election. And your numbers are at K240 million so that already takes us past a

billion kina just to conduct one election. So and listening to you I am actually concerned about your scary conditions and in 2017 you had some areas were green as you described in your report and color code the different provinces as to the risk they posed. Some are red, yellow and some are green and we like that report actually so that we can show this to the people of PNG, obviously there is something you used for your purposes.

But our people need to understand that in 2017 many provinces were yellow, some were red and the rest were green. Are you telling us in 2022, almost everyone is red? So that shows an escalating risk and you're saying that 2027 is going to be absolutely worse than 2022 and you want to get ready for that essentially.

Mr DAVID MANNING – Correct sir

Closing remarks

Mr CHAIRMAN – So we need to make a change and the thing is the proceedings of this Committee are being broadcasted around the country and Papua New Guineans are listening in and I hope they are as concerned as we are. Because for many things like the Electoral Commission a lot of things I didn't know. Even though I'm a member of Parliament and I think my colleagues didn't know. A lot of the things you are telling us now we didn't know. If we didn't know, obviously the bulk of Papua New Guinea don't know. Our role here is to understand firstly of all the difficulties of conducting elections and second of all, to look at how we can improve them.

There is a common trend when the Electoral Commissioner sat there, and he kind of got a bit of agitated, he said 'we are doing this for the people, these are their elections' he said. They need to take ownership of the elections and then we had Paul Barker from INA, he basically said the same thing and then now you're saying the same thing the people need to take more ownership of the elections. So obviously, there's a total misnomer or great misunderstanding between those of you who are only doing your jobs and those of you whose benefit you're trying to do the work for.

Let me just reiterate again the thanks from the Committee from Parliament for the work that you have done in very difficult circumstances. I want to also commend you for making a decision where you gave your air support to support the Electoral Commission for their outcomes. I mean these are things we didn't know and now that we know we are all for making elections safer and making them better and hopefully reducing the time it takes to deliver a result. We will consider all these sorts of things but we would like to see that in writing, your opinion on things like how should the voting be conducted, the preparations prior to the Elections and when you think the funding should be forthcoming in what years prior to. Electoral Commission will be giving us a similar document. We want to be able to go to Parliament and say these are things we must lock in; we can't wait for February 2027 to start planning for the elections.

We want to collate all of that, in terms of practical nuts and bolts of delivering an election. Obviously in terms of some of the things we would like to see that might be a little bit difficult. Obviously, we want to try things like bio metrics and voter IDs. You mentioned the electoral roll, the Commission did the same. They are struggling with it. We can't keep doing the same things for the past 48 years. We need to do them better; we need to look at technology. Perhaps that will help all of you but it will help the whole country. By helping you and the Electoral Commission and others, 1 billion kina plus for an election is crazy numbers. But I guess that's the cost we pay for the risk. It's a high risk too many people willing to do the wrong thing to

get an illegitimate outcome. And so the cost of delivering the elections is going to keep going up unless we start do deal with everything. Again let me thank you and the people of Papua New Guinea who are watching.

This ends the first day of our inquiry into the 2022 General Elections and Elections generally. We have two more days to go so I want to thank everyone who tuned in around the country and I want to thank our audience particularly. Even though we were a little bit thin after lunch but that happens. Thank you all very much and we look forward to seeing you all tomorrow. Please join me in thanking the Commissioner and our other parties.
I know declare the first day of public hearing suspended until tomorrow.

(End of day 1)

DAY TWO

22nd February 2023

Transcript

Time: 10am

Venue: State Function Room

In Attendance

Committee Members

Honourable Allan Bird – Chairman

Sir Puka Temu – Deputy Chairman

Honourable Robert Naguri

Honourable Jacob Maki

Witnesses

Mr Mark Goina – Major General-Chief of PNGDF

Mr Stephen Pokanis – Commissioner - CIS

Mr John Igitoi – National Statistician

Dr Ken Ngangan– Secretary Department of Finance

Mrs Napa Hurim– Deputy Secretary Budget Operations

Mr Hans Margis – First Assistant Secretary

Mr Joseph Warus- Secretary DPLG

Mr Larson Thomas – Acting Deputy Secretary

Mr Ken Gaso- Director LLGS- DPLG

Papua New Guinea Defence Force

Mr CHAIRMAN – Let me call to order again the committee hearings for the Special Parliamentary Committee on the National General Elections 2022, and a special welcome to all our people around the country who are looking into this live broadcast of the proceedings.

We are happy to have the Commanding officer of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force and his Deputy Secretary to start the proceedings for today. Generally, we welcome and thank you for coming to the hearings. I am very pleased to see that you've got a very well prepared and structured presentation. I have to say that this is probably the best presentation we've seen so far. Without further ado, I'll let you go straight into the presentation and we will ask you questions after.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr MARK GOINA (Major General-PNGDF) – Thank you, Chairman, Honourable Mr Allan Bird, and members of the Special Parliamentary Committee on the 2022 National General Elections.

The Deputy Secretary, Mr Samadin Apai, and myself are honoured to be here to present to you the PNG Defence Force's contribution to the national elections by way of support to the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary for a provision of security to ensure that we set the conditions for the Electoral Commission to conduct a fair, free and transparent national elections in 2022.

Chairman, by way of this presentation, I'd like to give you the scope as to how this presentation would be delivered. I will go through this, especially stating the purpose, the mandate in which the PNGDF was engaged, the assumptions and intelligence that led to the conduct of our operations in support of the police, and the mission statement and strategic objectives that we wanted to achieve to ensure that the police are fully supported, and setting the conditions for the Electoral Commission to conduct the elections and also give you a snapshot of how we deployed, especially around the country by way of land, maritime and air elements.

I also want to stress a little bit on the bilateral partner support because they played an important part in the delivery of the elections.

I'll also touch on the budget expenditure summary to give you an idea of how we managed the budget from the time we were given the funds up until now given the fact that we are still up in the area of operation. I hope to draw on some lessons from our contributions and key recommendations going forward. Following that, the deputy secretary and I would be available if there are any questions the committee may have.

The purpose of the brief is to provide the PNGDF's preparations and conducts of security support operations to Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary for the 2022 National General Elections and also show to you the bilateral investment in support of the elections.

This is essential given the fact that I want to draw some lessons out of that to give us some ideas as to how we can be able to invest well ahead of time to ensure that we provide the best support to our Government in the activities that they task us to do, and also to provide some lessons learnt of our key recommendations based on what we have seen in preparations for the National General Elections 2027.

As you are aware the PNGDF is responsible for external security matters, but this operation we are guided by *Section 202(3) Functions of the Defence Force* and *Section 204 of the Constitution* gives legal effect to call-out the PNGDF in aid to civil power, in this case the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary.

Emanating from that, an NEC decision was made to give effect to that call-out to support the civil power and to support the elections. Based on that, the following authorizations were given to us by way of the *National Gazette* and the plans from the Electoral Commission as well as the orders issued by the Police Commissioner. From that we derived our concept of operation and our orders were written to support the Police for the 2022 National General Elections.

The key assumptions and strategic intelligence – based on the information we collected, we were concerned as far as the red dots are concerned of the buildup of ammunitions and arms in those areas, especially up in the highlands and some parts of the country. We wanted to make sure that all the areas of concern were properly covered. And based on that, our assumptions were to ensure that we get additional support in case the security situation changes. And the Budget was very critical to make sure we continue our support and deployment and sustain our forces during our operations and after the operations as well.

Based on what was given to us, we also planned to deploy our force elements throughout all provinces, as we realized the change in behavior and conduct of our people had changed. PNGDF's mission and key objectives was to support the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary to provide a secure environment to ensure that the Electoral Commission conducted the 2022 General Elections successfully no later than 29 July 2022.

The key objectives are to ensure we prepared to support the National General Elections; support a free, fair and transparent election and set up our headquarters, one in the highlands and the other in Lae, Morobe Province. We also took into consideration the additional troops to support the other parts of the province through a whole of government arrangement of which East Sepik, Sandaun, Manus and parts of the other provinces benefitted from that arrangement.

I also wanted to make sure that there is logistic support to support our force elements throughout the operation. Also, the key to that was to ensure liaisons between all government agencies and bilateral partners.

As you are aware, there is a lot of moving parts and we want to make sure that everything is synched very well to provide the support. If there were requirements, we then provided additional improvements to support those provinces that needed extra help.

With the key operational timelines, I want to appraise you with how we conducted the operations. There were four phases to the operations. The first one is the preliminary operation where we conducted the pre-deployment training and then followed by phase one, which is the shaping. The shaping is very important for us to make sure we set the conditions for the main body to arrive and conduct the operations.

On phase two, the main body arrived around June and July to conduct the operations. In phase three, we reconstituted to make sure that those that are not required in operation are returned to their respective units. We reset, retrain and re-org for further tasking. Because we were required to continue to support the police up until 31 December, we also had to issue a

Fragmented Order (FRAGO) to make sure that we continue to provide the support to police post and the national elections up until 31 December.

Just to give you some idea of how we deployed all the force elements as per the slide that is before you, we had divided up the area in three. The main effort being the highlands provinces where we deployed 560 personnel. In the north coast and the New Guinea Islands, 440 personnel. Whole of government, those that were not included in the operations order but at the request of the provincial steering committees for the elections through the provincial administrators in East Sepik, West Sepik, Western, Manus, NCD and Central provinces, we initially allocated 500 personnel but given the security situations in those provinces, we were forced to increase the force size to 1000 personnel. So, for the first time after the Bougainville crisis, we had to deploy over 2000 military personnel to support the Police in this operation. A very big undertaking, as far as we are concerned.

In terms of land element, most of the deployments were up in the highlands, especially in Hela, Enga, Western Highlands, Jiwaka and Chimbu provinces supported by specialist forces in those provinces with Intelligence and logistics.

In the North Coast, especially in the Momase areas and New Guinea Islands, we supported New Ireland, West New Britain, Morobe, Oro and East New Britain with special unit support to them as well.

In terms of maritime support, this played a very key part especially as we think sometimes, we come from a land-based country but you can see the enormous sea that we have. So, we deployed HMPNGS Rokslokinap, HMPNGS Agwi and HMPNGS Lakakamu. Lakakamu was in Milne Bay, Rokslokinap was in West New Britain and Morobe and Agwi was in New Ireland and East New Britain provinces.

In terms of air element, Chairman and members, this is a very concerned area for the PNGDF,

I know that we are not linked by roads and this is a challenge that we continue to face every election. Without the support of our bilateral partners we wouldn't have delivered what the Government expected us to do.

I want to make a special mention to Australia who through the Australian Defence Force planned well in advance, almost three to four years in advance to provide this support to us with the provision of a C-130 and two C-27 aircrafts, the one just below the C-130 and two DCP List helicopters to the PNGDF. Additional to the two List helicopters, they also hired another two helicopters for us to use of which during the course of the operations, were given to the Electoral Commission because they needed helicopter support.

So, I was left with only two but they played an important part, so as a lead government agency on the elections, the Police Commissioner and the Correctional Services Commissioner and I had to make sure that he delivered on all his tasks so all the help he needed, we had to provide. Our pilots are only provided liaison roles and we provided the ground support to all the ADF aircrafts that were being used during the operations.

I'd like to go a little bit further on the bilateral partner support. ADF, when we initially had these discussions, had a plan two to three years in advance to support these operations. So, their capability investment to support the PNGDF was K45 million. That is excluding the air support they provided to us. We could not get that from the Royal Australian Airforce in terms of fuel costs and all that so we are unable to provide that. In terms of provision of vehicles, field equipment, uniforms and ammunition, the amount that was invested was K45 million. And also, the other partners like New Zealand, US and Britain also supported us with pre-

development training to make sure that our men and women are properly trained to take on the responsibility of conducting security operations.

Chair and members, under the Defence Corporative Program ADF was very kind enough to provide us logistics, vehicles, uniforms, body vests, two rotary-wing helicopters with an additional two more and also a civil and a fixed-wing hired within PNG to help support us in addition to those three Royal Air Force there were also provided.

So this picture here gives you a fair idea of what kind of support we were given. You can see all those green vehicles are part of the investments they have made in supporting us to prepare PNGDF for the National General Elections, including all the field equipment and uniforms. The pictures of the uniforms are there but the staff did not put it on. So those are some of the investments that Australia has made for the PNGDF.

This gives you a budget expenditure summary for Defence. We were allocated K100 million initially. In December, we were given another K5 million for the follow-on operations. As you are aware, around December there was an extension of the call-out from the 1st of January 2023 – 23rd of February 2024. So that K5 million was given to us to keep us going up until now. We budgeted for K1000 personnel only. However, due to increase in manpower we were lucky enough to accommodate that by ensuring that we use the savings that we made from our partners' support, especially with the purchase of uniforms, vehicles and air mobility and other support they gave us. We saved up to almost K6 – K7 million to help us redirect that money to capability investment. We paid for new vehicles, tactical radios and so many other things that we needed to help us deliver the effect the Government wanted us to do during elections. This has also sustained the post-National Election 2022 security operations till now.

PNGDF has fully expended the K100 million by 31st December 2022 and currently we are using the K5 million which will finish soon. I have not got the latest figure but I am of the view that by mid-March or late March we will be seeking additional funding to keep us going. The budget summary before you is correct as at early November 2022. I'm unable to give you the current figures but I am pretty sure that as soon as we get the figures, we are in target and applying the money as per our expenditure plans.

The key to our success in controlling the budget is leadership. The secretary and I took control of the budget from the start until now. There was budget discipline so that we did not spend outside of the plans that we have and that is why it kept us going this far. So, this photo I just wanted to put it up because I wanted to make a point this morning. Capital acquisition takes time and the procurement process is cumbersome. For the Defence Force to deliver the kind of effect the Government requires, the investment period is two to three years or even three to four years. Out of the 56 vehicles that were paid for, 18 vehicles are yet to be delivered. These vehicles that you see on the slide just came in about few days ago, well after the elections were delivered. We had to hire additional vehicles to keep us going.

I am hoping to recommend strongly here that for any national event, we need to have this investment done well in advance so that we get the equipment that we need to help the Government deliver on the task on time.

This is mainly because the funding came in quite late and we were struggling to get all these things for the operations. Sir, these are some of the lessons learnt. They are many and I would have liked to remove some of them but for the benefit of the committee, I felt that it was important to leave them on for you to deliberate on.

I think the important lessons learnt is that planning was very late, not properly coordinated, and war-gamed for a synchronised plan from a whole of government construct. A national event like the national general elections is complex. The security complexity is enormous.

The behaviour and conduct of our people have completely changed. As you have seen, we did not anticipate the burning of ballot papers in Morobe, but it happened. It took us by surprise. There were areas where it was peaceful, especially in NCD and other parts of the country like West New Britain. It gave us a big lesson to learn.

Therefore, planning is key to delivering an effective and efficient response to the support that government needs. And this planning in my point of view, must be done well in advance. For the national elections, even for the national census, this planning must take place at least two to three years before the event is conducted so that all those coordination issues, logistic issues, funding issues, capital investment issues are addressed way before the actual event takes place. We do not have to wait until the time when we are conducting the activity and then we are trying to invest. By then it's very, very late.

I would like to recommend strongly that investment is done yearly so that when it comes to the actual conduct of the activity, the cost is minimal because all those requirements that PNGDF, the Police, the Correctional Services, and even the Electoral Commission need are all addressed well in advance so that the transition into the conduct of the activity is smooth and delivered as required and expected by the Government.

The state's capital investments, you have already seeing examples where our vehicles came in very late because of funding coming in very late. Our systems and processes, especially to comply with the Financial Management Act and the procurement processes take time so we need to see that capital investments are done early.

The level of coordination was a concern from my point, especially the strategic level for commissioners; CDF, Correctional Commissioner and also the Commissioner of the Electoral Commission. We need people at the top that have networking relationship so that you are able to communicate well. We struggle trying to communicate among ourselves so this is one area that I would like to see improvement and that goes to show that people that are appointed have those right credentials and attributes to provide leadership at that level.

Mr CHAIRMAN – General, that is a good point you made but could you be more specific as to which people and positions?

Mr MARK GOINA – Among ourselves, especially at our level. Not at the political level but around the departments.

Mr CHAIRMAN – You mean the heads of the department? Which specific heads of departments?

Mr MARK GOINA – Yes. In this case I felt that in the lead agency, the Electoral Commissioner, was not engaging enough with every one of us to address all those coordination issues because all of us felt that he was the lead agency. He sets the perimeters and we provide the support to him so, in the future, having somebody that can be able to easily communicate can deliver an important activity like this.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Fair point, you may continue.

Mr MARK GOINA– Sir, population behavior and conduct raise serious concerns. What is driving them is something that all leaders, at all levels should study and address.

I say this because it poses a huge security challenge to the security forces and most importantly our innocent people who get caught because of the behavior of our voters such as burning down and hijacking of ballot boxes. All these behavior conducts are not acceptable and we need to seriously look into this and try to address it at all levels.

It gives a very concerning signal especially to the security force members. We do not want to come to a point where we engage with them in a fire-fight.

What we would like to see is voters behaving correctly so that others can go and cast their votes freely without cohesion. The behaviour from the 2012, 2017 and 2022 has changed dramatically. I foresee that the 2027 Elections will be even worse.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you, General. In the interest of time, we will go to questions and we may cut into the presentation, but it might be similar to yours. The CIS Commissioner might be brief when we do get him on.

It's interesting that you and the Commissioner for Police have similar grave concerns. Before I ask these questions, I want to commend you and your team for a very professional and detailed presentation. Your assessments are going to fit into our report. For us as members of Parliament, we are unaware of the complexities of running a national election. We come out on the other hand but we do not know about the things that happened before us.

You have made some very significant recommendations, for instance, things like planning. These are things that we can hard-wire into the future conduct of elections. The things that we can engineer out are things like early procurement. Your points are taken and these are things that we can legislate or do something about it in order to make your jobs easier in the future.

My biggest concern is what you and Commissioner Manning have raised. You said future security challenges are linked to our citizens' behaviour, conduct and attitude, destruction of property and lives and the national general election is a high security risk. You have said a few minutes ago, that you expect it to get worse. This should alarm all of us. I want to ask if you and the Police Force have a working intelligence apparatus.

Mr MARK GOINA – Mr Chairman, we have. The issue at the moment is that, there should be a centre where we collect all the information. Right now, we have our own intelligence but we don't bring it together.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So what do you need? Do you need government legislation?

Mr MARK GOINA – No. We just have to try and get together and provide, and get NIO-OISCA to be the conduit for that to happen.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Is OISCA working? I think your hesitation is a good indication.

Mr MARK GOINA – We need to do more in that space.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Coming back to this, from your assessment and by looking at the report here, the biggest risk is the behaviour of the citizens themselves in terms of elections. My questions are as follows;

(1) You are on the frontlines, so how do we fix that?

- (2) How do we remove the element of violence in future elections?
- (3) Would you have a proposition for us?
- (4) Do we go in six months earlier and conduct raids to disrupt those operations?
- (5) What do we do?
- (6) Do we change the laws so that we arrest people before they perpetrate?

We need to find solutions and that's why this Committee is here. It's easier to find blame but it's harder to find solutions. Can you tell us your experiences?

We will be calling the Police Commissioner back in order to ask the same questions.

Mr MARK GOINA – Mr Chairman, as far as I'm concerned, these are very hard questions. The citizen's behaviour is a direct result of who they support –

Mr CHAIRMAN – So you are saying that the candidates themselves might be – do you know which candidates in which area? Is it possible for us to identify them?

Mr MARK GOINA – I think from our experience, mostly up in the highlands, the voter behaviour up in the highlands is the most high-risk area for us, especially security wise.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So I might suggest to you that the highlands behaviour of election is being exported down to the coast, wouldn't you say? So pretty soon it will be all of us.

Mr MARK GOINA – My recommendation is to make sure that all the candidates need to keep their supporters from behaving in a manner that's not fitting, especially in ensuring that we conduct a free, fair and transparent election.

Mr CHAIRMAN – And if some of those candidates are already members of Parliament, dictating policy, what do we do?

Mr MARK GOINA – That is a hard question again –

(Interjections)

Mr CHAIRMAN – It's our country, General, and you are responsible for one of the security apparatuses, so I'm putting the question to you.

Mr MARK GOINA – As an agency supporting the policy, that is subject to the Police Commissioner to deal with. If there were laws broken those candidates who have been elected leaders, some measures need to be taken to make sure that that kind of conduct and behaviour should not continue because innocent lives are being lost here. People are being killed, properties are being destroyed, because of supporters trying to get their candidate to win. So to my point of view –

Mr CHAIRMAN – Can I ask another question, sorry to interrupt you. What do you think is motivating this violent behaviour in order to win a seat; what do you think? You people out there in the frontline, you probably engage with some of these people in terms of trying to talk them down and whatnot. What do you find is the motivation for this very violent and aggressive behaviour in order to win a democratic seat in Parliament illegally?

Mr MARK GOINA – To be honest, in my side of the province, most of our people are only interested in – for example, you give them a bit of rice and tinned fish or you give them a little bit of cash and they will vote for you. They are not serious about party policies; looking at the candidates themselves whether they are fit to lead the electorate. Up in the highlands, it's completely a different matter altogether. Our view from our experience is that, these relate to support that the leader would provide to that particular village or tribe. Because of that, they amass themselves to supporting that particular candidate to the extent of harming others.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you Major General Goina and Deputy Secretary Tunapai; as pointed out by the Chairman, very excellent presentation, and I'm personally very impressed and very thankful for the professionalism that you have brought to this particular committee. We are very happy that it will be part of our report.

I would recommend others to come to do the same; makes it easier for all of us, rather than just come with verbal explanations.

I have a couple of questions. On page 3 of your presentation, you presented red dots. You stated that the red dots indicate the areas which your Intelligence picked up and identified as having an increase in arms.

Explain to us your Intelligence work. When did you start picking up those movements of the guns? What happened when you knew that in these three areas guns were building up but nobody was talking about it. Why? That is my first question.

Mr MARK GOINA - Thank you, Deputy Chairman. That is a good question. These assessments are done on an annual basis. Through our Intelligence, we monitor the trafficking of arms, through the arrows that I have indicated from the border of Indonesia and PNG across –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So mainly from our land border, not from the sea border? Solomon Islands, Australia border?

Mr MARK GOINA – There are some, but those are picked up on notice, but the ones that are being given to us are coming from those sides.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– What type of arms?

Mr MARK GOINA –These are mainly factory-made weapons that come through there. But that is the question that I have been asking – the profiling of those arms. Every time there is a presentation, they are telling us that the arms are coming this way, and then you see them ending up at tribal fights up in the Highlands.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– Has your Intelligence been tracking who does the orders and where do they end up? Are these groups or individuals, or is it our Police or our Defence? Who? Politicians?

Mr MARK GOINA – Put it this way; this has been an ongoing concern for us. Because of the lack of collaboration between all the agencies, especially the Police and Defence and the Intelligence community, we have not actually profiled those that are responsible and pinpoint the types of weapons that are coming through. But what we see is that when we have incidences of tribal fights and these weapons are shown and used –

Mr CHAIRMAN – Can I follow up – once your Intelligence picks up the weapons or the movement of the weapon, what do we do then? Yumi save olsem samting stap long hap na yumi just lusim olsem, or are there any follow-up actions?

Obviously, these are illegal weapons and they have the potential to cause serious internal security threats. So, what do we do about it? Is there a mechanism for, I suppose, interdicting and making arrests and so on and so forth? Is there such a thing?

Mr MARK GOINA – That is a good question, Chairman. From my point of view, I think the issue is collaboration among ourselves to make sure that whatever we are picking up is shared with Police or the Intelligence community so we can work together to –

Mr CHAIRMAN– Are you saying it is not shared at the moment and hasn't been in the past?

Mr MARK GOINA – I don't think so, as far as I am concerned. Because for Defence, we monitor and track where the arms are coming from but because it's not within our jurisdiction –

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, let's get to that. It's a police jurisdiction and these are weapons coming in from outside the country and so it's not a border policing issue? And if it's a border policing issue, who is responsible for it? Is it your responsibility as the PNGDF or is it the responsibility of the RPNGC?

Mr MARK GOINA – Initially it's the PNGDF responsibility to ensure that our borders are secured on both land and sea. And because of the ruggedness and the number of patrols conducted along the border, there are gaps that appear and people come through those gaps to bring in the arms. When it enters the country then it's the responsibility of the PNGRC.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Major General, you have just affirmed yourself and the Committee that this is a big security issue and you were able to plot the red dots in the appropriate part of the country. As a member of the National Security Advisory Committee (NSAC) and since your appointment, how many meetings have you attended with the National Security Advisory Committee?

Mr MARK GOINA – About two times now.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Aren't these things part of the coordination issue that you have been talking about and has it been discussed at the NSAC so you can advise the NSAC of which the Prime Minister is the Chairman? Where has this gone and why is the information missing? And it's popping up now and has dragged on after the election? But you were able to plot the red dots and the Police Commissioner yesterday also said that there were red dots. We are running a country and not just the elections and that's the point.

Mr MARK GOINA – I agree Deputy Chairman, that's the area where we need to step up as head of the security agencies and we need to do more in ensuring information amongst ourselves so that we can inform NEC correctly. At this point in time in my view, this is not been done and as a result there is no profiling on people that are responsible, the type of weapons and ammunition that is coming in –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – In your opinion, Major General, who are the major perpetrators of the movement of these firearms? Is it ordinary rascals in the country? Are they leaders that are organizing these business people, priest or who are they? Can you tell the committee?

Mr MARK GOINA – Deputy Chairman, thank you –

Mr CHAIRMAN – Can I just advise you that you are protected by the Parliamentary Privilege so feel free to speak because no one is going to take you to court for the things that you say here, Sir, so please proceed.

Mr MARK GOINA – Well, my view is that anything that is of little is based on demand and where it can be used.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So people were preparing for the national election by building up the guns, that's what you are saying? You tell us what you, as the head of our Defence Force and your intelligence advice.

Mr MARK GOINA – Well, the national elections is a very contested event in PNG and every candidate spends huge amounts of money to participate in the elections and in some parts of our country, weapons is a tool to force voter behavior.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Major General, we all know that. Can I ask you, rather than going through these issues that we know, what would be your recommendations to manage this buildup of firearms for the elections? How would you want us to recommend to Parliament to stop this illegal thing from candidates or members of Parliament or ministers of state, or assigned police personnel aligned with politicians or soldiers with politicians; as they know where to pick these things up. Everybody knows where these things are. They go and pick them up, go to the border with trucks and all and this I'm sure is done by human beings. And as you have said, 2027 will be worse; yes, but we do not want it to be worse. These red spots from this year 2023 onwards, how are you going to help us, the state, to stop the build up of these illegal weapons in the country over the next three years?

Mr MARK GOINA - In my recommendations, I stated very clearly to establish a permanent inter-agency planning team. That is the way to go.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - Who do you want this team to comprise of as we already have National Security Advisory Council, NIO? Who do you want on this team and what type of new inter-agency will this be? We have laws governing that already and structures are in place, but you are not working together and sharing information.

Mr MARK GOINA – Sir, let me explain little bit on this so you understand. In any operation, planning is key to derive all those things that you have raised today.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN- I understand. What I want to know is who is going to be on this planning committee.

Mr MARK GOINA - All the CACC members, those current members should have representatives in the team. A planning team should comprise of all the IDEC members and those others that we think should be there. I want to step back a little on this. Planning in military setting is very important and we plan for activities 3-4 years down the line. And through the planning process we derive the threat situation.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - Major General, we already commended you for your presentation and you did very well in this election because of your planning and you do not have to emphasize on that. We are looking for a solution.

Mr MARK GOINA - This is the solution that I am trying to recommend to you. The key to find out and profiling every person that owns a gun or is smuggling guns is through the planning process with all the key agencies in there. So, those activities take 2-3 years in advance so we mitigate and once we establish...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - Can I intervene? We agree with you and there is no question about that. 2022 National General Elections was not the first elections in this country. We are now heading towards our 50th Independence Anniversary. In your statement you said and I quote; 'Planning was not done in advance;' and that is what you are emphasizing. My question is why didn't all of you, the heads of agencies, plan ahead knowing that in 2022 there will be a national general election? What prevented you from planning in advance? And what can we do to help you as a committee to recommend for proper planning? As to what we need, this is the structure we need. Tell us why planning did not take place.

Mr MARK GOINA - Thank you, unfortunately, I was not in the country to provide that advise but now that I am in a position to provide that advise, I will do it. That's my simple answer.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Fair enough, General, just a bit of elaboration here. I mean once you've done your planning, say you get this inter-agency planning team together, what are the real actions we can do on the ground like for example; do we set up a taskforce that goes out there and get on all these people? I mean let's be honest we might have to wipe out some people in order to take the guns. We want to remove the guns from whoever is hanging onto them so that we don't have a worse situation than we had in 2022.

So, this is about talking straight here. Not every Member of Parliament won the elections using guns and there are those of us in Parliament who abhor that kind of behavior. We want to ensure that proper behavior is exercised. I mean you got villains on both sides; you've got losing candidates who cause problems and winning candidates who cause problems, obviously they live amongst us, they are not aliens.

So, we've got to figure how between yourself and sister security agencies are going to come to us and say; look this what we need to do. We need the planning and action entity and if we do these things people are going to die, there's going to be a very high-risk operation but these are things we need to do before 2027 Elections, which means that we start in 2023, but in order to do that we have to use this committee. This is the first time in our history, we have an election committee. You've got to use our powers to give you what you want and in order to do that you need to speak straight to us even if you offend some of your colleagues. You have to trust that some of us here will stand up on the floor to defend you because we want a better country and you have to trust us.

You can't assume that all members of Parliament are in collusion and we are all hellbent on destroying the country. No! You have to assume that there are good people in Parliament as well and some of them are looking at you this morning. And so, we are here asking for your help but we are also here to help you, it's a two-way street.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you, Major General, you did allude to our long procurement processes. We did have the Covid experiences and the legislation for special procurement.

What's your view on recommending that for election purposes? The committee may have to look at a one of the special procurement legislations with a sunset clause and that everything is done on time. Budget for Defence, Police, Electoral Commission, Department of Finance, National Procurement Committee and everybody must cooperate under that sunset special procurement election bill.

What is your view? Because you say that your vehicle just arrived six months after the election. We know Covid issues and global transportation issues affected that but some of us also know that our procurement processes created a very long neck. So, what is your experience on this?

Mr MARK GOINA– Sir, thank you, I'll speak for Defence first. Our special equipment are only meant for the military and they are very specific and we do trials ourselves. Based on the trials, we determine the best equipment for PNGDF.

Previously we had a Defence tender board and all our needs were processed through that particular board. Since it was disbanded we are going through the normal national procurement process. So it takes a little bit longer to bring in ammunition, weapons and other specialist equipment that we need for our men and women.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - So, your past procurement process has now been moved into NPC so you don't have a stand-alone Defence Force even for your highly specialized defence specific items. That's what you are saying?

Mr MARK GOINA– No!

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And you are saying that you need it back.

Mr MARK GOINA - That's one I would recommend that we bring it back to the Defence so that it makes our procurement process a little easier rather than going through the normal process where you provide three quotes. We do procurement in a way that we do tests and based on that we pick one and it's only one quote that's going forward. So because of that, we don't meet the requirements of the national procurement process.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Mr Major General, by looking at your budget expenditure summary, you got some savings. You did say that your budget was very well managed and one point that I picked up is because unlike the Police, you have a secretary with you and you as a Major General and Commander of our Defence Force. And that looks like an advantage for you because you have a secretary making sure that everything is done on time and everything is done to the requirement of the law and you, as the head of Defence Force, you focus on the operations, making sure that our country is safe and et cetera, but somebody is there who is administering things like the funds to make sure that things are done on time.

We don't have that arrangement with the Police. Tell this committee your experience if you didn't have a secretary. How would you operate?

Mr MARK GOINA - This is what I can say. The Defence Force has a diarchy and we respect that that structure remains so to ensure policy and files are taken care of by my secretary. From my personal view, it has some disadvantages as well. It takes a longer process when the commander is making decisions without any visibility of funds. I want to make that very clear.

I'm making those decisions without any visibility of funds. For this particular general elections, I took control of the funds. I directed where the funds will go.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But somebody has to manage it while you are directing it.

Mr MARK GOINA – The secretary has to manage it and that's why the delivery of our support to the police is currently ongoing. My experience with the recurrent budget has some difficulty when I am working through the secretary to carry out orders.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Can I ask you, Major General, to put that in writing as a submission so that we can also look at it rather than explaining.

Mr MARK GOINA – Thank you, Deputy Chairman.

Honourable JACOB MAKI - Good morning, Major General. Thank you for your brief and very well prepared presentation.

In my view, we talked about the behaviour of voters in the polling places. In your observation of the behaviours of the people during voting, what are the sources of influence cause them to behave in such a manner?

What are the solutions that we have to take regarding these behaviors we have observed which we are now discussing? What will we do to prevent the same happening in 2027? That's the purpose of this inquiry.

I think these people are being influenced by things like money, power and firearms and they have the system in place knowing that there is no law. If they are caught, there is no law, that's why they do it continuously and create problems such as policemen, soldiers or generally our security force personnel being killed and other crimes being committed

I would like to ask this question based on what I have seen in the highlands region and some coastal areas. If there is a hauskrai, they display firearms and the firearms that are displayed come from our disciplined forces such as the Police Force, Defence Force and CIS. Some examples of weapons are the AR15, M16 rifles, et cetera. Where are they getting these firearms from?

I have never seen or heard of a member of the disciplined forces being arrested for issuing, selling or marketing of firearms. It has never happened. How do we control this? We can say they are obtaining it from outside the boundary through sea or land transport. But in our capacity, what are your plans to tighten this up, so that we make sure that one of the disciplined officers is not giving out or selling firearms to the public in exchange for money or other goods. We need to control this.

I believe that there are firearms which I have seen that belong to the disciplined forces. There are laws that the committee or the disciplined forces can recommend to people who are in possession of firearms. I have seen Asians and Papua New Guineans in possession of firearms. Can we confiscate and apprehend this people and bring them to justice? The law is very lenient and we need to impose laws to safeguard the disciplined forces, parliamentarians, committee and the public at large.

What are your recommendations, if firearms are only to be used by disciplined forces? Because when it gets to the hands of ordinary people of Papua New Guinea, our lives are threatened

during the election process. When they have weapons they are very powerful, they won't worry about the disciplined forces

Do we have a plan to remove these firearms from the general public before the next elections in 2027?

They don't bring in the guns from the bushes. They have the guns and are prepared to use them. They all know that a particular person has a gun. We should have some networks in place. Are we planning with the aid of the police, military and the committee? We must do something to recover the guns. We can talk about money later but these firearms, we have to take them back. Now you want an independent body to take charge of this. We have something already in place. If you have other avenues or options to present to the Committee, we are here to help and assist you. That's why we are talking and asking you questions. You can think along that line and walk with us and assist everybody to have things in a controllable manner. Thank you.

Mr MARK GOINA – Thank you, Member. It is a valid question and as I have said earlier, voter behaviour continues to pose a huge risk, not only to the security forces but also other voters that are going out there to cast their votes.

Their behaviour from our assessments through the conduct of all the voting in all the provinces, but most importantly up in the highlands, they are there to support their candidates. Candidates are the only people that can control their supporters. The supporters are driven by money or promises. They themselves know the reasons for why they are doing it.

What I will suggest in answer to that particular question is that this requires whole-of-government and the country's efforts to deal with it. No individual or even the security force can deal with it alone. It requires everyone to come together and address it, including the churches and NGOs. It is a very important issue that is affecting our election process.

In terms of weapons, for military, we have tightened up our armouries where we store all of our weapons and ammunition, following incidences where there was a break-and-enter in Taurama during the mutiny up in Wewak where we lost some weapons and some were lost during the Bougainville crisis. Those weapons continue to remain in the communities, unless they are no longer operational, they are discarded.

Based on the lessons that we have learnt, our security system has control of all our armouries where all our ammunition and weapons are kept, monitored and controlled.

Those that are going out on operations, we are now doing complete and detailed ammunition checks and weapons-return on a fortnightly basis so that we know that the ammunitions are not sold for money to warring tribes, or weapons being given away

So we have tighter control around that so in this point in time, Defence is very comfortable with our control of all our weapons and ammunitions.

Just a concern that was raised in Enga of allegations of us selling ammunitions, I've instigated a high-level investigation to go up there. We did a hundred percent stocktake of all ammunitions including weapons. From that finding, all our ammunitions were accounted for including the weapons. Only those that were accounted for but were used are the ones that were used during the incidences along the road where we were fired upon by criminals and we had to respond to make sure that we keep ourselves safe and also deal with the threat. So as far as Defence is concerned, we are quite happy with our stocktake of ammunitions and weapons.

In terms of other weapons that are in the hands of the criminals, this is a big challenge for all of us. There are other suggestions out there in public as to how we can be able do that. As a military person, if there's a military solution to it, I would stick for a state of emergency, block out the province, total control by the military, go in there, do the job and come out. Right now, I cannot do that because Police is the lead agency, I have to be in support of the Police.

The PPCs made the call. When they have plans for us to do, we go out and do it. We cannot go out and operate on our own. It's against the law for the Defence Force to go and do operations without the presence of policemen. So that is how we are operating, we are always trying to make sure that we abide by law and all our actions are dictated by police. But if the people want a hard knock to deal with that particular district or province that has those number of weapons, having military go in there, having total control, that means all the administration loses power, we take control of everything, we will run the district or province and we will deliver the effect that the government is seeking to achieve and then set the conditions and transition to the civil administration back and we pull out.

So those are some of the thinking if you are seeking a military solution to it but those require appropriate laws to be applied to make sure that the military is using it in that manner. So that's what I can offer in relation to what you say but I am very concerned of the weapons that are in the hands of the public.

As security agencies, we must do more by trying to establish where these weapons are coming in, who is bringing them in, the type of weapons, type of ammunitions and profiling them so we can do an intelligence-led operation to target those people, neutralize them, pick up their weapons, pick up their ammunitions, take those responsible, arrest them and bring them to court. That's the way I suggest we could do.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Thank you, Chairman, for giving me the floor. Good morning Major General Goina and the public. I don't have any questions, just a few comments to make before we sum up. Thank you so much for your presentation, a well-presented budget expenses summary, lessons learnt, recommendations, that's what the committee needs to move forward.

This committee will be here till 2027 National Elections. You will still be the Defence Force commander till 2027 Elections if your contract allows. I would encourage you to keep in touch with the Chairman. Come 2025, beginning of 2025, there are twists before elections. We have to have a very effective dialogue between you, this committee, Police, CIS and most importantly the Electoral Commission. So please, we are politicians, we have so much to do and we will at times forget these things. I would like to encourage you to get the contacts from our staff from the Parliament, this committee here, so we can stay in touch. Come 2025, two years before elections we should start coming together. Use us as a conduit or medium to bring the Police, the Electoral Commission and you here and let us start to prepare for 2027.

This is the practicality that we are talking about here. We know all the issues and all the negativity we have talked about. We are moving forward, we want to make 2027 the best election since this is the first time this committee has been established by the government and we want to see a lot of things changed. The 2022 Elections was the worst elections ever, we want to make 2027 National Election the best elections. So I would encourage you to keep in touch with the Chairman and the committee and we can find solutions before the 2027 Elections. Thank you very much for your time. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN – General, once again, commendations. Thank you so much. If we sounded a little bit like we are badgering you, I think that is the sort of job that the people would like to see us doing. You are our good friend, the country needs you and your men and we stand ready to assist you. Let me once again thank you for the very comprehensive and detailed presentation that we will certainly utilize. You are now excused, Sir.

Mr MARK GOINA – Thank you very much, I really appreciate the time and honour to present this brief to the committee. Thank you and God Bless.

Correctional Service PNG

Mr CHAIRMAN - The committee now calls upon Mr Stephen Pokanis from the PNG Correctional Services.

To the participants, we have two restrooms on either side if you need to use them. There is also coffee and tea, please feel free to help yourself. If you need to use a phone I would ask you to step outside and do so. If you are inside, I ask that your phone be kept on silent.

Commissioner, we welcome you to these proceedings and thank you for your participation and again like the Defence Force I think you have got a very comprehensive report before us. I would like you to just summarize, given that I think we had something very comprehensive from the preceding participant, so if you may just summarize your presentation and go straight to your recommendation. Thank you.

Mr STEPHEN POKANIS (Commissioner- Correctional Services) – Thank you Chairman and Deputy Chair and your esteemed committees. The summary of this presentation is before you. The Correctional Services has deployed 614 officers. We had officers who participated actively with the Police, the Electoral Commission and where Defence establishments are and also with officers from the subnational level. About 300 officers were deployed to the highlands by the orders of the Police. In total about 38 percent of the officers were deployed for the 2022 Elections.

The budget estimate for the election was initially K54 million. But real money was K11. 6 million given to Correctional Services. The allocation was given to be exact on the 11th hour. Six months prior to the election, the Inter-departmental Election Committee was set up. The chair was the Secretary to PM and NEC and currently the incumbent Chief Secretary. And members of the IDEC were the three disciplinary forces, Secretary for Finance, Secretary for Treasury and also Department of Personnel Management, National Planning, Department of Justice and Attorney General and the Electoral Commissioner himself. The setup of the IDEC was six months prior to the elections.

There some external and internal factors that I would like to discuss here. And I would like to read them from my notes here. There was no national and subnational planning and steering committee in place to plan for every election. Election is not something new. I have been involved in elections since 1987 as a young officer and I am still being involved in elections now as Commissioner. There was no national and subnational planning and steering committee in place and to me, it should be in place. IDEC was not active. It was activated six months prior to the election and the establishment of IDEC is not by law. IDEC was a coordination mechanism that was set in place to coordinate the election. Meaning if the Electoral Commissioner refuses to be part of the committee in that meeting then he will not attend. I am mentioning this because during one of our meeting last year, we were there at that meeting, he was not there. Several calls were made and I had to plead to the Chair at that time, stop the meeting, let us go and look for him. Literally, Commissioner of Police, Commander of Defence, myself and Secretary PM and NEC went to his office and there he was. And I told

him bluntly, 'you cannot run this election by yourself'. We have to work together and run this election.

So National Intelligence Organisation (NIO) was not that very active. Security basement in every province, knowing ideal candidates, knowing the risks and the factors, criminal elements supporting these leaders, these were not known. Even during the IDEC meeting, no concrete real evidence was presented at the IDEC meeting by the NIO. Election budgets are done in silo, they are not coordinated. Election budget should be a one-off budget for all and it should not go by what we want. It should go by priority at the strategic level and at the operational level. And that budget should be discussed at year one, two, three, four before the eve of the election. Sitting here and listening to CDF, procurement is something that is externally not within our control as well. And there are big-ticket logistics that should be purchased three or four years and that should be discussed by the national and subnational election planning and steering committee in order to decide even the budget to fund the election. The Electoral Commissioner, as I mentioned earlier, was working in silo trying to run the election on his own without considering the support of every lead agency that were there to support him. Logistics and mobilisation for big-ticket items were not in place and coming back to tendering, it requires strategic planning (inaudible) that is vetted and approved, budget allocated and tender is the last thing.

These are some of the issues that we faced in the 2022 Elections. For the three disciplined forces, there was no preparation that was done before the election, so there was absence of joint election preparation, training and mobilization. And externally when it comes to monitoring who is eligible voter to vote, it is quite difficult for the members of the disciplinary forces to assist officers of the Electoral Commission and those appointed by the Electoral Commissioner to support the voting.

The internal factors and the experiences that the Correctional Services faced, we had more than one line of communication so it was disjointed. We had officers who were running to different committees at that time. There was poor budget allocated leading to correctional officers being the last group deployed at the last minute. So, Deputy Chairman and other members, these are some of the issues that I have highlighted. I will sum it up with my recommendations.

I will talk on preparation and go onto recommendation number 2 because I have mentioned number one in some of my earlier presentations. The preparation for the national election must commence six months after the formation of the government. As long as we have a government in place, preparation must be done for the next election.

The national and provincial election steering and budget committees should be established to plan, prepare and make budget available to fund the elections. These committees must be established as of year one and continue until the year of the actual election. Early election preparation must be carried out to identify current and emerging challenges that will jeopardize the elections. This will assist the disciplined forces to mitigate possible and probable risks and take actions to manage and reduce these risks. A close working relation piece of legislation should be enacted by Parliament and should be activated at any national or provincial election of leaders. This piece of legislation should govern the conduct of the disciplined forces' members who come under the command of the Police Commissioner during the election period.

During the elections the disciplined forces come under the command of the Police Commissioner. When it comes to election-related offences we look at the civil law and our laws do not govern election-related offences. Our laws only govern the responsibility of each department as established by the underlying laws of the Constitution.

For my conclusion I have only two points but will leave that because I will give it to the committee. Chairman, your deputy and members of this committee, I am so privileged to be sitting here before you to make this short presentation.

Mr CHAIRMAN - Thank you, Commissioner, that was detailed and succinct and let me just commend you for your forthrightness. At this committee we expect people to be honest and speak their mind and I think you have done that. We cannot fix anything if we are not honest. You have given us a lot to ponder over.

I note the lack of funding and the lateness of the funding is a common issue across all the agencies and I note also you are concurrent with the PNGDF Commander about the way the Electoral Commission has conducted itself or did not conduct itself during the course of the election. We will be actually summoning them again later on to clarify some other issues and those points will be raised with them.

I have no questions actually because I think I like your recommendations. I like the idea particularly number five about having a sort of legislation that gets activated and I think that goes in line with what my Deputy Chairman was alluding to earlier.

Deputy Chairman, would you like to take the floor.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you Chair and thank you Commissioner Pokanis for coming and for a very well presented presentation. On a personal note, I want to thank you and your team who hosted the Abau counting at Bomana. I never went there during the entire counting but when I was invited to go and sign, I was very impressed by the arrangements by your team and during the day on my declaration I specifically thanked you and the team for the professional work done. I came out of the college area satisfied that there was a national institution that had the professionalism that I could trust and rely on, so thank you for your leadership and all the command and control during the difficult time. As you noticed, the Abau counting was one of the longest and your team had done an excellent job.

I have about two questions. You spoke of an incident in one of the IDEC meeting that the key person in charge of the 2022 Elections did not turn up. Then you had to go as a team to look for him and found him in his office. What did he actually tell you as his reasons for not turning up? Why didn't he turn up? What were his reasons? Was he busy? But you went and found him in his office, he was not in Abau, Madang, East Sepik or Western Highlands. Was there any reason he did not turn up? Was that the first time that he did not turn up for this important inter-agency coordination, which we at the committee level are thinking to make it a permanent body. But with your experience, I am doubting now why we should create a permanent body where members fail to respect each other and members fail to attend. Can you answer the questions?

Mr STEPHEN POKANIS– Thank you, Deputy Chair. All of us know the history of the 2022 National Elections. It was deferred several times and the IDEC committee members were always there meeting on a weekly basis every Tuesday. In many of those meetings the Electoral Commissioner was not there. There was a third deferral and we just could not wait.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So you are saying IDEC was not there.

Mr STEPHEN POKANIS –Sir, IDEC was very active, but IDEC as I have said, is not a committee set up by law. It was a committee set up for convenience; this was a National General Election.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So when a committee is not established by law any member can behave however they want? When to attend or not, it does not matter even if they are dealing with a national event which is very important in the country? Do you need to do everything by law?

Mr STEPHEN POKANIS – No, Sir –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Where is ethics, where is love for the country? Where is professionalism? You, as the head of the agency, are called upon to come and offer your advice on an important event in the country, and you think it's a small issue as playing marbles? You tell me.

Mr STEPHEN POKANIS – Sir, I agree with you, this is a time where personality is reduced to almost zero. This is a time where professionalism takes place. And only those in my very limited experience working in the public service, with a zeal and concern for the country, can stand up. This is the time where we see such leaders standing up; and he was not prepared to stand up at this time. And literally, with great respect to my colleagues, I was not that happy at that time. Than I have to tell him what I have to tell him.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you, Commissioner, for being honest and thank you for raising those issues that all of us in the panel agree with. When you are a head of an agency, whether it's a constitutional body, a statutory body, or a provincial head, or a departmental head, you are by ethics and morals, your duties and responsibilities, Papua New Guinea first, yourself last.

My second question, Commissioner; you did say in your very good summary report that you did not see a National Election Plan. What happened?

Mr STEPHEN POKANIS – Sir, plans were changing, and the plans were from the Election Commission; plans were changing, locations were changing...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Why? What was happening? Was it directed from somewhere because we understand that the Electoral Commission is a constitutional office and not bound to any direction from any person or any authority. Was it being directed to change this and that? Was it being influenced by politicians or some candidates? In your view, what was happening?

Mr STEPHEN POKANIS – Sir, with that, I do not know; but the facts remain that election timetable was changing. Who influenced that is not for me to say because I do not know.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You do have any Intelligence team? What was your intelligence radar on when you noticed that things were changing; no plans, and that chief manager of the elections was not attending. Where was your radar of your Intelligence arm?

Mr STEPHEN POKANIS – Sir, we did not have real time intelligence; we foreknew that the election, for me personally, and those who were with us, and those who witnessed what I said at the IDEC can remember this; I made this statement and I will state it here – “This election is orchestrated in a way to fail”. That is the comment that I made at the IDEC.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Why did you make that comment?

Mr STEPHEN POKANIS – Because of the way the Election Commissioner was changing dates that were not working together with the way security forces were planning. It was at the eleventh hour that we all agreed by just walking to his office, and we told him, stop this! We have to work together from here onwards.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And he changed?

Mr STEPHEN POKANIS – And he agreed! Actually, the way it was being designed. I don't have evidence to provide to the committee, that is why I cannot give a correct and accurate response. But the way things were changing without working together with members of the security forces; to me something was definitely wrong.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But who was the Chairman of IDEC?

Mr STEPHEN POKANIS – The current Chief Secretary now.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So? What was he saying?

Mr STEPHEN POKANIS – He was the one that took the lead, also emphasising very strongly and firmly to the Electoral Commissioner that we must work together to deliver the elections successfully.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So we see more politics among bureaucrats than politics among politicians?

Mr STEPHEN POKANIS – Sir, my view is, politicians do their work but bureaucrats know the rules and the standard,

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That's what I am saying. You are playing more politics in the bureaucracy than us politicians playing politics.

Mr STEPHEN POKANIS – That's up to the politicians, but I am going to restate that bureaucrats must stand because they know their responsibility.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you, Commissioner Pokanis.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Members, yupela igat sampela askim? No?

In conclusion, I have to say it is very refreshing to get a Papua New Guinean leader of an organisation that will come before a parliamentary committee and speak his mind. I think we need more leadership like that. Dispela kain pasin bilong yumi long respect, respect na yumi lukim narapela man wokim rong na yumi pasim maus na sindaun na foldim han na we expect the thing to fix itself. Well, obviously, this has led our country to where it is now.

I would encourage you to continue your forthrightness and your professionalism. I have to say I have been impressed with yourself, the Commander of the Defence Force and the Police Commissioner.

I've had my own personal opinion that the leadership levels within the country are actually declining. I made a comment about nine years ago when we were looking to select certain secretaries and I said, the cupboards are empty. The leadership in the civil service is now either lacking or non-existent. And I think we are beginning to see that come up and affect us. But suffice to say, there are some of us that want to make a difference and I sense that you are one of those people as well, so you are amongst friends. If we have a need for you, we will call you, but in future I would encourage you to continue the way you are behaving and I would also encourage you to also raise young leaders within your organisation. Quite aside from what

we are doing so that perhaps in the future they may also rise to not only head this department but other agencies across government, and we will be better for it. Again, thank you very much, and I will excuse you.

The committee now calls upon Mr John Igitoi, the National Statistician. Mr Igitoi, I welcome you to these proceedings. Please introduce yourself and your organisation. I would like you to give us your views on the 2022 General Elections, in terms of the number of people who were registered to express their rights to vote. And at that time in 2022, what was your estimate of the total population and what was your estimate of the voting population within that spread, and of course, the issue of voter registration which was a serious concern during the elections. In your opinion, what do you think the NSO ought to do, if at all, to be part of the process to assist the Electoral Commission, and is there a role that you could play in terms of voter registration?

National Statistical Office

Mr JOHN IGITOI (National Statistician) – Thank you, Chairman, Deputy Chairman and the distinguished members and the public. I will be very brief on these discussions and want to let the public know that there are other State agencies that deal with population numbers. One is the identity with population numbers, the Electoral Commission that deals with population numbers and the Department of Provincial and Local-level Governments that also deals with the numbers in terms of the ward recorders.

The National Statistical Office also deals with the population numbers in terms of conducting population count. The *NEC Decision No.174* requested the National Statistical Office to conduct the national population and housing census which is the Fifth National Corporation Housing Census, which was supposed to be conducted in 2020, but was deferred to 2021, due to the fact, that there was surge in Covid-19 as well as the restrictions imposed by the State on the movement of the citizens. And so, the Fifth National Population Housing Census was never conducted. It was further deferred to 2024, which we are preparing for the population count. The preparation that was done for the two periods 2020 to 2021, we were actually about 95 per cent in terms of the technical preparations. But due to the Covid-19 and also the diversion of the funds to suppress the Covid-19 we were not able to conduct it.

Also, on the part of the election, the National Statistical Office was never informed by IDEC on what sort of support we should be able to provide in terms of population estimates and all these information. But I must say here to the committee that the last census was conducted in 2011 and that census in the views of many Papua New Guineans was not conducted properly because it was conducted towards the end of 2011, when the election was coming. And so, they thought that it was not proper for us at NSO to conduct the census when the election was approaching because it would have compromised the quality of the information.

I will begin my discussions on some of the issues that I have highlighted in the paper, basically highlighting the NSO responsibilities and their roles so that we can be able to appreciate the different roles that the State agencies are carrying out in relations to the population.

Firstly, in terms of each mandate, the NSO was established by an Act of Parliament, which becomes the central agency in PNG for providing official statistical information to meet the needs of the Government for formulation of policies and development planning. This also becomes my opportune time, Chairman, Deputy Chairman and members, for me to also differentiate between the roles that each agency is conducting, especially on the population

side. So this gives me time to actually inform the Committee that the powers and responsibilities at NSO stated under *Section 4 and 17 of the National Statistical Services Act* in summary requires NSO to collect, compile and coordinate official statistics derived from statistical surveys, census, administrative records and other data collection instruments.

That is our role and the statistical information or products that we derive from those surveys and through the census should be published regularly and whenever the information becomes available for public consumption.

The responsibilities of other state agencies in relation to the NSO are stated in *section 5* of the *Statistical Services Act* which basically talks about NSO's coordination of the national statistical system including providing some information to the Electoral Commission on the total population data within different provinces, districts and the LLGs. So, that section requires us to coordinate those things but as I mentioned earlier the IDEC and including the Electoral Commission never came to the National Statistical Office requesting us to provide the frame in which how much population there was within each of the provinces, districts and the LLGs. So, that responsibility was not exercised when the common roll was being updated. Section 18 requires the head of each state agency to inform the National Statistician of the official statistics with the agency responsible. To date under my leadership I deny having being informed of such activities, programs or plans including from the Electoral Commission. I was never requested by the commission to provide any information, especially to provide the frame of population in in each, province, district and LLG.

The NSO also assists in all sectors of the government, it does not provide information to the Electoral Commission alone, the information we provide allows them to observe and review their respective policies and indicators. Basically, I am trying to explain the role of the NSO. We also put on notice some estate agencies by providing indicators and statistics on the things that they put at the beginning of the year in terms of their key result areas and the key performance indicators on what sort of things they do, so we provide those indicators to put them on notice as to the sort of things that they are not doing.

According to the Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Governments, section 106, sub section says that there shall be a census or the count of all national persons in each province in the year proceeding a general election. I mention this as to why we did not conduct the census. It was outside of NSO control and the COVID-19 protocols and the masses as well as diversion of funds from the NSO to conduct the census was not provided.

And we were supposed to be provided with more than K150 million but in the actual budget only K70 million was provided and only K30 million was spent. I must also mention to this committee that the conduct of the national population census is much bigger than the general elections because with the national population housing census we go to all households throughout the country. We go through swamps, jungles or whatever place throughout the country and count everybody from house to house.

We do a lot of preparation, like we need to have satellite images to show the structures where the people are living and we have to have maps of where our staff is going so that everyone is counted in. We were 95 per cent ready to conduct the census. The Electoral Commission's responsibility is to only register 18-year-olds and above. These people have to come to a gazetted location to cast their votes. And those 18-year-olds and above have the democratic right whether or not to come and cast their vote, nobody takes them to court.

For the NSO, it is mandatory that we must enumerate at every person, we must go to where they are living. We must have a proper process of meeting the international requirements on conducting census and so we have done that. We produced more than 63 documents on how we will collect that information. And that information that we collected must reflect or provide the mirror image of what is actually on the ground and so we are prepared for those things, but we were not able to conduct it. We are ready to conduct these operations in 2024. We are now preparing for these once again.

So, information is needed by the Electoral Commission to determine the number of eligible voters 18 years old and above. And provision of voters 17 years at the time of census out of the total population by the geographic areas' projections are also necessary when the elections are going to be conducted one or two years after the national census.

So, the census that we conducted was in 2011 and that was about 12 years old. The population numbers are determined by three things; births, deaths, and the net migration. We were not able to have those numbers, NSO does not provide projections, hypothesis and estimates. We collect information on the actuals so it was not within our means to provide projections for anyone of those activities that was going to come, we left it to other state agencies to do their projections because we only provide actuals and official information based on approved methodologies and standards. And therefore, we were not able to provide to any one person including the Electoral Commission the projections for the population figures because there was no basis and the information that was collected was outdated almost 12 years and we were not able to do that.

Census information is usually reported at national and sub-national levels; however, lower administrative levels are always available. District level information is also important for the Electoral Commission because an administrative district is equivalent to an open electorate or electorate which is represented by an elected Member of Parliament. And so, as I said, we were not able to provide that information.

Electorates are theoretically distributed on the basis of one person, one vote, but this assumes that each open electorate has roughly the same population. Population transits overtime which some areas growing faster than others and other areas experiencing slower growth rate or even declining in some population. So, that's basically why we were not able to provide the estimates or the frame in which the Electoral Commission can come up with the estimate for the electorates, LLGs and even the provinces. So that's basically why we were not able to do that but we provided some baseline information based on what we call the exponential population growth rate based on the 2011 census to provide some guidelines on the electoral boundary that's not an official information. We cannot do that and we were not able to do that and we just provided the guidelines for decision-making and information purposes basically tailored for specific activity.

And in that case, we provided some information for the Electoral Boundaries Commission, which we now have six new electorates and seven more to be implemented in 2027. Due to the NSO involvement in assisting the electoral commission, which has information for electoral purposes, the census is often confused with like I said common roll or voter registry updates. This unfortunate misconception has also cost the integrity and quality of census data because as I said, we are going to go to all the electorates, provinces and the LLGs and then to all the houses in the country or structures.

We need to do proper stocktake of Papua New Guineans. and that always confuses the Electoral Commission and the general public that the information that is collected through the census is basically to provide the names and other information for the common roll update and, definitely, we don't do that and that is not our role. If we do that, we're going to compromise the quality of the information and that will not provide what is on the ground.

We will not be able to tell the economic activities that they are involving with and most of the Papua New Guineans get involved in agriculture, forestry, fishery, mining, wholesale, retail and whatever sectors that they involve, we're not going to tell that information when there's going to be any compromise on the census and the common roll update. We have about more than 56 questions that provide information on socio-economic environmental conditions of Papua New Guinea.

We don't provide names to Electoral Commission, we only provide frame to the Electoral Commission and the information that we collect basically is for evidence-based decision making for policy formulation and for effective resource allocations. That means, the budgets that we do as to have some baseline information on where we should put money and what sort of things that we should put money on. So, that is the baseline information that NSO collects, it does not collect any information by name on the census.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you, National Statistician. I think the reason why you were called is because of what you have answered very appropriately. You'll find in the public discourse and even in Parliament, I think everyone is kind of confused in your role and that is I think how you ended up on our radar as well because if you look at some of the discussions in Parliament even amongst very senior members of Parliament, they will say things like when we need to do the census then we can do the elections. Obviously, we don't really need to do the census in order to run the elections.

However, based on your contributions this morning, your information is important for planning purposes and I guess to measure performance of some of the parts of the economy and then to sort of figure out the demographic dispersion of the different age groups. But suffice to say I'm happy to hear you present here and I think that might give a better understanding by policy makers of your institution's role and perhaps to better-resource you in future so that we are not acting like some tucker-box and we do national census sporadically whenever we feel like it. You know, like everything else we're running out of like power and fuel and all kinds of things that remind me of a tucker-box but perhaps tucker-boxes are run better than our country. But it's good to see that you're an agency that understands your role and you are able to tell us quite succinctly that you have very little input into – except perhaps to give a guide in terms of the population demographics and those that might be falling within the voter age. So I want to thank you for that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - Thank you, National Statistician, Mr John Igitoi, for the presentation. My view is that census is important and you have highlighted the reasons why and all of us know why we need to know our population. At this stage, can you tell the committee what you believe is our estimated population?

Given your office has information from the different sources, different surveys, 2011 National Census, which you said failed and the demographic and health survey information that NSO does, what is your view on the estimated population of our country today?

Mr JOHN IGITOI – Deputy Chair, I mentioned earlier that estimations we leave it to others. There are a lot of other state agencies that –

Mr CHAIRMAN – You are the National Statistician, I am sure you have heard the United Nations telling us that we probably have 17 million using their format, but you are the Chief Advisor on Statistics, the authority, therefore I am asking you, what do you think is our population today?

Mr JOHN IGITOI - For the purpose of this discussion, I would say that in 2011 we had a population growth rate of 3.2 per cent and that's about twelve years ago. Without any variables into the estimations conservative estimate, we used what we call the exponential population growth rate of 3.2 per cent and for the last twelve years we should have between the range of 9.5 to 10.5 million people. That's basically based on the 3.2 per cent.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But given the 3.2 per cent rate and the last population census at 2011, my estimate is with a growth rate of 2.7 to 3.2 per cent we should be doubling every twelve to thirteen years. So if our population was 8000 we should be now 16 000.

Mr JOHN IGITOI – As I said, Sir, the population growth rate is 3.2 per cent and if it's going to be doubling, it should be at another rate and not at 3.2 per cent or 2.7 per cent. But a conservative one from 3.2 per cent will give a range of 9.5 to 10.5 million people in the country, that's the conservative one. As I said, including some additional variables to support the growth. But we need to have two mid-points to come up with the growth rate. We don't have another mid-point to provide the estimate growth rate.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Who feeds you the growth rate?

Mr JOHN IGITOI – That's based on the previous –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Which department gives you the population growth rate?

Mr JOHN IGITOI – We do our own population growth rate, based on the census.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – The demographic and health surveys.

Mr JOHN IGITOI – We also have demographic and health survey, it's only a survey. But the census we do is the head count of every person across the country, a day-year old to somebody that will die immediately after we enumerate them. So we have that rate from 2000- 2011 census and that is based on our present growth rate that we do the projections. As I said, just only to guide and support certain decisions.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – As long as we have an estimate that is probably closer to the rates that you as a statistician can recommend as a guide for policy makers to take in terms of the population estimates and, hopefully, this year as you said you are 95 per cent ready. This is the first quarter which will end soon. How much funds have you received?

Mr JOHN IGITOI – We have not received anything yet.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Nothing? So when are you planning on holding the census?

Mr JOHN IGITOI – The NEC Decision has requested that we conduct in 2024. The population numbers to become available by 2025.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – I thought we provided a budget for this year.

Mr JOHN IGITOI – This year is only K50 million and that is for the preparatory work. Preparations meaning that we will number all the structures in Papua New Guinea. We have to provide some trainings to over 35,000 enumerators. And there is a reference night, where we put the population on halt and we get a snapshot. Once we put the population on halt, we can get the rates. You cannot get the rate when you are doing a moving population count. So, that is basically why we need at a point in time to conduct the census.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You will conduct the census in 2024, not in 2023. And then, you will make the reports available in 2025, and the election is in 2027.

How often do you communicate with the Electoral Commission?

Mr JOHN IGITOI – That depends on the Statistical Services in subsection 18. If there is anything to do with statistical activities that the Electoral Commission wants us to do with them to ensure the methodology in the process they take, they advise us to go and provide technical support to them. If they do not need it, we do not go.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – In the fourth paragraph of your report to the committee, you quoted section 18, which gives you the powers to call upon heads of agencies. But in this report, and I read and quote ‘to date, under my leadership, I deny having being informed of such statistical activities, programs and plans.

Mr JOHN IGITOI – That’s for the Electoral Commission.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – How about other agencies?

Mr JOHN IGITOI – We also implement in one of the policies of the government

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – No. When you need the statistics, do you wait for them to come forward, or you go and demand under section 18 of the law that you are administering?

Mr JOHN IGITOI – For that, we ask them when they are conducting any special surveys or census in other state agencies. For instance, if we conduct a census, we have a working committee that involves other state agencies like the Education and Health departments, National Research Institute and various other state agencies, including the Defence and the Police Force. We involve every one of them to be a part of this.

That is when we do the operations. If any other state agencies do the operations –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That I understand. In report 7, paragraph 7, you quoted section 106 of the *Organic Law on Provincial and Local-level Governments* which says that the census or count of all natural persons in each province in the year preceding a general election. The nation has not complied with this. We need to change the law.

What are your recommendations? Bikos yumi ino bihainim dispela lo.

Mr JOHN IGITOI – As I have said, we are 90 to 95 per cent prepared to conduct the census.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But the law says before every election, there should be a census.

Mr JOHN IGITOI – That was outside of NSO's control.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – This is under the *Organic Law*, which is defective. You need to recommend to us and we need to change that law, because em mipela ino impleimentim, or repeal that particular provision. I am glad that you raised this issue. I was personally complaining about when we are going to conduct our census again and if we are not complying with the law, then it's a waste of time having a law that you cannot administer.

Your last question about the *Statistical Services Act* goes back to 1981. I strongly recommend that you present a copy of that Act to us. I am personally interested because I believe that the electoral process must fully understand the population content of the country and if we have no idea of our population then we cannot plan for health, education, road services or even national election. And so in my view, your office is very, very important as it provides one of the most important information to any prime minister of the country, any minister of state or any CEO of a private company or any leader in the family. And so, when you are denied of support by the government, then you deny powerful information from the citizens of the country, including information that we all need to prepare for the next elections. So, I request if you could deliver to the committee the copy of your 1981 Act. Thank you.

Mr JOHN IGITOI – Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Thank you for those wonderful words. I will provide the copy; it is with me so I will leave it there.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you, Mr Igitoi. We appreciate your contribution to the proceedings. You are now excused. Thank you, Sir. I now suspend the proceedings for lunch. The committee will reconvene at 1:35pm.

Department of Finance

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Good afternoon everyone. Welcome back to the inquiry by the Parliamentary Committee on the 2022 National General Elections. I wish to pass the apology from our Chairman who will not be here, however, he will be here later in the afternoon so the three of us will commence the afternoon proceedings.

I welcome everybody and this afternoon we have the privilege of both the Treasury and the Department of Finance to be with us this afternoon. I am very happy that the Secretary for Finance, Dr Ken Ngangan, is here with his team and because he is here, we will proceed with Finance team. So if I can invite the secretary and his deputy to come forward for us to begin the inquiry.

Thank you Dr Ken Ngangan and your Deputy Mr Stephen. You are fully aware of the establishment of the Special Parliamentary Committee and we thank you for responding to the invitation to participate in this inquiry and present evidence before this committee on the 2022 General Elections.

As you and I know, the Department of Finance is responsible for providing direct and supporting financial policy formulation, financial systems, financial and accounting information and all those issues. As far as the election is concerned the Department of Finance is directly responsible for funding in collaboration with Treasury. So far as the elections are

concerned, Dr Ngangan and his deputy, your department plays a very important role. And so as head of the department, the committee felt it is of vital importance that you come and inform the committee with the view of how we can improve the 2027 National General Elections. I think that is the interest of every citizen of this country and as the department responsible for releasing the funds on a timely basis and the amount that is required. You also play a very important role and will continue to play a very important role in the success of the 2027 National General Elections.

The committee has prepared four simple questions for you to begin with and then later on the members of the committee will ask other questions after you present your briefing to us.

(1) Can you explain to the committee the major component of election funding? How much from the departments did each of the major components receive for 2022 National General Elections?

(2) Was the Election funding made available on time or were there instances of delay? What were some of the reasons causing the delay in releasing the funds for the elections?

(3) What would be some of the recommendations that you would offer in terms of improving the financing of future general elections but in specifically and in particular the next election in 2027?

Dr KEN NGANGAN (Secretary – Department of Finance)– Thank you Deputy Chairman and the members of the Special Parliamentary Committee on the National Elections.

Thank you for inviting us to explain the role that the Department of Finance played in the management of public funds that were set aside to support the running of the 2022 National General Elections. We actually started with the systems that we used in 2022. We established those systems in the 2017 Elections. In it we set up one main trust account, the PNG Electoral Commission trust account and related to that were 22 provincial election trust accounts. In the 2022 General Elections, those accounts were reactivated. The same accounts that were used in the 2017 Elections

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – When did you reactivate, at what point of time?

Dr KEN NGANGAN - In February 2022 those accounts were reactivated. The role of the Department of Finance is about the management of funds. All the procurement of goods and services related to election expenses were undertaken by the PNG Electoral Commission. We just supported in the management of funds but the actual engagement and the procuring of goods and services were undertaken by the PNG Electoral Commission together with the other agencies that were responsible for managing and running the elections such as the PNGDF, Police, Correctional Services –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Combined security forces?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Yes, that's correct.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – This is through the national procurement system?

Dr KEN NGANGAN- Yes, and they were each responsible for procuring the goods and services. Finance came in for the payment and management of money for the goods and services. The Treasury officials will give us a breakup of the K600 million for the 2022 General Elections out of which the PNG Electoral Commission was allocated K311.3 million kina and that was the money that Finance was jointly managing with the PNGEC. The other component

of the K600 million was allocated to the other agencies involved with the National General Elections, this includes the security forces, Ombudsman, NBC DJAG, et cetera.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Secretary, then you will submit a written report with regards to the details of that.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Correct

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Can you, Secretary, specify for the PNG Electoral Commission when the K311 million was made available

Dr KEN NGANGAN – The money was available on 15 March 2022 and further funds were made available on 18 March 2022.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – When were the writs issued?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – April.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You gave just one month for the Electoral Commission to access the funds and you opened the account in February. The warrants came in whatever month and your date is on the 15th of March that you actually released this money into the trust accounts?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Sorry, I retract that, 15th of March was the date in which K2.5 million was given to the Ombudsman Commission and on the 18th of March, the Treasury further issued K11.6 million to the Correctional Services, K10 million to NBC and K3 million to State Solicitor's Office. Those were done on the 18th of March.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – How about the Electoral Commission who was the head and leader for the elections? When did you release their money?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – I have noted three lots of money prior to the submission and K100 million was the first lot of money that was issued on the 3rd of February. At the same time, the second lot of money was K111 million and was released to Police and K50 million was released to PNGDF.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That's in February?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – That was on the 3rd of February. So that was a time when had to meet to reactivate account so that his money goes into the accounts.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Secretary, you continue, I just wanted to get the dates because the timing as you and I know is critical to procurement process, etcetera, but please continue.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – In the provincial trust account the districts and provinces wanted to support the election with money so we encouraged them to send that money into the provincial accounts. All the election-related money whether it was PNGEC or from the district or the provinces, they were encouraged to put into one basket.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Can you advise the committee as to how much money was eventually deposited in that provincial election trust account? Do you have a bank account details or bank balance details?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – I have the printout but I can't be able to give you the summary. I have the details and will summarise them and submit it to the committees.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You will also submit that to the committee. But, on your paper there, how much funds was deposited into the provisional trust account and by whom? Each province had a provincial election trust account?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Correct!

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So did all our provinces actually have a provincial election trust account?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Yes, all the provinces have a trust account.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Do you have records of how much is in for Central, Western Highlands and other provinces?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Yes!

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Do you also have records of who deposited, whether it was provisional government, DDAs and then yourself given to transfers?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Yes!

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But this is within the total budget of K311.3 million. Is that including your provincial accounts and the main Electoral Commission election trust account?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Correct! The Department of Finance involvement was in the main trust account but we helped set up the provincial trust accounts.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So who was managing that?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – The provincial election managers in each of the provinces.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And they are basically the PA and his team. And up to date, have they made any reports as part of your department's efforts to get financial reporting back to you?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Through the PNGEC.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – They will come through the PNGEC?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Has PNGEC submitted their financial report? When do you expect that financial report back to you? Please gather that information and later on submit it as part of the written report.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So you are saying that the funds – the Electoral Commission had the main account, which you were in charge of; then there were provincial trust funds with specific trust instruments that you had to sign as Secretary for Finance...

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Correct.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And therefore their compliance to the instrument is why we are asking if they have reported back to you?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Correct.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Okay, continue Secretary.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Yes, Chair, the beauty of setting up these accounts was that, all the payment of election allowances was done through the Kundu pay system. So those that we involved in the elections were discouraged from carrying cash as they used to do in the past. So, we had them all linked on the Kundu Pay; their allowances were automatically paid into their accounts. So that was one of the main –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So all the gazetted appointed officials, you gave them Kundu accounts?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And they are getting paid from the provincial trust account or the main Electoral Commission?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – The main Electoral Commission Trust.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But then we had complaints of polling officials not receiving, even up to now. They have never received anything; some of them were trying to boycott the counting, et cetera, etcetera. So explain to us what happened with those Kundu trust accounts? You created all of them but they never received the money according to them.

I'm sure on the written report, you will tell us how much went for the allowances, and therefore, how much was paid and how much was not paid, or under-paid because the reports that we are hearing is that, a good number of officials – counting and polling officials – never received any allowances.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – PNGEC is responsible for managing the recruitment and management and –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That, we understand.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – If planning is done properly; because they keep changing. If the names are provided earlier, then we get the details, the bank accounts and submit to the banks so that

their names appear in the Kundu Pay. But when people keep changing, then it's hard to keep up with the payments.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So those are administrative issues that may contribute so you need to highlight some of them in your written report. Please continue; members of the committee can interrupt at any time.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – The Treasury will confirm with us that in the 2022 Elections, funding was made available on time. There was money there on time.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – They will come and tell us themselves.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – During the elections, you will remember that Ombudsman took control and they cleared all the payments that were coming out from the provincial accounts, and including Finance and Treasury. I wrote to the Ombudsman Commission to give special exceptions, express clearances for those accounts that were managing the election-related accounts, and they agreed and it worked well.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – How long did it take for them to allow those accounts to be opened after you wrote to them? How long did it take for them to respond?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Two weeks. The accounts were opened earlier but the expenditures, I think, within a week or two of my letter, Ombudsman did agree to that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – I want you, in your written response, to get the dates right because your department is very important. Your responses must be written so that it forms part of our report to Parliament. Because to make corrective actions, we need your experiences on timing, warranting, Ombudsman Commission freezing the expenditure, the struggles that you've had, how long did it take for Ombudsman to respond, how long did it take for the Electoral Commission to start paying allowances while people were complaining. Outstanding allowances in the last election, how did you handle them and how much was it. Those are the details we want you to put down in written submission. The committee would want to analyse everything before we make recommendations.

Dr KEN NGANGAN– I also issued Financial Instruction in 2022 on the management of national elections that spelled out the timeframes as well.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – When did you issue the Financial Instruction?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – The Financial Instruction was issued on 7 March 2022.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You will submit the answer, but in a nutshell, what did it actually say.

Dr KEN NGANGAN– The procurement or the use of the funds related to the election must follow the national procurement process and the payments must follow the PMFA. So it basically spells out the –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So basically you were just reminding them of the Procurement Act.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Because in the process, we had removed their powers to procure because the Defence procurement committee and the Electoral procurement committee no longer exist, so your instruction gave them the way forward for them on how to manage public funds.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So you need to submit that instruction as well.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Yes, I will. It also sets out the requirements for the reporting and the dates as well.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So you are basically going to use the instrument for them to report back.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Correct.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What did you say on the timing of the reporting? We are now going onto March now. When do you expect them to report back on their expenditure?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – We said 14 days, a month. Yes, we said 14 days at the end of each month that they had to submit those reports.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Have they been doing that?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – No.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Did the Electoral Commission do that? Did the Police do that? Did Defence do that? Did the Ombudsman do that? Did the provinces do that? No? Have you given further instruction for them to submit their report as per your Financial Instruction on the 7th of March?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – We've advised our financial controllers to endorse the departments to follow through.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Continue with your planned –

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Yes, in terms of your second question on the timing of the election fund, generally, the funds were made available on time.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – We had complaints otherwise from the implementing agencies. They said they did not receive them on time. In fact, with the Defence Force, the major general showed us a picture of all the vehicles that they procured. And because of the delayed funds, they had just arrived three months after the elections. So, who is telling the truth? We have evidence that these things were procured late because funds didn't come on time, and they arrived - how many months? In August we finished the elections and from the 11th Parliament after six months they just arrived, and he has the photos here to prove that they just arrived.

So, somebody has to tell this committee the truth so that we can make remedies. No good telling lies to the committee because we won't make recommendations to remedy the situation. So don't hide the weaknesses but expose it so that we can strengthen them.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Chairman, for the purpose of that example, these days Ela Motors is allowing order of new vehicles up to one year to arrive and election funding was made available for six months before the elections. So, if they were using that money to pay for the vehicles than motor dealers would require time to order and they don't have them in stock. That could be the reason why they received the vehicles after that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – My instruction, Secretary, is that you need to go and sit down with the Defense Force Major General and we need these issues to be addressed and furnish the report to the committee. We need to solve this procurement issue and we know Covid-19 came and we know Ela Motors delays production and so forth, but we need the reality and we need two of you to agree that this set of issues was the reason why the delays happened and if it means a number of the sets require improvement then the committee is prepared to help in the process. If you can undertake to meet with –

Dr KEN NGANGAN – And Chairman, one other improvement is that the money for elections should be made available not in the year of elections but prior to that so that those long big-ticket procurement can take place in that year. When we budgeted money for 2022 Election in the 2022 Budget, we had to wait for the warrant to be released in 2022, which give us less time to procure. If 2022 Election money was made available in the 2021 Appropriation then we could drawdown on the big-ticket items, for instance; payment of vehicles will take one year for the vehicles to come from Japan. If those funds were made available in the previous years, then we could have big-ticket items ready for elections.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Secretary, the question is why didn't you plan in advance for it and why are you telling the committee that it should have happened? What happened that you didn't plan? The 2022 Elections was not the only one, you were head of the department for the duration of that time. There were electoral commissioners, defense force, police and the Interdepartmental Election Committee (IDEC) was there too but formed late.

Why didn't your departmental heads get together with proper planning, strategically saying for 2019 this is the budget we need for the election preparation, and for 2020 this is what we need and the procurement must take place in 2021. Why wasn't that done and why are you recommending that right now after the event? What prevented you from taking actions on those honourable desires that you are now presenting to the committee? Tell us why?

Was there inertia at the political level? Was there no funding or what happened? Were you interfered when you raised these issues to properly plan for the 2022 Elections? Tell the committee.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Deputy Chairman, the Inter-departmental Election Committee. IDEC was formed late and my representation and my voice is through IDEC.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– IDEC came in late in the election process and you are talking about 2019 to 2021. Why didn't you organize yourself now? Everybody coming is telling the committee that we must pre-plan but you were heads of agencies that were there to make it happen. What prevented you?

Can you outline the issues and if you do not have them now, put them in writing. I want to remind you that you are protected by privilege, whatever you say against anybody or anything, you are protected. And that is why this is a public hearing. So, take your hat off as the Secretary for Finance and put the hat on as a citizen of Papua New Guinea. How can this country be better? You as one citizen are the head of the agency. And you are telling us now you should have planned these years before the elections, which we will do for the 2027 General Elections and the committee will recommend that we start having the budget for 2024. What is there for Defense, Police, Electoral Commission and so forth to make sure that the election-related activities for 2024 are provided for in the 2024 Budget and this committee will oversee that. And that is the assurance that we are giving you. If you didn't have the support, tell us in your written response what prevented you from planning ahead and making sure that all these issues are prevented.

My issue with regards to the question, Secretary, is that we are told by other agencies that the funding was never available on time. And when the Treasury people come we will also ask them the same question. But we agree that there should be proper planning at least for three years minimum ahead of the next event.

Mr KEN NGANGAN- And then an effective IDEC committee.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – We could legislate; it's an unlegislated coordinated unit but as you know leadership is important and we have the Chief Secretary of Government chairing the IDEC. We want a coordinating body and IDEC could feed that. But if IDEC calls for meetings and key people do not turn up, the committee will not make any recommendations to keep IDEC. We look at other options because it did not work.
Continue to the Number 3 question; the important one.

Mr KEN NGANGAN - For the recommendation of future financing; we are going electronic, there will be no cash and that will require us planning early and the Electoral Commission identifying the people that will be involved in the elections down to the district levels, and getting their names ready so that we input them in our data base and put everyone on electronic payment system on a weekly or a fortnightly basis when they need to be paid. This is so we manage the money issue for people getting paid.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - May I ask, Secretary, that in that specific recommendation that you provide the committee as to how you are going to make that happen. As the head of the Finance Department, and you recommend to the committee how you want this to happen and this is the way you are recommending it to be done.

Mr KEN NGANGAN - This is also in line with the current improvement in the digitalization of payment system and we are working with the Central Bank and the commercial banks. And this will be in line with the Public Finances Management system reform where we go digital.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Secretary, one of the important issues raised by your colleagues who were part of this team on IDEC, apart from poor attendance, et cetera, was their own ability to procure things on time and strategically plan.
For example; Defence Force was one of the better-planned agencies that had a proper planning structure and I guess with the partnership from the Australian Government through the corporation, then they were able to plan well. And therefore, one of the issues raised and the

others raised was the centralization of the procurement process under the National Procurement Legislation. That many of these important agencies for example; the Defence Force brought out the issue of specific items that they need. Only the Defence Force commander and his team know the specifics. For example; in some of this Defence Force items there is only one developer in the world so you don't have three quotes. It doesn't call for those things and when they were having that procurement committee in their own agencies, they were able to fast track their plan and action it on time.

But the MPC has been seeing to be the bottle-neck for many of these agencies. You have been around as one of the longest serving Secretaries in this country at the Department of Finance, also been chairman of the MPC and the previous CSTB with all these changes and the principle of decentralization of powers, what's your personal view on this highly procrastinated procurement process that we are now struggling with? Give us your honest views on how we should change this law, which can be the way forward for us because procurement is so important in timely delivery of public goods and services. I want your view on this.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Thank you, Chair. We have in the *National Procurement Act* the provision for specialized procurement. They are authorized and issued by the APCC, the Authority to Pre-commit Committee that endorses the setup of the specialized procurement. So, agencies like Department of Health procuring specialized medicine and medical equipments and Department of Defence procuring should have this special tenders board but for the specific activities. So that is allowed and provided for in the Act.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Why hasn't that Act provision been evoked? Are you waiting for them to come forward?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Yes, in 2017 Election I was the chairman of the NPC. We ensured that all those procurements took place under a special tenders board. But, Chair, you can ask the NPC as to why the special tenders board allowed for under the NPC were not –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – We will be looking for recommendations to improve the procurement process. So, I am asking you as someone with that experience what you can recommend to the committee, if we need to change the National Procurement Legislation. What provisions in that Act should we amend in order to facilitate the National Procurement System?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – It's already in the law, so all we have to do is to make it work. We must establish the Specialized Tenders Board for the election period, so that they don't go through the general procurement through NPC, but as part of the election procurement they can take place in the specialized procurement at the NPC through the APCC which will allow for the establishment of special committees.

I agree that during the elections all the agencies that are involved in the procuring of election - related goods and services should be accorded specialized procurement.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – One of the questions that bothered me is, when agencies ask for election budget, the response that we have heard from their representatives has been that they never received what they asked for.

These are the heads of these agencies that know, for example; what does it mean for the Defence to be involved and what are the requirements that the Defence really need to support the Police in making sure that the election is free, fair and safe? And so they calculate or they

plan them in but when they submit their budget it's not the amount that they they've asked for. So have the Police and Electoral Commission.

Explain to the committee, what do you go through when you receive a departmental budget or the election budget? Have you got a set of criteria that you go through and say sorry, we don't agree with this amount. So how do you process with the responsible agency when you disagree with a figure that they agree with? How do you manage that? Have you got a process?

Dr KEN NGANGAN - That's the process managed through Treasury, so when they come next you can ask Treasury that question, but insofar as the requesting and the funding available, we work in a constrained cash flow. So when agencies ask they usually ask for a lot of things but when we look at the money available, the actual allocations of money is based on cash flow itself, so Treasury can be able to provide more details. We would expect agencies to go back. If they do not, they know what the outcome to deliver safe and fair elections.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - On that note, specifically, just focus on the cash flow response on the elections. The election had its own timeframe. You are talking about establishing their trust accounts in February and releasing them. During that period, what was the cash flow situation in the country in order for you to make certain priorities such as releasing an amount to this or that trust account. You had a set of decision-making processes. What was the cash flow situation during that time? Did it give you difficulty? Were we in trouble, what happened?

Dr KEN NGANGAN - Given the importance of the elections, we made K100 million available in February to start the election process. So, whilst we continued to operate in that, election funding was given priority and then the subsequent budgets, Treasury would be able to provide explanations as to the request that came in and how much warrant was issued against those requests. But in terms of making immediate funding available in February, K100 million was made available into the trust account.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - Then what happened throughout until the counting? Why did people start complaining? For my specific case, the Abau counting was taking place in Bomana and the counting officials were walking off because they had not received their allowances. And then the returning officer came and said they still had not received their funding for them. It's not just the timing that you gave, which is okay, hundred million but what happened throughout the year until the declarations in terms of cash flow? I want you to inform the committee as to the cash flow between February to July.

Dr KEN NGANGAN - The Treasury would be able to provide the answer to that. They are listening to this and will prepare for the said questions.

Hon ROBERT NAGURI - Secretary, that's a lot of money released in February to the Police, Electoral Commission and Defence Force.

Why didn't you release that money in October, the previous year, or September or August?

Dr KEN NGANGAN - It wasn't in the budget for that year. Election 2022 Budget money was in 2022 Appropriations.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – It's a funding for pre-election preparations, updating of the common roll, training, et cetera. Can you in your written response with regards to that question, how much was budgeted for in 2021 and 2020 for the election and the operations?

The next question is for Deputy to note. Did the Electoral Commission give you a 2022 plan with funding requirement? Did the Defence Force give you a plan? Did the Police give you a plan, so that it prepared you as head of the agency to manage and support these agencies because the national elections is a big event once in every five years.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Thank you Deputy Chair. Secretary Finance, you are telling the committee and the public that the Government did not budget for the elections in 2021. The only budget allocation for the National General Elections was in 2022? Is that correct?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – There is 600 total funding for Election 2022, and that was in the 2022 Appropriations.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – So there is no funding made available in the 2020 or 2021 Budget?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – Treasury will answer that, they are the custodians of the Budget.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Treasury, take note.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Continuing with the recommendations, you have provided one, are there others that you want to inform the committee and the public who are listening and watching? As the agency head of Finance you must have a set of strong recommendations so that the committee can support you in changing the laws, making sure that coordination is better, planning a way ahead, et cetera. Please proceed and conclude with your set of recommendations.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – We'll go back and do a list of recommendations, but one of the recommendations is what the member has eluded to, which is making funding available in the previous years before the General Elections in 2022. Providing funds in 2021 would have been better. This can be mainly for big-ticket items such as vehicles, patrol boxes, electoral papers, et cetera, so one of the main recommendations would be to make funding available two or three years prior to the elections to allow for preparations.

As part of the digitalization, funding should be managed and we are already working on that with the commercial banks and central banks. We will go cashless on the funding for the elections. That's already in action, so we will make sure that is made a priority.

Not so much on the money but if the elections can be run on the biometrics and make that as a priority.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That's for us to look at in terms of financing. If it's biometric, Secretary, could you be able to work with your other agencies so as to know how much we would need to bring in an electronic voting or bio metric system or other options. We need some of you experts to work on the costs we are talking about in our preparation for electronic

voting, NID support or whatever ID processes that we need to use IT to progress in going forward.

My last set of questions are;

- (1) Do you know how much support the development partners gave us for the 2022 National General Election?
- (2) If you do not know, how best can we coordinate the support that is coming in from our partners?
- (3) Do you know how much of the K600 million was our partners support for the elections?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – I know that our development partners were involved in the election, but in terms of the money that they brought in and used to assist us in the elections, that we do not know. In fact, through IDAC, we can be able to find out how much money the development partners brought in.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– Can we direct you to bring that information? The committee would like to know;

- (1) How much did our partners support us in the 2022 Elections and what processes did they use?
- (2) Did they go directly to the Defence and the Police Force, the Ombudsman Commission or the provinces?
- (3) How do we account for those and recommend what is the better method of the donors partnering us?

There are too many parallel systems and it is very difficult to manage these systems in this country. The donors are doing their own thing and we are doing our own thing. The left does not know what the right is doing.

- (4) In this specific question, how much did the donors give?

One agency said that if the donors did not come, the Defence Force would not have done what they did. We have their expenditure report with us. But as the head of the Finance Department, you should be the one calling the shots. Like what you have said, you established trust accounts in the provinces. Maybe, through the establishment of the Electoral Commission Trust Account, they need to divert their funds transparently so that they can report back to their tax payers on how much was given to them. Our tax payer knows how much we receive through a trust account.

If you can think of those friends' contributions and develop new ways of receiving the partners support during the elections, then we will have a better plan to manage our systems.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – We will provide that.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Deputy Chair, may I have the floor again please. I have a last question to ask the secretary. Money is collected by Electoral Commission from all nomination fees. My questions are;

- (1) Do you have any visibility in those funds?
- (2) If you do, how are those funds utilised and by whom?
- (3) And, how much was collected?

The committee would like to know.

Dr KEN NGANGAN – The monies that were collected are kept in a trust account.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Which trust account?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – The trust account under Electoral Commission Management. They have a separate trust account that the PNGEC usually keeps mostly for reimbursement purposes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Can you explain reimbursement?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – For the courts of disputed returns.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– So they used those funds to get their lawyers to defend them. That is what you are basically saying. But you have no idea of the total candidates that were nominated and how much money was generated.

Do you have any powers as the Finance Secretary to go into that trust account? You signed the instrument of that trust account? Can you use your powers to go in and say, this is how much you received and I need a report on where this was spent?

Dr KEN NGANGAN – I will certainly do that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That will answer and satisfy the member.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – It will be interesting for the public, the committee and the government, to know how much money was collected from the nomination fees of the 2012, 2017 and 2022 elections. Who controlled it and where did they spend it on? It will be very interesting for us to know, if you can provide that information.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – There are no other questions from the committee. Secretary and Deputy, thank you very, very much for coming. Please provide on a timely basis the report that we have requested because we view your contribution as very, very important in our efforts to make 2027 one of the best elections our country has ever gone through. Thank you for coming. You are excused.

Can I ask the officials from the Department of Treasury to come before the committee? Just the two of you? Mrs Napa Hurim you will be the leader in these interactions and the FAS Mr Hans Magis will support. Thank you for coming.

Why is the Secretary for Treasury not here?

Department of Treasury

Mrs NAPA HURIM (Deputy Secretary – Treasury) – Sir, he's been called away to a meeting at short notice with the Governor of BPNG and the Treasurer, and at the same time PEC is happening.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – When did that happen?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Just today.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – As of today? Are they still there?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And he has instructed you to come before the committee.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes, that’s correct, Sir.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Have you got a written report to the committee?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – We have an internal brief only but after hearing the questions that were directed to Department of Finance, we are also asking permission to provide a written report, including copies of all the warrants that were released to the different agencies, Sir

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN –When were you and the Secretary informed that today would be your day to face the parliamentary committee? How long ago were you informed?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yesterday.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Only yesterday? So, you only received the notice and you didn’t see the newspapers that the committee is going to start hearings yesterday, today and tomorrow and you didn’t hear me speaking on NBC last week. The whole country knows that this committee is in place and you didn’t know until yesterday. Is that right?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – I regret so, sir.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you for being honest. We have five questions for you to answer today verbally but as you heard from us questioning the Secretary for Finance, the committee demands written responses. No less than written responses and it must be on time. Deputy Secretary, Mrs Napa Hurim, and FAS Mr Hans Magis, all of us know that the Department of Treasury is responsible for sound and practical fiscal budgetary and structural advice to the government. That advice must always lead to improving the lives of all our citizens. As far as election is concerned, your department is the lead agency for allocation of funding for financing the elections in collaboration with the Department of Finance. In the committee’s view, your department plays a pivotal role in the success of elections in this country, let alone the success of delivery of public services in our beautiful country.

So when the committee calls you to turn up please give this your priority because your agency is what this country cannot do without. The committee would be unfair to the country if your department gives us less than what we expect verbally or in writing. So, please pass the message to the secretary for the Department of Treasury. Advise him that the Deputy Chairman demands a written response on time on the questions that we will outline to you plus others that the committee members will ask.

The questions are;

(1) What is your view on the funding arrangement of the National Elections in the country and what point in time in the last Parliament was the funding for the 2022 National General Elections commence to the release of respective implementing agencies funding?

(2) How is the funding for general elections framed? What sort of information is required by the PNG Electoral Commission, the security forces, and other stakeholders in order to come up with a budget for the National General Elections?

(3) What was the estimated funding allocated for the 2022 General Elections? Do you think the funding was sufficient, too much or less?

(4) With the creation of six new electorates just before the Parliament went for the elections, did this affect the funding allocation before and during the 2022 General Elections?

Last question and most important because this is not a court where we trying to find who is at fault. The committee's role is to find recommendations from the Department of Treasury as one of the lead agency. So the last question, please, pass it to the Secretary.

(5) What would be some of the recommendations in terms of funding for future elections? Recommendations based on our observation and therefore the reason why the Parliamentary Committee on looking at what happened in 2022 elections was established. It was because many citizens including the leaders agree that the 2022 Elections was one of the worst elections in our history. The committee was established to go back to the Parliament to recommend how we can improve the 2027 Elections. Therefore, in terms of your department, a key agency, what strong recommendation can you give to this committee for us to improve funding of elections so that everything goes smoothly and timely?

Moreover, what time frame would you recommend to the Parliament and your Treasurer to prepare for 2027? Are we going to wait until 2026? Or should we start preparing today. The 2024 Budget will have a component for 2027 Elections. We want you to give us your input because of all the complaints of not getting enough funding, funding didn't come in on time, officials are not yet paid and service providers are not yet paid. But on the other hand we were told by the Electoral Commission and other stakeholders that they do submit an annual budget but the Treasury knocks it right down. The Treasury don't call them back to explain why did they need that amount and also the Treasury doesn't explain why they cut down that much. You understand, Deputy?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes, sir.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – These types of interactions is not to protect you as an official, no. This is to protect the country called Papua New Guinea and Treasury is important in this equation to make Papua New Guinea a better country for our children and ourselves. So Mrs Napa, please respond to these five questions.

If you have the answers and then in the process as you are talking, my two deputy committee members, Honourable Robert Naguri and Honourable Jacob Maki will also intervene and lastly may I say, you are protected by the privileges. Whatever you say, the information you give, you are protected. We are not here to find who is at fault so we can prosecute them. That's not our role. We just want to the truthful information so the Department of Treasury can prepare better for the next election. Thank you, Mrs Napa Hurim.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Thank you Chair and Deputy Chairman and Members of the Committee for having us this afternoon. Before we answer the questions, I think it will help us if we ran through you briefly the budget process that will set the pace and the background in which we discuss how much funding was given for the National General Elections.

The budget process starts as early as January technically at the background. Agencies don't get to hear about it until we are somewhere in the middle of the year but all the inside technical work starts as soon as the fiscal year opens up. So we do a lot of preparatory work. A lot of work gets into getting all of the information ready. On the 31st of March every year, the

Treasury puts out the Final Budget Outcome (FBO) report for the previous year. So this coming March we will be putting out the FBO report for 2022 and then in July 31st we are required to publish what is called the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) report, that gives a half-year update of the performance of the economy and how we have done on the Budget, and how we have gone on the budget implementation.

These reports also feed into the budget formation for the next fiscal year. So for 2022 the FBO report for 2021 and the MYEFO Report for 2021 would have helped us to form the Budget for 2022.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You knew that 2022 is the election year.

Mrs NAPA HURIM– Yes, correct. And then it's a requirement in the public service, all agencies know this and all agency heads know this. We issue budget circulars whenever we need to but we have standard ones on the budget.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So for 2022, when did you issue that budget circular?

Mrs NAPA HURIM– Deputy Chairman, pardon me, I don't have the exact date but it's issued after the MYEFO is published, after July.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – After March.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – After July.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But by then the 2022 Budget would already have been passed in November 2021.

Mrs NAPA HURIM– In July 2021, we put together –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – I understand the MYEFO Report for 2021 was presented in July 2022.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes, the public presentation, and the internal documents are available –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – The point that I am getting to is you use the MYEFO report to plan for next year.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Correct.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And I am saying that the 2021 MYEFO report was presented in July as you advise in 2022.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – It's published in that same year.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Yeah, but it's the same thing. It's published and you prepare the MYEFO for 2021, and present it in 2022 so that it will help you for 2023 onwards.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – So the FBO is for the previous year. Sorry Sir, I think the MYEFO is required for that fiscal year. So 2021 MYEFO would have been presented in July 2021. It's

under the *Fiscal Responsibility Act*. For 2022, it will be this year. And there are other reports and other work we do on GDP forecasting and all of that. We have three rounds of forecasting and then we do three rounds of quarterly budget reviews; two of them are paper reviews, one is a face-to-face review where the agencies come in and we have the review of current year's Budget

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Just come back to the specifics of the budget process. The 2022 budget process that you both were in charge of under the Secretary. Begin with January right through.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – So, I'll step back to January 2022, we would have issued three circulars asking all agencies to give us their work and procurement plans.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Start preparing or to give you their budget estimates?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – No, to give us their work plans and procurement plans. In 2021, we would have prepared for the 2022 Budget, so I am trying get to how the K600 million was appropriated in the first instance. So, when we asked the agencies to come in August 2021, all the agencies who know that they have a role to play in the National General Elections in 2022, will have to submit a Budget bid.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You specifically ask them to do so as well?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – All agencies get the circular and they are to bid.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – In your written report please submit that circular as well.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – When the bids are submitted then it's consolidated through a screening process for Strategic Budget Committee.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Who sits in there?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – The deputies of central agencies.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What are the central agencies? Who was there in 2021 for 2022 Budget?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Department of Treasury (myself), Finance, National Planning, PM&NEC and Personnel Management.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And Provincial Affairs? It's a central agency.

Mr NAPA HURIM – No, they are not there.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Justice?

Mr NAPA HURIM – They are not there.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So those two central agencies are not on the Strategic Budget Committee.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – No. So that committee will screen all the budget bids and make a recommendation. However, we also have an internal as per the *Fiscal Responsibility Act*, Treasury is required to do a Budget Strategy Paper for the following year. And the Budget Strategy Paper in line with the MYEFO will set out the budget parameters or the resources that will be available for the next year.

It's just a guide for the report to be produced and then it helps us with all of the quarterly report reviews that we have done. We gather all of that information and combine them together.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – It forms the Budget Strategy Paper, which goes to the Cabinet by the Treasurer and then it's publicly announced.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Correct. It is like a guide in framing the Budget.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Can you also give us the copy of that strategic paper? We want to know whether the 2022 election is featured all the way from 2021 planning right through to 2022.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – When we are running the Strategic Budget Committee, that process takes about six weeks to get through all of the agencies.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Do you call them up?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – For the key ones, yes. We have prior meetings with the key agencies before the Strategic Budget Committee hearings where we see there are important things to discuss then we sort of repeat the process so we get their bids right so we can better represent them.

There were budget reforms previously some years back where we use to have all agencies coming and doing their budget presentations. That went for 10 weeks and it took a lot of time so in the budget process reforms now the agencies don't come in.

The budget people do the presentation for them but before SBC sits we have meetings with them to hear them out and ask questions that we are not sure of and what they mean by certain things in their budget bids. We just go through and understand what they want from us and understand the numbers, what they are asking for.

At the same time, we have our Treasury policy wing also working on revenue and the size of the envelope that is expected for the coming year and all of that. So we have to marry the two process towards the end.

So after strategic budget hearing, we make the recommendations known to the secretary and it goes to Central Agencies Coordinating Committee (CACC).

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– What month is that done?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – In October, so SBC is usually in September. So by October CACC receives.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What type of information goes to CACC at that time? So that is in October 2021?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Correct.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– You have a copy of that so we can also include that in your presentation?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes. So CACC will receive all the agencies’ budget briefings -

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But for that October.

Mrs NAPA HURIM– In October.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You submitted all the agencies’ –

Mrs NAPA HURIM – All the agencies’ budgets, bids and the recommendations from SBC to CACC to approve. After CACC hears, it goes to ministerial economic committee. That’s at the ministerial level now and the Treasurer is the Chair of the ministerial economic committee.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Let me give you an example that came out in our session with the Electoral Commission. They said they submitted for K400 million but they were only allocated K311 million. So in that process of budgeting where did that cut happen? Was it in that recommendation that went to CACC? The original requirement for the Electoral Commission, after your processes, that paper is recommended to CACC because CACC is the process before Cabinet.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Correct.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So is it in that recommendation in October that the figure is cut, or where in the process, or you leave it to the next year?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – So there’s a few more steps there, so after ministerial economic committee then it comes to Cabinet to NEC.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But then you are talking about November which is the Budget session for 2022. You re in 2021 October –

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Then your recommendations go to CACC in October, it goes to the Ministerial Economic Committee in October, NEC rushes it because the November session is the Budget Session. My question is, that K400 million that the Electoral Commission requested, at which stage did you cut it? Was it cut at CACC or MEC or in Cabinet?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Sir, I cannot pinpoint that; we have to check the records.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– You have to tell the Committee.

Mrs NAPA HURIM– Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Make sure you get that information and deliver that in your written report.

Mrs NAPA HURIM– Chair, if I can explain, that happens across all agencies.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – We understand but we are focusing on the elections.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes, we will provide that. I cannot pinpoint at what process the cut happened. So after Cabinet –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Then the budget is presented in November by the Minister and then whatever is allowed for in the Appropriation Bill agencies just have to make do with it?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And then for the elections, what is the Department of Treasury's strategy to ensure that the 2022 General Election funds were managed accordingly in a timely manner because the election had till issues of writs is cleared and then elections had to finish by the end of July and a new government has to be formed by first week of August.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So in your planning and budgeting et cetera; what was then your plan specifically for elections after the Budget was passed. What did you actually do?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – So as soon as a Budget is passed like in any other year – let me make an example; for this year, we issued the budget circulars last year to make sure the agencies –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That we understand; I just want you to focus on after the budget was passed. What did you do for election purposes?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Everyone falls under the budget circulars that are issued to agencies to submit work plans, cash flows and procurement plans. We have three requirements.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So when did that happen?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – January.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So after the Budget was passed in November, you then went back to the Agencies of State, and say we need your cashflow projections. Basically, it's cash flow projections.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – In there was Electoral Commission.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Can you remember? What did they present to you? And if they did, please submit it to the committee. And when did they present it, their cashflow requirements? When was it stamped, and when was the first warrant released to Department of Finance? And when was the first cheque raised by Department of Finance in the respected trust accounts that the Secretary for Finance informed us of? The main account in the Electoral Commission and the provincial election accounts.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – By the 11th of February 2022, we had received the participating agencies had submitted all their work plans.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – 11th of February 2022?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes, correct.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That includes the Electoral Commission, the Defence, Police –

Mrs NAPA HURIM – DJAG, Ombudsman Commission, NBC. Because of the nature of the Elections and the urgency to have funds advance to the agencies to prepare; we had some funds advanced without the actual receipt of the work plans, the cashflow and the procurement plans.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So in your written reports, you submit to those special – that includes the Electoral Commission as well?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes, the K100 million that the Secretary for Finance was alluding to; K111 million to Police and the K50 million to defence were advanced prior to us receiving the work plans and the cashflows.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Very good. So the key stakeholders received advanced funds.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Once we received, their funds were all released. As to how was the funding released, we will provide a written report. Just to give you a summary, we had a total of K600 million appropriated for the 2022 National General Elections; we ended up giving K695.8 million for the conduct of the National Elections.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Where did the K95 million come in?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – We had some agencies who did not feature in the initial budget –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Like who?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Like Information and Communication; we needed to publish information and awareness, and get the citizens to follow the General Elections conduct; and then the Registrar of Political parties' office –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So you can tell us specifically how much each of those got. You can give it to us in the report.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes, we will provide those. The K95 million also includes additional funding that was provided to Police and Defence and CIS.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So they requested for additional.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And the Electoral Commission? Did they ask for additional? You cut their budget by K100 million, did they not come back for part of that K95 million?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – No, they did not ask.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So you did not worry about it? And what was the reason for you approving those other requests...

What was your criteria for approving that extra K95 million? Do you have certain, specific criteria? Otherwise it was done from the Secretary's facility because it wasn't in the budget.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Police wrote requesting funds for air-hire and post-election callout. So, air-hire specifically was not budgeted, so we did not include that. It was unclear at budget time who was going to support us for air-hire. So, Chair, through you, we picked up the point on donor-partners assisting us. We agree that we need more clarity around that. We noted from Treasury's experience each of the agencies were coordinating with donor-partners themselves. We asked for information through IDEC on who was providing what type of assistance, whether it was in kind or what kind of assistance they were providing, we were not able to get that information.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – At this stage you cannot tell the committee how much the bilateral partners contributed to the elections, and who received how much?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – No.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You don't have that information?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – We don't have that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Why?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – We asked for that information and asked if the agencies – it was not clear to us also at budget time when the Strategic Budget Committee was sitting and screening the proposals, we asked who was going to support us for –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You were asking the partners?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – We were asking the agencies participating because they themselves were liaising with the bilateral partners. Also at IDEC, we heard they were also liaising with the bilateral partners themselves so we asked for that information.

So, that's where we didn't cover the air-hire so when no one came through and we didn't get any information we provisioned extra funding to Police to cover air-hires.

For Defence, at the same time, I think there was an emergency happening somewhere for the elections as well and so we had to advance additional funding above their said allocation from the K600 million, and K3 million additional to CIS for allowances and accommodation because they went over the cost.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You will provide these in your written response to us.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes, we will.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And when are you expecting the reports back from the agencies?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – We were supposed to receive the reports through the quarterly reviews but we have not received the reports as yet.

Mr DEPUY CHAIRMAN – Your final budget outcome is 31st of March, this year.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Correct.

Mr DEPUY CHAIRMAN – That is not too far away. And because the committee is worried about the election funding, we really need to – we will definitely have that report when the Treasurer presents the FBO in March.

Thank you for that very clear explanation. The question in the process that has been worrying us is, what process did you go through in your budget process for 2020 and going back 2019, knowing that the elections are in 2022 and there are pre-election preparations that have to be budgeted for responsible agencies. Because of the delays in procurement processes, some of the key, big items need to be procured way ahead of the election year. What happened in your department with regards to the issue of elections and when were you appointed as deputy?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Last year.

Mr DEPUY CHAIRMAN – So you were not in there. Mr Hans, when were you FAS?

Mr HANS MARGIS (First Assistant Secretary -Treasury) – The same.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – But two of you had been in the department. Knowing this, can you tell the committee that really there was nothing so far as election preparations is concerned for 2020 and 2021? Can you admit that? Or was there anything in your system that could have asked the question – Electoral Commissioner, aren't you preparing for the 2022 Elections? How can you get ready? What's your budget requirement for 2020 and 2021? Anything of that sort happened or nothing whatsoever?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Deputy Chairman, in the public service each agency has a corporate plan and it's usually five years and the annual plan is pegged to the corporate plan and we have a five-year rolling implementation plan. It's a part of budgetary process and part of financial management that all of our budgets reflects what is in our plan. So in 2020, we would have expected Electoral Commission in their budget bid for that year in their successive budget bids for them to capture and make a bid for election preparations. I cannot recall whether –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Can you help us go back respectively for 2020 and 2021 in your process whether the Electoral Commission – and look at the budget documents – and whether the country actually prepared before 2022 so far as Treasury and funding is concerned and inform the committee whether that didn't happen. And, therefore, we have to say it must happen and we cannot leave it to the last minute and that's the point that we are driving at.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes, we will.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Deputy Chairman, may I take the floor please, Deputy Secretary Mrs Hurim, before you were elevated to your post as the Deputy Secretary, what was your previous position?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – First Assistant Secretary - Budget Operations.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – FAS Budget Operations, so, obviously, you would have come across all agencies' bids in your records and you would have come across if Electoral Commission submitted their bids for budget preparations 2022 in 2019, 2020 and 2021. So, the committee would be very much interested for you to submit to this committee the bids for those years. So, we would like to know where the problem was that caused all these delays in funding. Thank you, Deputy Secretary.

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Chairman, through you, yes we will provide all these.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you. The other question that you wanted to answer

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Yes, Chair, what sort of information is required was one of the questions.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – I think you have answered that regarding budget process and it was clear but come to –

Mrs NAPA HURIM – What was the appropriations – 600 and then we provided 685.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You got the details there and then number five

Mrs NAPA HURIM - The newly created – yes, so that one, Chair, we admit it was very late in the process but at the same time we would like to have seen the process for preparation like our colleagues in Finance Department pointed out that the budgetary process for election started a year or two earlier because of the procurement process.

Many times, generally for agencies it takes a while for them to put their budget bids together knowing what will be needed and how many people will be needed on the ground for election, what ammunition is needed and what type of paper and these kinds of things. For this one, the seven new districts were late in the process.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – How did you handle it when Parliament and the Electoral Commissioner said to issue the writs on these electorates? How did you manage it in terms of funding?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Is it for the elections? Yes, we allowed the executing agencies; Electoral Commission, Police, Defence to plan how they will go into the new districts but we just made the funding available to them and, yes, we allowed them to expand the plans to cover the new districts as well.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Last question; two of you are very experienced public servants in a very important agency of the state; which is Treasury. Take off your positional hats and put on the hat of a Papua New Guinean. Using your wealth of experience and knowledge recommend to the committee in terms of Treasury's role in preparation, process, budgets that you have explained. What areas would you want the committee to look at to improve or change for the betterment of our people?

Mrs NAPA HURIM -Thank you Deputy Chairman. We will put those in writing but very briefly from the top of our head the first one that came that was of evident to us during execution time was coordination. We need to coordinate a little bit better and also which agency should initiate; for instance, coming together for a meeting, what resources are needed and the ceilings given to us; it is a Treasury thing – the cash flow, how much revenue comes to us. Those are different on a separate stream and we have another group coordinating. The IDEC was on this side but there was no link between the two.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What happened that there was no link?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – Well, we were at IDEC but there were different things happening at the same time.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN- Like what?

Mrs NAPA HURIM - I will make an example. There were different gazettal notices on the different dates that went out and we also needed to know when the Police and the Defence Force were going to be deployed. We needed to know the deployment dates on our side to be able to support with the funding to make sure communicate with our finance colleagues to ensure the allowances were in so on and so forth. The deployment dates were not given to us on time. We did not know the dates until very late. We only found out when we were at the IDEC process.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What was happening in 2012 and 2017 because IDEC was not there? How were you coordinating these things before IDEC was formed and what mechanisms were you, the leading agencies, using before IDEC was formed? We were told that IDEC was formed very late in the piece.

Mr HANS MARGIS – To be honest IDEC was part of the previous election as well. It was there but the Electoral Commission took the lead during those elections.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – They chaired IDEC?

Mr HANS MARGIS – It was normally chaired by the chief secretary, however, the provisions of schedules and all others were led by the Electoral Commission.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That we know but we were told that in a good number of IDEC meetings the Electoral Commissioner never turned up.

Mr HANS MARGIS – I think that was for the last election.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What is your recommendation for this issue?

Mrs NAPA HURIM – We need to strengthen the IDEC process and start the process earlier on, also not to have IDEC only in the election year, it needs to be held every year within the five years to attend to things like the update of the common roll and planning of the election process.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Are you saying that we have to establish it as a legal entity so that it is a recognized body, so that everybody can follow who the chairman of that body is?

There are penalties that need to be prescribed because our experience is that IDEC didn't work even as you said it was established in the last election. We were told that in this election IDEC really didn't work; the meetings were poorly attended and the issues that were arose during the elections were not properly addressed.

But please think about this issue, sit down with your secretary and then come up with recommendations where Treasury has the powers, functions and responsibilities. Obviously, you have integrated your programs with all the agencies of state in the budget process but am sure that there is a better more efficient, transparent and easily manageable process that we need to go through.

The committee urges that you provide and prepare a sufficient – some of the requests we may specifically include them but we want a good set of paper, but a very strong set of recommendations on how we as a country can improve including the procurement processes because we were told that procurement bottlenecks resulted in poor service delivery on the election, so how can we address those things. But the message I am reading is out of the K600 million Budget, the report will indicate how much funds has been allocated to each of the key stakeholders, this is how much we believe was spent and in the Final Budget Outcome that your Minister will present in March, it will include all this election-related expenses, so that the committee can pick it up and look at it.

In the area of Treasury, these are the areas that we need to improve, so we expect a 2022 Election-focused Final Budget Outcome report. Pass this message to the Secretary and Minister.

Thank you Deputy Secretary (Mrs Hurim) and First Assistant Secretary Budget (Mr Margis) for coming. Please pass our message that we may call you back again at a later time but my recommendation from the Chair is that a written submission must come before the end of March, within two weeks preferably. Then we await the Final Budget Outcome report that will be presented on the Floor at the end of March. Thank you, you are now excused.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Our last team to come before the Committee is Mr Joe Warus, Acting Secretary for Department of Provincial Affairs and Local Level Governments.

We can proceed because we can't pay you overtime, we have to finish before 4:06.

Welcome secretary and your team. You are aware of the reason why you are here. We represent the Committee that was established after the elections by the 11th Parliament to look into how our 2022 National Elections went. The reason why the committee was established was because I think you'd agree, everybody agreed and your leaders agreed on the Floor that the 2022 Elections was one of the worst that we have ever undertaken and, therefore, a committee was established to highlight the real issues but more importantly map out a way forward so that 2027 Elections would be better than any other elections that we have ever hosted in this country.

Secretary Mr Joseph Warus, Deputy Secretary Mr Lasen Thomas, Director Mr Ken Gaso and the team, I welcome you all to the committee hearing. Secretary, you and your team know exactly the reason why your department exists but in this process we are interested in one of your responsibilities the key being the local level government elections but one of them in terms of the big issues that we've faced is the issues around the common roll and the integrity and the credibility of the common roll – and as you know many of our eligible voters were turned away.

What happened and the people were turned away? What can we do better? What processes can we start preparing towards a better common roll? Therefore, the question to you as secretary for Provincial and Local-level Government Affairs is your contribution in that process where your powers, functions and responsibilities allow you to contribute and help the Electoral Commission to prepare better for the next election.

The committee has prepared four questions for you to answer today but we would want to request a written submission as well within two weeks if you can because it is the written statement that we will attach to the parliamentary report. So your valuable issues identified and most importantly a valuable recommendation will be part of the report that the committee will submit. We have made a decision that the committee should present the parliamentary report by June. So we've got a time to work flat out and, therefore, we need your support to give us the right information, particularly recommendations on how we can improve issues like the common roll which is part of your responsibilities.

Therefore, the 4 questions are as follows:

(1) As your department prepares for the local level government elections, what are your views on the 2022 General Elections? Your observations on your people on the ground, your governors and presidents, your election officials and the ward members there that you interact with?

(2) What has the department done in preparations for LLG elections? Who are the stakeholders involved in the preparations because we want you to assure the committee that for the coming LLG elections on the date that we will set through your minister that we actually have taken on board some of the key issues that contributed to the poor performance of the 2022 National General Elections.

(3) Briefly explain the involvement of the Electoral Commission and how effective is the Electoral Commission's involvement?

(4) How much funding does the department require to conduct LLG elections? Will the LLG elections be solely funded by the National Government? If not, what are the other sources of funding?

Basically, we are all here to set a pace that the lessons that we have learnt will not be repeated in the LLG elections, and the success of the LLG elections will be one of the foundations for the success of the 2022 elections. Thank you Secretary

Department of Provincial Affairs and Local Level Governments

Mr JOSEPH WARUS (Acting Secretary –Provincial Affairs and Local-level Governments) – Thank you Deputy Chair and your esteem committee. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Prime Minister for setting up this very important committee to look at the review of the last National Elections and also to seek our views on the LLG elections which is coming next year. This is a very important discussion and we are honoured to provide our views.

The department is a very key partner to the National Elections as well as the LLG elections. We only provide a supporting role to the Electoral Commission. The actual role of conducting of the elections at the national and LLG level is performed by the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission, which comes under the Department of Prime Minister and NEC. The Provincial Affairs department only provides a role that is to assist the Electoral Commission to conduct a fair, safe and free election for all. Election is everybody's business and it requires a team effort for everybody to contribute to make it successful. Everybody has to express their democratic right to vote for a leader they desire for.

The other role is to provide a list of proclaimed wards that we have to the Electoral Commission to help them to assist to conduct the elections. The third role is to facilitate the signing of the MOA with the provinces to assist the Electoral Commission on cost-saving measures to conduct the LLG elections.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Secretary, have you got those MOAs. If so, how many MOA’s have been signed.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Those MOAs were signed with Electoral Commission and respective provinces.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Yes, but have you got copies?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – No, I do not have a copy to provide to the committee.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Would you be able to gather those MOA’s and submit as part of your written report?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – We can do that. We will have to work with Electoral Commission to get those copies.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That’s what I’m saying, work with them to obtain copies because I understand those MOAs include the establishment of the election-related trust accounts. Is that right?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – We’ll have to check that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Okay, check it because the Secretary for Finance said that they did allow the establishment of election-related provincial accounts and that the provincial governments, DDA’s were also to provide funds from that account. At this stage there is no visibility and now that you have mentioned the agreement, if you and the Electoral Commissioner can work together to provide that updated list of provincial election accounts and how much money have been donated by provincial governments, et cetera, in that account and their expenditure. Thank you, continue.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Just some quick observation on the National Elections. I was with the team and my late Secretary, Dr. Gelu, and we went to Alotau for observation of the general elections.

The election was good and peaceful in Alotau. Most people turned up to vote, but as the Deputy Chair has mentioned, people were turned away. They were not able to cast their votes because their names were not on the common roll. Some of those people have voted in the last election but surprisingly they were not in the common roll to vote for this election.

The other issue that we noticed during our observation is in regards to the MoAs on the national election with the Electoral Commission and the provinces. Those MoAs were signed but without any clear guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of the provinces and the Electoral Commission.

Another issue faced during the election was funding.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – The Secretary for Finance told us that trust accounts were established and as we know the Secretary signed every trust instrument. That instrument dictates how those funds are managed and handled. You are saying that there are no proper guidelines?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – That has to be cleared.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – In your opinion, what were those MoA's about?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – It's about the support in provinces as partners conducting and delivering the election.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – One of them was through funding, but what about the other supports?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – The other was through engagement of public servants in the provinces, districts and LLGs to assist in the conduct of the national elections.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That basically was a simple agreement that PA will collaborate with the Electoral Commissioner to release his public servants on time for different roles and responsibilities. Please continue.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Another issue that was noted was the payment to the service providers. You will note that a lot of provinces travel to Port Moresby to seek clearance from Electoral Commission for the payment of cheques and the release of cheques to the service providers. That causes a lot of delay in terms of payment to the service provider in the conduct of the elections.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So the cheques that were generated by Finance, the Ombudsman Commission blocked it. The Secretary said that he did successfully negotiate and they were allowed to be paid. What is your observation? Are they still waiting?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Generally, from that, it causes some delays in terms of payment to service providers. It is quite costly for public servants to travel all the way to Port Moresby just to get clearance.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Give an example of some of those cheques. What were they for?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – I am speaking from our observation in Alotau. This issue was raised by the provincial administrator.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What were the cheques for? Are they for allowances? Were they for the provincial election manager to come and get clearance to do some purchases?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – An example of the cheques would be for logistics.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – The Secretary for Finance said that they successfully got the Electoral Commission to allow them to proceed.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – The other issue is the provincial election steering committee at the province.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Yes. Please comment on that.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – The provincial steering committee on the ground in provinces were not effective. A lot of the issues on the ground should be addressed at that level.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Who was the Secretary during the elections, you or somebody else?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – It was our late Secretary.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Your late successor. And if you were there as the Secretary for Provincial Affairs and you saw that, that the provincial election committee was not functioning, what would you have done? Or what would you recommend to the committee on how to improve that?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Okay, on that, Sir, the chair to that steering committee is the provincial administrator.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – That's what I'm saying, as the Secretary for Provincial Affairs, you communicate regularly with the provincial administrator.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Yes and we have provincial and monitoring coordinating committee on the ground also and that is one of the committees that is very effective which can also be used.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – And they didn't use that. You recommend that they should have used that?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Yes, they could have used that to help to support implement some of those –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Why are you recommending that rather than the established steering committee? Who were those individuals in charge of that committee, whom you said is better to use? Who was part of the provincial steering election committee?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – I'm not saying that is better but this is the same committee which comprises of all the sectors and even national agencies who were on the ground. It's already in operation.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What do you call that committee?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Provincial performance, monitoring and coordinating committee on the ground. It's just like plasma –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – It’s a sub-national plasma structure. So, it’s a plasma structure but at the provincial level. Continue.

Mr JOSPEH WARUS - Okay on the LLG Elections. Our responsibility is mainly to facilitate the issue of writs, which the Minister issues and also to receive the return of writs, which the Minister does. For the actual conduct of the LLG elections, it’s the responsibility of the Electoral Commission. On the last conduct of the LLG elections, I would like to make a comment that the last LLG elections was a successful one. It was conducted well because –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Highlight the ingredients that made it successful.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – It was successful because we involved all the provincial governments, provincial administrations, districts and LLGs and it was a cost-sharing exercise, which did not involve much cost.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Can you submit to the committee the last election costs? Would you be able to have that information on the cost of the last LLG election? And how were those costs coordinated? How much came from the National Government, provincial government, district authorities and LLGs? And what lessons can we learn from the National General Elections going forward? You’ll be able to do that?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Thank you, we take note of that and will provide that to you.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you, proceed.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – So the conduct of the LLG elections. The failure was less than hundred so it was a good turnout.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Explain that.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Because like I said, we had involved the provincial government, districts, LLGS. They were involved, in that, a lot of awareness was conducted.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– Basically you are saying there was a good preparation to conduct the last elections and, therefore, the outcome was very good. There is a thinking that, why don’t we go back to the old way of provincial governments conducting the LLG elections rather than the Electoral Commission or the National Government worrying about it. Therefore, through the budget process for that LLG election year, the National Budget provides to the provincial governments their election budget so they conduct, the PAs in charge in coordination with the Electoral Commissioner or the delegate of the Electoral Commissioner helping in establishing an election management supervisory committee or coordination committee going forward, rather than coming back to Waigani and taking charge.

The reason why we have been delaying LLG elections is because we got the national election to worry about and, therefore, we are delaying it. So why can’t we in the future rewrite the law and the future LLG elections should be the responsibilities of the provincial governments and they do it on a specified time in the LLG election legislation.

We have a national election legislation and so what is your view on that. In doing so, the Electoral Commission will worry about and prepare properly for the national elections. Rather than preparing to have a breathing space this 2023 they have to start preparing for the

2024 LLG Elections. So poor Electoral Commission is basically exhausted so why can't we change the law? What is your view on that?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Thank you, Deputy Chair. Well the suggestion is good. Let us look at the previous arrangement; how were elections conducted successfully and what made it to be successful. These are some of the things that we can look at and from what you are proposing now is something that we are open to that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – In the report that the committee is requesting you, please provide the experience of provincial governments conducting the elections in the past; the pros and cons of centralising the LLG elections and, therefore, the delays that we are experiencing. And then in that submission the way forward in terms of recommendations and one of them I have just suggested –if you agree with it – then put it down in writing and we change the law.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS– Thank you, we take note of that, Sir.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– Proceed.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Let me say, in terms of conducting the LLG elections we are working closely with the Electoral Commission we have a huge task to work with them. We are working with the provinces now. So far, we have assisted the provinces to establish new wards and new LLGs and that is our responsibility. I will just give you the quick summary of the LLGs that we have in the country right now.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– You have given us the Gazetted document there, thank you.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – The number of LLGs that we have in the country at the moment is 331 and 6375 wards. There are some new LLGs that have been established and that will increase.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – When will you stop approving new LLGs and new wards?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – That's a very good question, Sir.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – What is your recommended time frame because the election is next year?

You have to advise the Minister to stop approving new LLGs. We just approved seven new electorates at the eve of the elections then we went for the election. We don't want the LLGs to do that again. So what is your recommended time frame? Maybe 12 months before the election nobody should be recommending to the Minister for new wards and new LLGs. So you only have 12 months breathing space to establish the administrative structures, build their offices, staffing requirements, et cetera. It's not just saying it, we approve 20 and we go for elections without knowing where the office will be, where the staff will come from, what type of budget will fund the staff, LLG manager, clerk and everybody.

You have to have a recommendation in policy. Minister, you can't approve any more LLGs. No time to prepare for that.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Sir, we take note of that. Normally it's 12 months that we put the deadline for no new proposals for establishment of new LLGs and wards.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Coming back to some of the specific questions, you said that the election is next year. In this year’s budget in preparations for next year, how much money was allocated for 2024 election preparations in the 2023 Budget.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS– Thank you Chair, the allocation if I can recall is around K30 million.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– And how about Electoral Commission to prepare with you.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS –Normally, the budget comes from Electoral Commission. We work in supporting them.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So that K30 million budget item is under Electoral Commission?

Mr JOSHEPH WARUS – Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You don’t have it in your budget.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – No.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So you know it is to prepare for the next election. Is that adequate because LLG elections is bigger than the National Elections?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – No.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You are saying no. This is preparations about because in the discussions and interviews we have heard, everybody is saying we did not have time to prepare. That’s the main issue that is recurring from all the heads of agencies that came. We did not have time to plan. We did not have time to prepare. Well we have the LLG Elections in 2024. We need to plan whole of this year 2023. So if the K30 million budget is not enough, well you have to make noise. The committee is prepared to take on board the issue that you and the Electoral Commissioner – as a lesson for us, we have learnt in the main election and as a way forward to prepare better for the forthcoming National General Elections.

Do you have any pre-LLG Election preparations in place that you are coordinating with Electoral Commission this year? If you have a plan, then the committee is requesting for you to submit that plan as evidence that we got LLG elections properly planned and there’s this plan ready before the event takes place one year down the line.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Thank you Deputy Chair. We don’t have the plan because it’s done by the PNG Electoral Commission. We only provide supporting role to them.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – I suggest that you go and sit down with the Electoral Commissioner and say, show us your plan, how can you can you expect my department to help you because all my workers are going to come from the provinces, LLGs and the villages.

You have to share the plan. If you don’t have a plan, you have to make it now. Don’t behave like last general election, no plan. Can you do that? And two of you bring the plan for this year, preparing for 2024 Elections. My instruction is you go and talk with the Electoral Commissioner. The committee has asked for 2023 LLG Election preparation plan and included in that plan is how are you going to use that K30 million. And as secretary for provincial affairs,

how are you going to liaise with your provincial administrators, the CEOs of the districts, the LLG managers and all the council ward members.

One of the issues that's been raised is lack of coordination. Departmental heads are not talking to each other, even in the time of phones they don't even communicate. Use WhatsApp, internet or phones. They're just complaining that this fellow is not helping. This type of culture is not good.

Secretary, so for the LLG elections, we do not want and I don't want your minister to come to the floor after the 2024 elections and say the 2024 LLG elections was the worst ever we've had. I don't want to hear that report. We already said it in the main election so for the LLG election we must prepare better. And I'm demanding as deputy chair of the committee to give us the plan this year for the preparation on how to utilize the K30 million. You got it Secretary? Thank you very much.

Honourable Robert Naguri, Honourable Jacob Maki, are there any pressing issues you want to raise with the secretary?

Honourable JACOB MAKI - Thank you, Secretary. You are aware that the LLG elections is in 2024, therefore, you need to be prepared. Is the K30 million budget allocation okay with you and the Electoral Commission? But I think this LLG Election should be controlled and coordinated by provincial governments, district officers and LLGs alone.

We should recommend that rather than pulling along the Electoral Commission which involves a lot of expenses, we have people down the line, they can coordinate and do such. So that's what I think and believe. It's okay, as you are secretary, you go and have a word with Electoral Commissioner and then both of you discuss and come to an amicable solution that we can put this election back to the provinces to run. It's easy for us.

The budget is for preparation of the elections, if this is so, you check, balance we get things fixed in 2023 now and then we have the elections in 2024. If we want to start in 2024, it's going to be late. We talk much on this, we are here to help you and support you.. We support each other and then we try it out on the LLG elections and we'll see whether it's going to work or not.

So, you'll have to do something. If you have a plan available, you can complete the plan and deliver to us so that we can assist you and deliberate on for the parliament too. We'll be behind you and the Electoral Commissioner. Thank you.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Thank you Chairman. Good afternoon, Secretary DPLLG, Deputy Secretary and the Director. Just a question of interest.

Council elections are normally held straight after national general elections as the traditional way of conducting elections in Papua New Guinea. Due to some unforeseen circumstances, council elections are now held two years after the national general elections. Does your department have any plans on bringing back the traditional way of conducting the elections or are you happy with the way it is and you're going to leave it like this forever? Just a question of interest. Thank you.

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Thank you, honourable Member for that question.

You will note that LLG Elections are conducted concurrently with the national elections, as per *section 34* of the *Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Governments*. Unfortunately, we did not do that because of the circumstances that is beyond our control. But for the Department, that *section 34* should be re-looked at. There should be amendment done to that *section 34* so that we can at least allow LLG elections not to be conducted concurrently with the national elections but maybe to have it a year later.

So that is something that our Minister has raised already. We will be discussing that with the Department of Justice and Attorney General to have a look at that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – When will that proposed amendment come to the Floor?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – We are discussing this now because of the current situation. That is subject for discussion with the Department of Justice and Attorney General and it will go through a process.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – The earlier that amendment comes the better so that we have a law to follow. At the moment, I feel sorry for LLG presidents and ward members because really, we are not telling them exactly what time is the elections and they are waiting. And so that is an important issue, so Secretary, if it can be progressed.

Just one little area – the Ward Record Book; some of us believe that the role of the Ward recorder, and therefore our commitment to support that particular position is critical given the fact that, the Ward Recorder is probably the only person that knows that particular ward like the palm of his or her hand; who is born, who has died, who has transferred out, and who is eligible to vote?

In preparation for the LLG Elections, and looking forward to preparing for the 2027 National General Election; where does the Ward Recorder come in the process so far as your department is concerned?

Mr JOSEPH WARUS – Thank you, Deputy Chair, I will allow my deputy to comment on that.

Mr THOMAS LARSON (Deputy Secretary) – Thank you Deputy Chair. From our observation as a Department, as custodian of the governance system, administrating the laws and organic laws, and *LLG Admin Act*, we have seen that Ward Record Book is an option that we can try to address the ongoing voter roll issues going forward.

Basically, the law provides for the Ward Record Book to be established in every proclaimed ward under *section 57* of the *LLG Admin Act*, and the *section 67* of the *Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Government*. What the department has done is review the Ward Record Book, and we have started rolling out to the provinces. We have started with New Ireland; it's one of the first province and we have established about 95 percent of the Ward Record Book program.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Include in your submission, a copy of the Ward Record Book to the Committee.

Mr THOMAS LARSON – Sure we can do that. So what we have done is we have also developed a customized user-friendly, Ward Record Book database system.

We are collecting raw data. We are appointing ward recorders to go there and collect and we are training them. We have a requirement in place where people with at least grade 12 and above who are living within the proclaimed ward camp be appointed to go out and collect. So, we have started that and we have entered that raw data into the system. We are also targeting to try and cover all the provinces by 2025 or 2026.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So, the 2024 LLG elections will not be –

Mr THOMAS LARSON– It will not be feasible. The coming LLG elections won't be –

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – It won't be possible so we plan for the next one.

Mr THOMAS LARSON – Probably for New Ireland, it can.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So, you have a rollout plan, you have a budget?

Mr THOMAS LARSON – Exactly.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – You already have human beings there at every ward in the country?

Mr THOMAS LARSON– Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – How about harnessing IT at the ward recorder level?

Mr THOMAS LASEN – Yes. That is the way forward that we are looking at. We'd like to buy tablets and give it to the ward recorders so that they can input data because the Ward Record Book is a big, thick book and it can be destroyed. We are looking into it and we would like to start with Morobe Province, and I think New Ireland is already into it now.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – In New Ireland, how is it funded? Does the provincial government come up with the funding or is your department partnering with the New Ireland Provincial Government?

Mr THOMAS LARSON – Exactly, we have an MOU in place where we share the costs. They also meet the logistics on the ground and we buy data entry portals, computers and all this. We train them and print the books. So, we have an MOU in place to share costs and it has worked very well. We would like to replicate that and roll it out to other provinces.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – If for example some of us volunteer at the district level, and say I want the ward record system to be established in Abau and my DDA will sign an agreement with you, is that also possible?

Mr THOMAS LARSON – Yes, it can be done.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – So we facilitate at the fastest level this ward record structure.

Mr THOMAS LARSON– We've been doing that but there are some challenges in terms of coordination on the ground. So, the way to go about it is to sign an MOU with the provincial administrator who can provide the oversight on the ground. So, we are doing that. The New Ireland model can be replicated but Central and Gulf provinces, we are about to do that so you can come in from there.

What the department is doing for record purposes is to make the Ward Record Book as a one-stop database system at the ward level so that all other end users at the relevant agencies such as the Electoral Commission, NSO and NID can use the data.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – It is a bottom-up approach so it is valuable.

Thank you, Deputy Secretary. All the best with the program. If you need the support of the committee to help facilitate, our Chairman can do a letter to the provincial governors, our colleague leaders, to support if there is a conversation that we really support the ward record book in every province and ward then we need to budget and structure it properly so we have a bottom-up approach to this search for a proper database in terms of elections or planning, et cetera. I think those are very important.

The last question, Secretary. In the 2022 General Elections, many people were turned away because their names were not on the common roll. Many argued saying, ‘I voted in the last elections but my name is not here. The pastor and the ward member know that I am from here but my name is not on the common roll.’ They were sent away.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Some us believe that we should device a process for them not to be turned away because turning them away is actually we are removing their Constitutional Right to vote. In the LLG election next year, how will you handle that issue? If voters turn up at my ward, Kapari ward and the polling officials will say, sori nem bilong yu i no stap long rol long Kapari ward na bai yu inonap vot tasol ward memba istap, pasta i stap.

Can there be a process to stop this citizen from being turned away because all of us know that there are defects in the common roll. There must be a way out for the citizen to have his legal right practiced.

My questions is, in preparing for the LLG elections with this issue, how are you going to handle it so that voter votes and is not turned away.

Mr THOMAS LARSON- Thank you Deputy Chair. That is something that we take note of that and we will have to discuss with the Electoral Commission on that. In the past election if I can just share, voters for the LLG elections turned up to vote and when their name was not there the councilor would identify them and were allowed to vote. So, it happened in other places but that is something that we take note of so we can discuss with the Electoral Commission on how we will help them.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – We want that to be the standard and don’t want some wards allowing this while other wards are sending them away because that’s not another country, we are one country. So, Secretary and Deputy Director, these are the big issues the committee has learnt that we are faced with from the elections last year. We are going to host a LLG election and we need to clean up some of these big issues and one of them is turning the voters away. And the Committee wants you to find a way out so that the voter is not sent away. Some places ol bai brukim box but some places there is always peace so they just accept it and walk away crying away and nobody to hear their cry. You know what I mean, Secretary, so please find a process to allow them to vote.

Mr THOMAS LARSON – Deputy Chair, we take note of that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Any other questions? Thankyou our time is up, Secretary Joseph Warus, Acting Deputy Secretary, Mr Lason Thomas, Director LLGs, Mr Ken Gaso,

thank you very much for coming. All the best with your preparations for the LLG Elections with the Electoral Commission. Please discuss the issues on what you must prepare in 2023 so that next year LLG elections can be successful.

The issue of properly coordinating amongst departmental heads is very important for this committee and the country as a whole. If we can use the lessons of the last general elections and improve the LLG elections then the committee will have some armamentarium to recommend to the Floor of Parliament for the next general elections. These are the areas what we call the low earning fruits. Things that we can do immediately with low cost to improve the elections so that we have credibility. We are part of the global community and whatever we do the world watches and for LLG elections and the general elections I want us to perform as a proud country. And for your role in the preparations all the best, Secretary and your team, your minister and the amendments that you are proposing so that we give assurance to the LLG presidents and ward members that this is their time and they get elected this time and that's how long they have waited That's very important for our country.

Thank you for coming and all the best in the preparations for the LLG elections, you are now excused thank you.

Closing Remarks

Thank you my Committee Members and thank you to the secretariat and those of you who have come to observe; the Director for National Research Institute and your team and other keen citizens that are interested in listening to these interactions so that we can all work together as a country to improve 2024 LLG Elections as well as the 2027 National General Elections.

We will now officially close for the day but we will be coming back again for the last day of this program. We can just do a quick announcement; before we rise for the day.

Tomorrow we start again and for those of you who are listed please come between 9 a.m and 9:45 a.m. As you have seen we are starting right on time at 10 a.m. At 10 a.m tomorrow we will have the pleasure of Reverend Roger Joseph from the PNG Council of Churches, confirmed to come. After him we have former Electoral Commissioner, Mr Reuben Kaiulo who has also confirmed and will come around at 10. 50 a.m. Then we have Mr Peter Aitsi, the Chairman of the Transparency International and he is also confirmed to come.

Also, an open invitation is made to the public to come and observe because on the line-up for tomorrow we have some very important stakeholders that will be present to participate in the morning period.

After lunch we come back at 1.35 p.m, we have Mr Nemo Yalo who has confirmed to come. He is a lawyer, a former lawyer to the Ombudsman Commission. We have Mr Mark Menninga, IY Foundation, Mr Russel Kitau from UPNG Political Science, and then we have Mr Morris Ikui from Church, Children and Youth.

These are people that would want to contribute and they will basically be giving some very good recommendations from their perspective to the committee, and that is also a very interesting panel. Those listening and who have tuned in from around the country, thank you for being with us here for the last two days. One of the big issues, listeners out there, from our agencies that are responsible for managing and administering the elections, one of the key issues that we have heard as your committee, is the behavior of our citizens during the elections,

how we follow candidates around and how we try and instigate fights. It's not the candidate fighting, it is the citizens and the followers that are burning down ballot boxes and causing chaos.

The way out of this, and if you are in the provinces, we will be visiting the provinces. We will give you the program please come to those regional venues that we will publicize in the media. We want to hear as many citizens as we can so that at the end of the day the report that the committee finally produces will be a very good package of your views that we take ownership of the changes that we want to see in the country.

The maturity of a nation in my view is also demonstrated in the way nations conduct elections. We need to demonstrate that because we are heading towards 50 years and we have come of age and if yumi man trutru, we have matured as a nation and that we are able to conduct our business in a more mature, free, fair and safe way in this election process.

So, as Deputy Chair of this Parliamentary Committee, if you are not able to come and see us in the sites please use the phone and send us your recommendations because we want everybody to contribute in this important debate on what we can do as a country to improve the conduct of elections in 2027.

I invite you to participate and for those of you who have been watching and those of you who have come; tenk yu tru long kam.

God look after you, take care and see you tomorrow. Thank you very much.

(End of Day 2)

DAY THREE

23rd February 2023

Transcript

Time: 10am

Venue: State Function Room

In Attendance

Committee Members

Honourable Allan Bird – Chairman

Sir Puka Temu – Deputy Chairman

Honourable Robert Naguri

Honourable Jacob Maki

Honourable Elias Kapavore

Honourable Keith Iduhu

Witnesses

Reverend Roger Joseph – Secretary -National Council of Churches

Mr Rueben Kaiulo – Former Electoral Commissioner – Private Citizen

Mr Nemo Yalo – Lawyer and Private citizen

Mr Richard Kassman – Board Director TIPNG

Dr Osborne Sanida – Director National Research Institute

Mr Moris Ikui – Church Children and Youth Representative

Mr Mark Meniga – IY Foundation

Mr Russell Kitau – UPNG Political Science Tutor

Opening Remarks

Mr CHAIRMAN – Good morning everyone and thank you for always turning up before the Chairman.

All right, if our crew is ready we'll start.

Good morning to all our viewers and listeners around Papua New Guinea and welcome to the third day –

Listeners around Papua New Guinea and welcome to the third day of the Public Hearings into the conduct of the 2022 National Elections but also looking back at lessons learnt from previous elections

I'm your Chairman, on your left is Deputy Chairman Sir Puka Temu, on my right is one of our members, Rt Honorable Robert Naguri, Member for Bogia, also pleased to welcome Rt Honourable Elias Kapavore, Member for Pomio and Rt Honourable Keith Iduhu, Member for Hiri Koiairi.

Just to recap from the last couple of days, we have heard from the Electoral Commission, INA, Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary and the PNGDF and the Correctional Services including others yesterday like Treasury and Finance.

We've learnt quite a few things; I think significantly the Security Agencies are expecting our 2027 Elections to be much worse than previous Elections. They have given us that assessment now and its very alarming and it should concern everyone. It certainly concerns the Committee, we would like to see some improvements and a lot of the improvement from what we are gathering from the people who have presented is first of all there needs to be better transparency of Government and the Electoral Commission itself. That it needs to have greater transparency around its processes. That should reduce the level of suspicion amongst our population, particularly the candidates and their supporters.

We have also learnt from the Security Forces that the behavior of candidates and their supporters have actually become worse and that is really the main issue we are facing in the Elections is the behavior of Candidates and supporters.

So just to recap for our people and to also stress that this is a properly constituted Parliamentary Committee which means that everyone presenting today is protected by the privileges of Parliament. We expect people to be truthful and honest and to tell us their experiences if they can but more so tell us how they think we can improve and we can incorporate that into a report hopefully to be presented by around June/July for Parliaments adoption and then begin the work of implementation this year. We don't want to leave it to late. We have already learnt from other important agencies the impact of leaving things too late. We saw that culminate in last year elections.

So without further or do I now call upon the PNG Council of Churches and I believe Roger Josephs if you're here, we call you to present, thank you Sir

Reverend Joseph if you may introduce yourself and tell us which organization you're from for the record and present your views.

PNG Council of Churches

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH (Secretary-PNG Council of Churches) – Thank you your honor. My name is Reverend Roger Joseph and I am the General Secretary of the National Council of Churches. The role of the National Council of Churches in the nation is to be the prophetic voice to the nation on issues of social concerns as well as economic concerns, religious concerns. We try the Government and the people of Papua New Guinea when it comes to matters or issues that affect the lives of the people

Thank you, sir.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Do you have any points of view, suggestions, observations or recommendations that you wish to contribute in relation to elections generally, and particularly the 2022 National General Elections?

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – Yes, Mr Chairman, I do. At the outside, I wished to express my appreciation for inviting the churches through Papua New Guinea Council of Churches, to appear before this very special committee. I must admit that when I receive the invitation, I emailed all the church leaders across the nation to inform me of the experiences that they each went through.

So, appearing before the Committee this morning, I come not only with my opinions and reflections, but I come with the information given to me by the leaders of the churches across the nation.

Mr Chairman, the general overview experienced by the church leaders was that, the 2022 National General Election was not properly prepared, in the sense that preparations were all done at the very last minute. There were and we could recall last minute rushes which turned out to be a failed election. It all started with the widely talked about common roll not being updated. We have churches in almost all communities in the nation. And the churches in all these communities, have not sighted the presence of electoral workers upgrading the common roll.

As a result, many of the names were not in the common roll at the time of voting. Of course, we could shift the blame to Covid-19, but we had 2017, 2018 and the earlier parts of 2019, where initially nothing was done. Therefore, would there be a possibility of the departments like NID, NSO and the Electoral Commission sharing data together to upgrade the common roll. I think, there are some of the instruments used by some these departments which are very vital, and if we could work together to upgrade the common roll, it would be much better.

Sir, the common roll to be upgraded is very important because it would justify an individual candidate number of votes, against the total voting population in that particular district or province. In some cases, not only in this elections but past elections as well, we felt that there were some people who gained votes much higher than the number of voting population in those districts or population. This was unfair and unreal.

Sir, there was a comment made by one of our leaders on the dispute in issue on the dates of the issuance of the writs between leaders which were not supposed to be for public knowledge we felt. This scenario actually removed the trust by people on our leaders.

Another issue was the integrity of the RO's and the ARO's, which were often criticised and commented by the general public during the course of the elections. The question of transparency and honesty comes into play. This has resulted in probably 80 per cent of disputed returns, compared to previous elections.

Then, I cannot forget to mention the influential roles supposed to have been played by each political party informing all supporters of their code of conducts during elections. I can clearly remember the launching of the election code of ethics for the political parties and their

supporters before the issuance of the writs. I regret to say that PNG witnessed and experienced one of the worst violent field elections in the history of Papua New Guinea politics.

Sir, yet another, though it was made clear that there will be separate voting booths for women. In some communities this was not strictly followed, questioning the seriousness of allowing women to make independent decisions and choices when it comes to national general elections. Your honour, finally but not the least, a reflective observation was also made by one of our church leaders that the majority of the sitting MPs won in the counting and not in voting. So, he questioned if those who won their seats in voting won through money therefore questioning if those who had won seats in voting are legitimate representatives of their people. Thank you, your honour.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you Reverend. Members, sapos yupla gat sampla askim, please go ahead.

Honourable KIETH IDUHU – Thank you, Reverend. Firstly, I want to thank you for the statement, although short, I think is succinct. I want to enquire, is there a copy of the statement that has been furnished to the committee?

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – I can email that to the appropriate people here.

Honourable KIETH IDUHU – If you can engage with the secretariat here, that will be very good. In your statement you make reference to, and made general remarks, but you also make some specific references, do you have copies of accounts of incidences that you might have received?

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – Yes these were expressions of leaders they experience in respective places around the nation so I can also get the evidences and provide those evidences.

Honourable KIETH IDUHU – That will be very helpful to the committee as it formulates its factual foundations on which recommendations should be made. You make also some very interesting remarks, matters of fact with respect of the common roll. You also agree that the common roll was insufficiently presented at the issue of the writs? Is that what you are saying?

Mr ROGER JOSPEH – I think the whole nation was waiting on the upgrading of the common roll and it was never published that the common roll is being completed and is now provided for the nation's consumption.

Honourable KIETH IDUHU – How did that affect the voting process in your mind?

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – Most of the communities who went into election had no names written in the common roll and so how they voted is a big question.

Honourable KIETH IDUHU - How do you think they voted?

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – That's the question I pose here, how did they vote?

Honourable KIETH IDUHU – If they did vote. And, is that the general trend across the nation or just these specific areas?

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – This could perhaps have been the general trend across the nation.

Honourable KIETH IDUHU – Did you get some accounts from your members of your organisation in respect of this subject.

Mr ROGER JOSPEH – I will do that. I will get the evidences and provide the evidences.

Honourable KIETH IDUHU – Would you be so kind as to provide pictures if you had of voting patterns?

Mr ROGER JOSPEH – It would perhaps be hard for us to get the actual pictures because what was happening there and then was not captured, it was not our role to take pictures of what was happening but after all that had happened, people are now recalling back from memory.

Mr CHAIRMAN – I’ll intervene here. I think the committee already accepts that based on the presentation from the Electoral Commission that the voter rolls were deficient. So, we’ve already established that. In terms of evidence of some of these activities, I think we will see that when we see the NRI presentation because they’ve got some of the evidences in their presentation so we will come to that, just as a guide.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – This political party’s code of ethics for parties and supporters. Do you know what it says?

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – Thank you your honor. I am the Chairman of the Integrity of Political Party and Candidates Commission and I was present to launch the code of ethics to all the political parties. Unfortunately, there were was only one member of the sitting Parliament present at that launching all the others were represented by their secretariats and so it did not go down well with me. As a Chairman I didn’t feel that the Political Parties were responsible or they felt responsible towards adopting the code of ethics.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN– Good morning Reverend Roger Joseph. Firstly, let me acknowledge the enormous job and contribution the Churches have been doing in our beloved country. We commend the efforts of every church organization in this country. We can say that without a church we would not be this far and so we highly commend and acknowledge the enormous input in our country through all the church organizations. Through the workers in Health or Education or Women’s Program or Youth Programs the churches have made an important impact in our country and so in recognition there is a formal churches and government partnership program. I once again thank you for coming.

Couple of issues that you raised. One of the issues that the Chairman reminded us in his opening remarks was. The behavior of our people throughout the country both candidates and our own citizens who follow certain candidates. Some of these behaviors you have observed. Your church leader in the group PNG Counsel of Churches have observed. Violent actions, criminal in nature, deaths have occurred, properties have been destroyed. What is your view on this behavior of our people during this election, is it a symptom of how far we have not come in terms in terms of Human Development, the most important capital in any nation. The church contributes enormously to human resource development in this country. You and the church leaders have told the committee that this was one of the worst elections. Can you comment on

the behavior of our people on how the church can make an impact or has it make an impact or have you divided this impact in different parts and regions of the country? What is your view and what can the church and the government do in order for us to address this. Not only for the coming 2027 elections but for the good of our people.

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – Thank you your honor. It is a very good question. Thank you so much for posing that question. Firstly, perhaps we have a sick society, people cannot be able to think logically, think well and behave well. But this question towards that statement is perhaps towards the institutions we create. You know us in Papua New Guinea we have a tendency were we easily associate ourselves to groups that become very important. So is the other political parties creating that division is a big question. Political parties now with the integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission we are putting a lot of emphasis on individual people affiliating to a particular; that is where the integrity of the political party will be seen. Which is good but with the context of Papua New Guinea, the more groupings we create, the more we create infighting. SO is this contributing to the behaviour of the people today, is a big question.

On the part of the churches, we are trying our best and we are speaking to our people, and emphasising, before and after the election, we should use the pulpit in speaking to the people about their behaviours. So, most of the churches did that; they were using the pulpit to advice their people of their behaviours in the coming elections. Nonetheless, we still experienced a lot of those violence taking place. Whatever we are creating that is associating people with groups is becoming a big question for us the churches.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – One of the observations, Rev Roger Joseph, is that, even the pastors and deacons and members of the church, are also very divided in terms of which candidate they are supporting, and they are involved in this violence as well. How do you handle it at your church level: how do the individual churches dealing with this? What type of instructions do you give? Do you give instructions to not affiliate with any candidates because I personally have seen pastors affiliating themselves with candidates? Even church members for example, United Church members going with their candidate and the SDAs going with the candidates and so forth. How do you handle that?

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – You are right in saying that. We have church policies and laws that restrict people from directly involving themselves with political parties. But then respect what the nation is trying to also teach to the people. The government is telling the people to affiliate to members and we as church leaders and congregation, are also members of this nation. Therefore, we cannot always hold on to our restrictions but we must list to what the government is saying. This is a situation where we are tearing people apart.

I don't know how we are going to solve this. We do have our restrictions; we tell our deacons, and our pastors that, if and when you are involved in elections, you are going to be terminated or you are going to be suspended for a certain period of time. That is what we tell them; but then we still see people directly involved in the elections. We feel that it is their constitutional right to affiliate to a particular party. Therefore, we cannot really stop them. I think it comes back to the question; what we are creating in this country that is leading our people away.

Let me also express here this analogy of an egg; *if an egg is broken bey an external force, life inside the egg will end. But if an egg breaks from inside, new life will begin.* We seem to be adopting a lot of external forces to drive our nation and that is why we are continuously killing

the people of our nation. But if we a lot the context of Papua New Guinea to inform us of how we should go about with our development matters, then I think we will see new growth coming out. Therefore, context is very important here. We cannot use the content of the foreign countries and enforce it into our country. We must use the content of foreign countries to be informed by the context of Papua New Guinea and make a living that will save this nation.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you, the other question Reverend; you noted that out of the 118 members, we only have two women representatives. Women as you and I know are very important in any society and we understand that in Parliament they are very badly represented. What is the churches view on this scenario? How would you recommend to the committee and have you got views on how we could improve in having more women presentation on the Floor of Parliament? Are there disadvantages in the Election Process and in what areas? Should parties be responsible by way of law that parties should nominate 50 per cent of their candidates to be women? What is the churches view on helping women to be elected into parliament to at least win some elections rather than only one or two every now and then?

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – Thank you, your Honor, this is another very good question. I think that you are right in saying that the parties should feel responsible and they should make a ruling across the board that 50 per cent of their candidates must be women. I think this is the only way that we can increase the number of women being elected into the Parliament. And perhaps at the same time, from my past experience working with women I can shift the blame back to the women. There are many women who say that they want to see a women representative in the Parliament but when it comes to voting they have their own politics and they tarnish the woman candidates so I think it is a women attitude problem.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – My last comment and question to the churches view is that during your commentary, I particularly picked up the issue of voting for individual candidates and not parties. I think this is a very important message and this committee has been advised that in all of the many issues that the 2022 election went through it was the candidates and their supporter's behavior that contributed to the difficulties of our securities forces containing them. What would be your view if the committee comes up with the recommendations that in the voting process we vote for parties and not candidates? In this process we are promoting parties as political institutions in this country.

Most people don't vote for parties; they don't waste their time to know the policies of parties because they are only interested in which leader will give them handouts and all the accusations that you have observed. I note that pastors also turn up to pray for the opening session of the campaign, on whoever the candidate is looking after pastors, those type of allegations come out so what is our solution and the churches view will be very important. Perhaps you can go back and discuss with your church leaders about this question, could we change the law to promote party institutions and in the process we have only two or three parties in this country and less independent candidates standing so when voting time come you vote for Pangu, PNC and other parties rather than Sir Puka Temu or Mr Allan Bird, what is your view?

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – Thank you, your honor. There are currently 45 registered political parties and the further we go we are going to create more political parties and the more divisions we are going to create for Papua New Guinea.

So, it is a question for Parliament to seriously look at whether we want just three or our major parties and everybody affiliate to it and the smaller number of parties will create a smaller number of tensions. The more parties we create the more divisions we create. In one particular household for instances father belongs to one party and mother with another party and the son with another party so household is already divided. And if the household is divided then you can already image how the country can be divided. So, it comes back to the question of having political parties. If we have four or five major political parties, then our affiliation to these parties will be good but if we affiliate to 45 different political parties then we are already creating a lot of problems for our nation.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Sorry my last question Rev. Roger Joseph is you made a very strong comment by stating and I quote, ‘majority of the sitting members win in the counting time and not at the voting time’ that is a very serious statement. Possible if you can give the Committee a written submission including this particular point that you have raised and whether it is just an observation or if you have any evidence so show the Committee that what happens in the counting room determines who becomes a leader in this country. The implications are that officials, security officers, counting officials are the ones determining as they count the ballot papers into tens they pick up somebody else and wrap it up in the preferred candidate they have, is that what you are saying?

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – Your honour, that’s what I am saying because I think I experienced this myself. I was at one time a counting official and the votes I counted in one particular box were all done and then we were told to cross check so I shifted to another box. And in this particular box when I counted a large number of people in that box were not belonging to this particular person in that box. Somebody put them in there and same experience faced by two other pastors involved in this counting experienced also. And we mentioned and knew that this is where corruption taken place. So that’s the evidence of voting winning not by counting but by votes.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Can I ask a follow up question on that one. When you shifted and you did a doble check were corrections made or not?

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – There were a lot of corrections.

Mr CHAIRMAN – In essence the practice of switching counting officials to double check is actually to try to prevent what you are just describing. So in this particular case was it prevented or not?

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – We identified different names in that particular box so we corrected that.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So it didn’t influence the outcome.

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – No, it didn’t influence the outcome.

Mr CHAIRMAN– So this particular practice by the Electoral Commission of switching counting officials actually had merits.

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So if this is the usually practice then we can assume that if there are certain polling officials who are being influenced having this internal procedure as a check and balance will actually work to reduce the impact of such actions by counting officials.

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – Your honour perhaps it would be determined very much by who is doing the double check. A person who has a clear mind and this person double checking the box will correct the mistake. If people with wrong minds checking that, they will say larim em tasol igo. And that has been the case in the past elections.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Can we make it quick because we have others to come on board as well. Thank you, reverend, for your responsibility and your commitment.

Honourable ELIAS KAPAVORE – Mr Chairman one of the assessments that you have made as one of the worst elections compared to the previous ones. And the point I want to make is you have made a point about the code of ethics and you also said that you are a member to the Integrity of Political of Parties. When was this code of ethics of the election launched? Do you think there was enough awareness made on this particular code of ethics before the elections? If there wasn't much awareness done for this code of ethics, what do you think this is the problem?

And what are your suggestions? Do you think there is a need for greater awareness? Because we are talking about integrity and respect in the process of election. That is the only thing that I think that instill confidence, integrity and respect to the process of law in terms of the conducting of elections.

Do you think there is a need to engage churches more in this area through the department of community development?

Reverend ROGER JOSEPH – The code of ethics was launched before the issuance of the writs but to me, I felt that the timing was wrong. It was too late, the launching of the code of ethics should have been done 3–4 months earlier. This is so that each of the political parties would have gone through those code of ethics. But I thought this had been an ongoing practice because before elections the code of ethics is issued. I did express to the acting registrar of political parties that the launching was very late.

Former Electoral Commissioner & Private Citizen

Mr CHAIRMAN – I am going to make a ruling here; gentlemen, we have got a long day. Reverend Joseph on behalf of the committee and the Parliament I want to thank the PNG Council of Churches for your contribution, this morning. I now excuse you. We will have, even though on the program we have Dr Sanida, we'll wait because we have a very important presentation with some very clear recommendations from a former Electoral Commissioner Mr Rueben Kaiulo, could I invite you to the seat here. You can introduce yourself when you are comfortable.

Let me say here that it is very refreshing to read a submission with very specific recommendations as to what we ought to do. Without further ado, I will let you have the floor and perhaps introduce yourself as I forgot which years you were in charge of the elections. Perhaps you can refresh the country's memory and then you may proceed.

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – Thank you, chairman and the Committee Members. My name is Rueben Kaiulo and for those who came after 2002 I watched over three General Elections.

From 1991 to 2002 General Elections. I guess I have a fair share of information that I have to share. I have prepared a five-page written submission and the submission entails the four TORs you have.

I just briefly touch on the bullet points, then leave the rest to you to ask questions from now until the end of the tour. One thing I want to discuss here is the previous reports that have come and gone. The one that I remember is prepared by CLRC, during Peter O'Neill reigns in 2018. Nothing has happened to that report from memory unless I've been sleeping not reading newspapers, but I have been following that.

Since Gamato got removed in 2020, the whole thing just died out because I was the advisor. We prepared written statements, submissions and gave it to CLRC went as far as CACC nothing has happened since from memory, or perhaps you can correct me. So, the question I want to pose to the Committee Members is this; are you going to do the same, sit on another inquiry report and expect the people of Papua New Guinea to fix the problems.

Report the warning by the police and the security forces is serious, you are going to act on this. The mindset has gone bad in this country. I have heard the good churchman here. The laws and regulations are perfect, it's the mindset. It's a whole generation thing to fix. It will take my grandchildren to really behave properly. The attitude is so bad starting from the ground to the highest level. The conversation and terror are getting bigger; we should be ashamed of one thing.

How can you not stop the violence before it starts? I am sure there are conversation brewing in the grassroots level, there's no hiding about that. So, how come the police, security forces don't do advance sweeps, pick up this information run to the community say listen don't do that we are watching you. Nothing's happening. There's going to be government interventions in between elections.

He talked about awareness issue. the code of ethics and it's been here for the last three events and they just rewrite the date. So, how can we not, the institutions sell or market it to the public in between five years. So again, it was a lack of ability or capability to take it to the public, the parties.

So, you read it, prefer yourselves, warn your supporters like the individual's candidates. I came here very prepared to tell you – the law makers, that so many of these reports have been through the system. CLRC from memory, had spent over K10 million and nothing has happened.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Can, I ask you? Sorry to interrupt, I like the way you are going but you keep mentioning this CLRC report. What year was that?

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – That was in 2017. The O'Neill Government tasked CLRC to go and review the electoral system. So, they brought over two volumes reports have been presented and the NRI director is sitting out there. I sent through at the level of CACC with the former commissioner Gamato sending the views.

Almost the very same views I am going to give to you, I have been written about it. Those views have been presented few times already.

Mr CHAIRMAN – To the CACC

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – CACC got them and incorporated them and the matter just died out, after Gamato was suspended in 2020. Mr Simon Sinai did not progress those matters to

Cabinet and Parliament for enactment. So, bureaucracy is just as bad. Talking about lateness of preparation, I watch that from day one.

So, I'll go back to my points now and you can ask questions later. The structure of commission 50 year later now ought to be looked at that's your terms of reference number one. Yes, I'll agree there are problems.

(1) Structure is decayed. The have one of the best IT facilities that is funded by the Government of Australia funded by people of all over the world that I know very well, it is underutilized. I mean the website for example, result counting process, it was a disaster public was getting late information.

On the process of counting, yes it needs to be reviewed. If you don't know it, I will remind you now. The Electrical Commission consist of one commissioner, pardon me a single commissioner structure and the rest are all public servants. He is very powerful and the power has been abused over time. I probably abused it in my watch too, I must admit. You need someone to watch you other than the Prime Minister or a minister in Cabinet. You need another board and give the oversight role to keep eye on this guy.

We've been subjected to one thousand tribe's phone calls and I'll say that it's a hard and tough job so you need to restructure, keeping time in phase with the changing technology, train them and remind them the ethics. The number one job is to teach them to believe in what is true and honest leadership. Ethics is missing and there is nothing there.

How many changes walking in any time, I'm invited, go and see it for yourself. I'll ask you, you want to visit any of the institution that you want, these are all dead organisations and electoral commission one of them. It deserves to say that because there's no real leadership in there.

You talked about the money issues, it's a big matter right now. The process itself, you need an audit process into the electoral process apart for the money matters, the system that you guys are have it needs to be audited. It needs independent panel of people to investigate where the Chairman Allan Bird, Sir Puka Temu with due respect going to proper means to occupy the seat. We need an independent body, totally outside of the structure. This is something to think about. It cringes many jurisdictions all over the world in commonwealth countries.

Court of disputed returns is another headache and too costly. I read on the daily *News Paper* that K150 million was set aside for lawyers and you can't believe and I still don't believe it. There is a rod there. Let me be frank and honest about it.

When Mr Gamato took over the job in 2015, he inherited a bill, an outstanding bill of something like K70 million in outstanding legal fees plus other service providers. So the legacy issue is enormous and so bugged there. I hope they reduce the debt level and you need to look that.

Spending is uncontrollable. If we had run out of money in the past, I can understand that you are paying priorities where you are not supposed to prioritise. The core functions of the office are documented.

Come down to security part of it, police have been accused by many people and they also acted for other people in the part leading up to campaign and election process. So the perception is still very big out there. Plenty mekim work belong dispela candidate na party. So you need to get that corrected. So the electoral commission is also accused of taking sides to the candidate, party and a group so the list of accusation is endless. So, in short, you need to study the law and preview the penalties and upgrade them. You know, just changing a law for the sake of change won't work, it's a mind-set that is going to work. It is a long term process and you

need government intervention in between and you need to get proper leadership to lead institutions and electoral commission is one of them. You can't be shift by these 1000 phone calls to do it their way on a deal, not your way, but their away. This practice is getting bigger and bigger and then the report or the assessment will be taken by the police seriously. It will be sitting out there, obviously you will know the ground level. It is big out there in the Electoral Commission so you need to intervene and correct it.

So, yes, restructure the electoral commission, audit the proceed and check them on time. In every 5 years, there is always an issue of money.

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO

One, because it doesn't come on time and two, if it's going to be spent, they spent it on wrong areas rather than the right urgent priorities. So it's that supervision of the expenses that you have to watch. Thank you. I'll take questions

Mr CHARMAN – From a technical perspective, we probably could not have anyone better than you. I want to thank you and commend you on behalf of the people of Papua New Guinea for being so candid, and let me assure you there are some members of Parliament and some of them are sitting in front of you that really want to do the right thing by our country.

As you know, we've never had a special committee into elections. I called for it when I noticed that I was having difficulties as well.

In my case, I think I'm the first member of Parliament in my province to actually go past 50 per cent. But I had to wait five days for a declaration and because the candidates basically took control of the counting room, that's when I realized we had issues. Everything that you have mentioned occurred in my province.

In my province we had almost seven counting centres and my province is the second largest area in terms of land area. I had to have seven teams monitoring each counting area and collecting data because the Electoral Commission data was not up to date and that created a lot of suspicion and I realized then and there that we had to do something and when the Prime Minister turned up in my province I said PM you know coming back to me asking you about when we will have that report.

In 2017, I was in Opposition and I asked the then Prime Minister Peter O'Neill if we could do something about the elections. In fact, I asked three times on the Floor, there was no response. So I've had responses in these things for quite a while and I want to assure you of that Sir.

My personal commitment is to see if we can do something good for the country. because the members sitting next to me are no slouches. We are known for causing ructions within Government for some of the things that we think or to be done properly and this is one of them. I am happy to see you have provided very clear recommendations. I want to come back to the issue of the Electoral Commission and I'm very happy to see the recommendations. We had the Electoral Commissioner here, he was the first person to talk. We heard a different story. When we heard the Police Commissioner, he was very polite to say that we had difficulties with the Electoral Commissioner, when we had the Commander of the PNGDF he was also polite but when Deputy Chairman pressed him quite vigorously. He came straight out and said we had a problem with the Electoral Commissioner, and when the CIS Commissioner came up well he was just blunt outright.

We note your submission and I wanted to ask you that, if you've heard the comments about the voter roll. Could you tell us in your experience and you just mentioned this fancy computer system sitting in the Electoral office that nobody uses, paid for by the Australian Government.

Is it possible for them to do a full proof common roll or at least a 95 per cent accurate one? Is it possible?

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – Thank you. Chairman for asking that question. That been debated over many times over the years. The issues I want to raise here is the collection of data nationwide. It comes in line with the issue of voter roll, NID, the so called village recorders managed by the Provincial Affairs and then you have the Electoral Commission that runs the voter data which is only 18 years and above. The Government has to come in to one census to combine all these three arms including census in NSO. Now let me qualify NSO data. NSO data, the census data, I can be corrected if John is here, does not record names of fathers and mothers and the kids. They record numbers of people in every household. After every ten years NSO conducts a census followed by the election every five years. Data is the issue in this country. The accuracy of it. Any data.

We need to get the NID, Electoral Commission, National Census Office and all other stakeholders into one room and we will collect proper data and share it. There are now laws in place and we have to study them and bring in someone to spread it out and service the entire government system.

On matters of planning for 18 years and above Electoral Commission can take it and that data in the entire world is so bad, Electoral Commission is no exception. It is an issue every five years and I have had a lot of conversations. You will never get an accurate data in any part of the world.

To answer your question, you can attempt to do it but you must go down to the ward level. This old village recorder assessment was a good concept but never worked. Issues like allowance issues, the concept where people have to be compensated before releasing data. So the government has to enact laws were we penalise the people who are refusing to release data to government agencies who will use it meaningfully. Those laws need to be brought in to be regulated so that it can be used. We can attempt to do a new roll and the only way to do it is to go about every community and consider child infants be captured because they will turn 18 one day. So we need an agency to specifically do that. The old Kiap system. you are familiar with that. A day old baby was captured to the oldest living person. So you can keep the data

With today's technology, you will have no problem with it but you just need someone on the ground to constantly manage it. Give them incentive. Reward them with some allowance. Penalise if they are not working or if they are withholding the data. There has to be a central point of data collection for any election. At the moment, we have three arms of agencies collecting data for their own purposes and no coordination and no sharing. This is something for the committee to think about.

To answer your question, the government needs to be committed on the part of resources in order for this to be carried out.

Recorders fail because of commitment and provincial governments do a piecemeal job and just stop somewhere. But the concept was good. And the data must be updated every 6 months or 12 months. For years everybody has been talking academic but here we need a practical approach and we need resources commitment and they can choose to delegate to the provincial government but regulate and centralise it somehow. So we have one national central data.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you Sir. Members questions please.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Good morning Mr Kaiulo, members of the public and committee members. In your capacity as the former electoral commissioner, from what we gathered, the last election was the worst of elections in this country. Basically in the last few days was the method of planning and financing and that was general concern that we gathered from the Electoral Commissioner, the Police, the Defence and the CIS and all other lead agencies these methods came very late.

(1) In your capacity in the previous elections that you managed, when you were putting your papers together for budgeting purposes how long back did you start planning for those elections. Say if you managed the 2022 elections how long back would you normally put your papers back for budgeting and start asking the government for funds to prepare for your elections.

That is my first question.

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – Firstly the Electoral Commission has a budget cycle. So straight after this event now 2022, they should only now be in planning mode for 2027, not only that in between next year, you have the LLG, another expense for the Government to face.

They could start planning for LLG next year, number one, the Motu Koitabus in October-November this year. So, 2027 you got to start now immediately, bits and pieces every five years, every twelve months until you complete the exercise. So, planning starts immediately. You can't say, it's the problem of the executive government, I'll be frank with you.

Every time Electoral Commission asked for money, it gets fair share of money, not everything it asks for, but timely release from Waigani is issue number one. The warrants and certificates, it takes a while to get it out of Waigani because Commissioner will have to send the money down to 22 provinces, financial management requirements, so that takes another few days or weeks sometimes. So timely release of warrants is an issue.

They've never given the total amount of money the commissioner asks, that I know. In my time that was small millions, this time its several millions. But you've got to plan for General Election immediately after you get it out of the way, regular meetings and concept, getting the law in place again, regulations basically, you got to get the regulation right.

So, planning, now long term for four five years down the line is important. I heard the good church man here, talking about ethics, coming late, just before you showed them in, and I watched the media, so many things came in very late, last event, voter roll is one of them, running around in circles trying to get the update, was totally possible nationwide, to get that data. It's a long process, you go to the ward level, got to manage it, then to Port Moresby, send it back to square one. So, you need a five-year process, everything in Electoral Commission, it's a cycle there, well documented.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Thank you Mr. Kaiulo. My next question here is from your report here, it seems like every election, the cost of running elections is increasing and its not a marginal increase, small increase, we're talking about hundreds of millions of kinas increasing.

Mr CHAIRMAN– well the last election is over a billion kina.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – over a billion kina. Now in 2027 we expect, much, much more than that. Now in your professional opinion, why are these increases in millions of kina? Why can't we have at least a marginal increase? So that's my next question to you, Mr. Kaiulo.

Mr. REUBEN KAIULO – Money like many other institutions is an issue always to the Electoral Commission. K1.2billion the chairman has raised, I only read in the paper. The budget documents I read straight after the 2021 was about K600million and now I hear in the media –

MR CHAIRMAN– Well when the different agencies were presenting, I picked up the numbers from them, Electoral Commission was about K440million, I think. Police was K240million. Electoral Commission needed about K300million for the common roll update. The Defence Force was over K100million and for the Correction Services. So, if you add all that up that’s already...over a billion.

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – I don’t have any answers but I can tell you the population increases every five years; you have a new set of voters turning 18 so you allow for about fifteen percent. But the roll they asked for K300million I can’t believe it, voter roll nationwide. There were debates about provincial government given the responsibility to take ownership of running elections, national elections, I mean you might bear that in mind in your conversations, 22 provinces, but the cost I know, I’m just as concerned as you people and the Government of the day. I just can’t believe it. And the legacy issues, I told you about it, investigate that. There’s long term bill still sitting out there. 2015 to 2020, I saw. There’s issues there, dig into it. So, they’re probably adding those old bills as well.

Mr. KEITH IDUHU – Thank you, Mr. Kaiulo. My final question, Mr. Chairman is that we hear a number of candidates also increase in every election. And the kind of money they pay to the Electoral Commission also increases. Can you briefly explain to the committee and the public who oversees those money, where are they kept and how are they spent? Millions of Kina paid by candidates as nomination fees. Thank you, Mr Kaiulo.

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – I know there is a trust account operated by the Electoral Commission where the nomination fees are deposited. I know the last decision by the old government, half of that money goes back to the Electoral Commission to pay its own cost but the other half was put into the Consolidate Revenue by the National Government, that will I know. It was 1000 by 3000 candidates last time? That money I don’t know where is it at now. From what I know there is a trust account where the Electoral Commission operates in over the time and up to the event they do their sums and half goes to the consolidated revenue for Finance Department. The other half remains in the trust for the Commissioner to use for core functions in paying its own bills.

Honourable ROBERT NAGURI – Thank you Mr Kaiulo, no further questions from me. Thank you Chairman.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – Mr Kaiulo, I want to say thank you very much for this very concise and clear recommendations that you put forward. There is a lot of matter you raised which is relevant to this committee. One such matter you raised is about the composition and structure of the organization that runs the elections and that is the Electoral Commission. It might require a board commission comprising of three or so eminent people to lead to keep the Electoral Commissioner in check. Is that what your recommendation is?

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – Correct Sir.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – You also make some remarks in relation to the funding budget expenditure and accountability. It was not written here but in your oral presentation you make remarks to some figures. Hundreds of millions of Kina being poured into the roll out of the elections and seems to be increasing every successive election. The last one of course, as the Chairman and yourself have engaged, you have to come to a compromise of that probably the vicinity of K1.2 billion for 2022. The K150 million you mentioned for legal fees?

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – Not me. I read in the media, quoting Simon Sinai. That was yesterday's paper.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – You will also agree that Electoral Commission lawyers simply turn up at the election petitions and simply listen to what the petition respondent will say, correct?

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – Well it seems that, I mean you can assume that, there a lot of lawyers' fees still sitting there that I know of. Going back on Andrew Trawen's watch, not Rueben Kaiulo's watch.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – Who authorizes those fees?

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – I will tell you how it works. So this is the opportunity.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – Thank you.

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – Again, I was the one who took out the matters to the private company way back in 1991 because the State Solicitors were so slow to respond to my needs. So I walk to Rimbink Pato, telling him. Are you ready for this, this is 1992, to be honest 1997? He said, yes, can you do that? I become very controversial when I took it to private sector. The Auditors did not like it. But that paid over a little dividend in getting the petitions out of the way and it just become a legacy after I left. So when I walked in with Gamato in 2015. After late Andrew my brother, retired. We saw this fat bills on the table. From the watch of Andrew, I don't have to give names, they are on records they are there. Several law firms not just one. I told Gamato, don't touch that. Give it to the Justice Department to go through it. I sat down and I can't believe it. It was enormous, and I hope it is not still there, now that the K150 million has been quoted in the media.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – So would you recommend that the election petition defense prerogative be given back to the Solicitor General's Office?

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – Well there were two arguments out there. The Commission is a Constitutional Office, the independence argument, which I remember sitting in one or two meetings to go out and hire. But then Justice Department got to give that okay. To bid it out to private sector you got to need its approval. So that is where I think the issue would be. So they go get approval by a letter signed by the Attorney General or Secretary of Justice. So that is what has been happening that I picked up.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So you are saying that this legal fee issue in the EC is just a blank cheque?

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – It is not a blank cheque; it comes with their regular billing after a job is done. There are two cases that they attend to all the time.

Mr CHAIRMAN– But if it’s a K150 million, that is a blank cheque.

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – I can’t say here.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – It could be K200 million actually.

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – I hope that’s not legacy bills going back 2012, so that ought to be investigated. What I’m saying is, the lawyers acting for the Commission come with a bill of cost. That is for this petition. So, a lawyer would charge a fee and you could negotiate downwards.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – I think this is coming back to your organizational structure as well I guess. The provisions of the Attorney General’s Act vest the power to brief out with the Attorney General, correct?

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – It still does that...

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – And so therefore, the Solicitor General which is established as litigation front should be taking up this responsibility, do you not agree.

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – I will agree; looking at the cost, one aspect is the legal fees, you can take away and give it to the state lawyers that is an option. So cut out these hefty bills going to private law firms, and that’s huge; and God knows who supervises the hours because the EC does not have the capacity to supervise the hours. They don’t follow their cases; they don’t sit in the courtrooms.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – Correct!

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – They don’t sit in the courtrooms; not that I know.

Mr CHAIRMAN – You are correct; I have been in court and the Electoral office is not there.

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – It is something very serious...

Mr CHAIRMAN – And the judges ask after that...

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – And so they should give it back to the General Solicitor’s office.

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – Exactly, to the Justice Department.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – We have an army of lawyers there.

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – No harm in that.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – It will be very cheap too. You pay their salaries only and logistics. That concerns me; there are 118 or less three, members of Parliament, most of whom are obligated by the Court to turn up in court physically to answer to their petitions. These are petitions in the courts, even during Parliament sitting. And when the Electoral Commission

officers, who willy-nilly brief out legal duties at the expense of the State, don't turn up; that is a concern. Especially when it's going to cost this country the vicinity of K150 to K200 million, it's not fair. Something's wrong somewhere! So, I think I will agree with you on that. We both agree that this should be a function that should be domicile with the Solicitor General's office, under the Attorney General's watchful eyes. The Electoral Commission, yes, is independent but it's an agency of the State, and dealing with public funds. So, I think we are on the same position.

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – Chairman, I will agree with, because if you don't look at this bill issues seriously, it's going to get out of hand for 2027 definitely.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – One other matter I wanted to raise also is in terms of tribalism and your earlier comments about the level of violence in the 2022 General Elections. We both agree that the elections were most violent, weren't they? A lot of innocent lives were lost, and in fact, one or two electorates were deemed failed; and there was continuous tribal fighting.

Do you think, as extension of your recommendations, that it might be prudent for these so-called tribalism, and tribal warfare, emanating out of electoral process, be owned by candidates? So, they are fully responsible, do you not think? You can't default to tribes because the people are getting violent because of their passion for support of one particular person, correct?

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – My point on that terrorism now is getting bigger and bigger, is one, if you can't start education programs as early as five-year-olds in school systems right throughout the country. The next 50 years will be so bad. The warnings have already been issued by the security forces and 2027 will be just as bad as 2022. So, the Government has to bring in interventions in between events. The Electoral Commission should plan for 2027 now rather than waiting until 2026. Because you have the Motu-Koitabu this year – small exercise –but you have the nationwide LLG elections next year. So, you have the interruptions in between the 5-year gap. Nothing is stopping them from sitting down and planning. What went wrong? Let's get it right. Education! Education! Education – to the parties, to the voters and getting them out to enrol now rather than waiting for 2026 or before issuing of writs.

Much of what happened last year was because of late preparations. I look back and see someone coming in to suspend the former commissioner in 2020 thereabouts, and Simon, the current commissioner being appointed. So, he had a short time to prepare, maybe, I am not too sure because he got appointed in 2021 to the post. He was on his substantive but acting and I don't know if those were factors that really didn't get him to start early preparations. But there is no excuse, they were always there.

Mr CHAIRMAN – The institution is always there. You can replace one or two people but the institution is always there.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU– I wanted to ask, the hire-car bill, what does that look like?

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – It's terrible.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – Pick a number –

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – Second to the lawyer's fee is that one. It's not funny.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – Shy of K200million

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you, Reuben Kaiulo, for the recommendations that you have posed to the committee. As the Chairman has assured you, this will not keep dust. We will make sure the 2027 Elections will be at least better. But you and I know the realities, politics may come in 12 months' time, maybe a new Electoral Commissioner may be appointed very late in (inaudible) realities that you and I know and, therefore, the preparations will catch up with us once again.

In that regard, the realities, you experienced in the Bougainville referendum process, can you inform the committee? As a former and very experienced Electoral Commissioner overseeing three major elections in this country, what are the lessons that this committee needs to pick up from the referendum electoral process that you observed with myself being involved as well.

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – I will get into it but, very briefly, you were the Minister at that time and I was next to Gamato, the Bougainville referendum was another election process basically. It was supported by a lot of international agencies. They brought in the Government of Australia, Governor of New Zealand, European Union, United Nations and from all directions they came around and pretty much in advance of the event.

The people were skilled to skill the locals and the Bougainvilleans took it very seriously and the public servants and the bureaucrats there. That's why the result was almost flawless. They retained on record the highest number of turnout. The roll was an issue but they got right into it from day one. And they took ownership of the roll at the community level so they had a very high turnout, close to 90 per cent. That was a record number of turn-out in any event in this country. But the mindset was perfect for the event, they were all geared up for it and all united so they got the outcome they wanted.

Mr CHAIRMAN – So, what you are saying is that the biggest factor in that election was the positive attitude of the Bougainvillean people?

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – Early preparations combined with the positive attitude of the Bougainville people at all levels. Sir Puka can tell you. Everybody combined. They had little difference in between but they forgot it for a moment in time and it worked. It was taken as one of the most successful event. Compared to Scotland for instances, they are still trying to get their house in order, New Caledonia they went to two phases of it and still got issues right now, Bougainville got it right. At the highest level he provided, people really groomed and mentored for one purpose and they achieved it.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Second question Mr Kaiulo is given the Electoral Commission is a Constitutional office and we know it cannot be influenced. During your term, did you have disruption from executive government and influence whether ministers of State or prime ministers?

My view is this and I want your comment on it. Once the writs are issued the two arms of government are out; the legislator and the executive and there is a caretaker mode at the level of the executive. The Electoral Commission takes charge for the five months period, sets the dates for the writs issued and the dates for the return of writs. But some things do happen influences do come, resources are not timely released. In this scenario how do you –

In terms of restructuring the State institution called Electoral Commission and the powers it has, I am aware of India when the writs are issued the Electoral Commission takes over and if the Prime Minister influences, then he can be criminally charged. What's your view on moving

towards that type of scenario but with an advisory team by law so that one person cannot exercise the powers that he is granted by the Constitution? Just trying to look at a future structure of the Electoral Commission.

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – Thank you Sir, the concept that I have in mind for a new board of commissioners to watch over the commissioner is one; basically, the policy advice or oversight and the risks facing the election process. It doesn't get into the operational matters. It watches and is fully compliant with the laws of the elections and regulations. Not reacting to phone calls, emails or text messages. In my watch, when I was commissioner there was one guy and I can name him because he is not here, a former Prime Minister, Bill Skate, drove in, in the middle of the night to make a point at my house. And Sir Barry Holloway drove into my house to make a point so you have that, its hard to resist but you got to tell them. I can't look around for a better word for it. I don't want to listen to it and its hard they will come to your doorstep and gate to make a decision in their favors. Yes, and that conversation is getting bigger and bigger.

The influence by people on the institution, alternately influences a bad decision instead of following the process and the law. And the consequences we all know, sometimes we have seen in media reports so the integrity and must be truthful to yourself and the law. Hold the Bible na tok yes and stick to the plan and the oath you take to perform your duties. Bikmen anap i stap and its temptation. Coming to the oversight role the board merely should look at the policy and the risk so it signals to stop and be careful. What are you doing about it but don't get into the operation and leave that to

The domain of the administration. I reported to several Prime Ministers. And they never interfered and accepted whatever I gave. There were no phone calls. We had regular briefings. We had every right to be briefed. There were no phone calls and we scheduled regular briefings only, either fortnightly or monthly. They do not come to my gate, trying to make their way in and force a decision out from me. There are temptations people get persuaded or influenced. Good or bad sometimes the media captured it and the disaster happens. The Indian experience as Sir Puka mentioned, I got a mate of mine long time ago this chief election commissioner in India is very powerful, he becomes the acting Prime Minister, basically. While the government of the day goes to the polls. I would not want to recommend that. Just to recap and go back to the old days; there was this committee, equivalent to the IDEC that they have now. that was basically to feel the gap while the government was in campaign mode. So, maybe the bureaucracy should be handpicked to look after the country while the government is on election mode. Maybe the bureaucracy could look after the role of the Government and IDEC could perform that role or you might want to get another, it's just my view.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – There is only one arm of the three arms that is still in operation and that is the head of the judiciary. How can we utilize this during the election period, the chief justice?

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – I will have no comments on this. With election petitions you run back to the Court Houses, would this be an issue of compromise or conflict of interest? You must have truly independent people to watch over the affairs of the Government. Because, the fear is the use of public funds in that space. While everybody is busy campaigning, the bureaucrats can have funny minds too.

Mr CHAIRMAN – You make a fair point there. At the end of the day, there are just too many fleas sucking the blood out of the dog, so you need less fleas but unfortunately there's too many. They are everywhere, I think we start to allow the bad behavior to dictate how we should restructure. That is probably not a good way to go. We have to kind of rebuild the institution, with checks and balances, which is what you are saying.

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – Look at their laws that govern them now, many of the laws governing them now are out dated and Electoral Commission is one of them. Fifty years later and we are still talking about this voter roll issue. When you and I know there's three agencies basically collecting data of all sorts funded by the government. So, they run to the government for funding every budget year.

Mr CHAIRMAN – And they all get hire cars. They all get their wantoks in and bleeding the dog.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – My last question is your views on the Special Circumstances Declaration.

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – I think we have abused it in the past and it needs to be properly defined. 2003 was my last event, I failed six seats in Southern Highlands. I deployed my team went in, just tell me what forget about the rest. I can name names waiting for me in my office to see me. It started about 8.30 a.m., because they were listed to be failed I kept them until about 7p.m., in the evening, I sat through with my lawyers and ultimately made the decision to fail them and I did.

I became the most unpopular guy, most threatened guy and most threatened guy on earth. I got stalked around so it was hard. But there were cases and in the last event which were clearly failed events. I do not have to qualify it; they were in that basket as failure. I read and watch everything on elections very seriously. So, the events of parts of the highlands were highly questionable.

I talked about auditing of the process. You can audit former Prime Ministers including our current Prime Minister seats. I am being frank about it. an independent team can do it; the electoral commission is not qualified. Those in the government system are not qualified and bring experts around the corner to do an audit of the process. It is easy to check and audit the process whether people have given the opportunity to truly vote in person, it will be amazing, at least am been frank. The experts all over the world on elections, they will track this, you got the schedule there, did the team visit all this; yes, or no, you will be amazed.

Suddenly the numbers are here, so that's the audit of the process and money part is ongoing thing. The legacy issue has been ongoing, so the process part has got to be audited. I mean you sitting out there, I'll pose the question and do the reverse. Did you come in through true and honest means, that's what people need to answer not you? So, we audit that process from nomination to declaration.

I mean we've even allowed convicts to nominate, when the law clearly says you don't accept that. That's an audit process preparing documents and give it to Parliament. So, we need to be audit ourselves, you just can't occupy the office, i no money tasol, DDA funding there. The process itself. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you, any other questions members.

Honourable JACOB MAKI – Thank you, good morning Mr Kaiulo, observers, professional men and women, Committee Members, Deputy and Chairperson. Mr Kaiulo, I would like to

make some few comments and ask questions at the same time. As a very experience man in conducting several elections in Papua New Guinea and an expert, now acting as a consultant. I would like to ask this simple question from your observations.

You where the electoral commissioner during the period of the first–past-the-post voting system. So now we change to LPV system. What is your point of view in these two systems; is there a development taking place or any changes. One from your time and the other, we are currently exercising it through the election process of polling and counting.

Mr REUBEN KAIULO – Thank you, member. First-Past-The-Post was defined as the most problematic system we thought those days, it was reported and written about it. LPV that came in, that was my last watch, I brought it into government before I took leave. We thought LPV will fix up all those levels of violence but look at it now, it's getting bigger. So, violence was reported by academics and LPV won't stop the level of violence. They wrote about it and now we can prove it.

So, the real answer is the mindset, First-Past-The-Post just wanpela tick tasol na you go. So, there was no sharing of the other preference like LPV does now. LPV allows yu holim one bilong yu two, three trade with your so-called friends, neighbor, tribe, na clan. It gives a better representation and that's what the government was ask to consider and they did under Sir Mekere watch.

It gives 50 plus one threshold then you are declared. The old system of voting its documented and NRI can provide data later on. People who are voted in as members of Parliament with as lowest eight to ten per cent of the vote but now you are all sitting there you gain more than 50 plus one per cent of 12 votes which is more acceptable.

The First Past the Post (old) voting system was very bad as it created a lot of infighting. Chairman, thanks for raising this leader here. There's nothing wrong with you committees to go deeper into the LPV the system. Consider to allow counting to continue beyond and allow the last man standing was intent but never followed. So you don't stop at 50 per cent plus one threshold, you continue to count because those guys who get voted cannot allow them to know their numbers were counted. So you can consider the old voting system basically to exhaust all preferences and allow one man standing and declare him or her. You can consider that in your long term conversation.

Mr JACOB MAKI – What is your view on the electronic voting system, should we introduce it?

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – Thank you, I'm not a fan of having it immediately. I'll agree with the idea of bringing technology, but can the government maintain and sustain that between elections because it's a software. It's like the laptop programs and you are going to constantly update it. It will give you quicker result and there's two phases to it, the enrolment registration process and the voting and counting. In India they do it very well because their mind sets are better than us.

So, we can have the technology but I'm reluctant to allow almost immediately. Maybe you can do a small scale experiment over a period of time nationwide but we will adapt to the technology and I'll agree with that. I am still saying that our mind-set going to be fixed first. I've seen it all and it's a mind-set thing and no amount of technology will stop this ugly mind-set.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you, Sir. In the interest of time, I would love to let you and for us to keep asking you questions because obviously you're responding to a lot of the things that we wanted to hear and I'm sure the public wants to hear.

Your suggestions on a board, I think that's brilliant. The idea of having a shock absorber between the electoral commissioner and everyone else and investigating the finances, I think that's something that we will certainly do because we'd like to understand how many could hire and lawyer's bills. It's becoming a very lucrative industry in itself where the people benefiting from elections. So we will try and look at that. Tribal terrorism, I just use some of the words that you've given to us. Other countries have anti-terrorism acts, perhaps it's time for us to constitute one and put in very serious or punitive measures.

So with that, Sir I want to thank you. I'm sure, amongst our own Committee once we have a discussion we may recall you in the future because I think your insight is quite invaluable. I certainly would like to listen to you again more in depth but for now on behalf of the people of Papua New Guinea I excuse you.

Thank you for your contribution.

Mr RUEBEN KAIULO – Thank you Chairman and the Committee members. I was honoured to be here.

Lawyer And Private Citizen

Mr CHAIRMAN – We have two more presentations to go but Dr Sanida I'll let you wait and get Mr Nemo Yalo before lunch. So if I could call Mr Yalo to the stand please. Mr Yalo, please introduce yourself for the benefit of the public and also proceed with your presentations immediately.

Mr NEMA YALO (Lawyer And Private Citizen)– Thank you a Chairman, deputy chairman and the members of the Committee. I am here as a private citizen to give my views, my observations as well in relation to the Committee's work.

Firstly, I was a primary school teacher for eight years 1987 – 1994, I left teaching and entered University in 1997 – 1998 and studied in Australia and got my law degree. Two years, I worked as an electoral officer in the Parliament with my local MP from Kagua – Erave then I joined the Ombudsman Commission on the 1st of August 2001 I was a legal officer, then two years later I was appointed senior legal officer, and two years later I was appointed counsel to the Ombudsman Commission after David Canning left to the National Court and Supreme Court. In 2008 I was appointed as Acting Judge to the National Court and served in Wabag for two years. I left early 2010, and since then I've been a lawyer in private practice and had an honor for a short stint, working with the Chairman himself assisting the office of the Chief Secretary in 2012-2013 conducting couple of administrative investigations. So basically, I have been in the public service but not as qualified as some other speakers that may have come before me and I haven't had the privilege of listening to the Electoral Commission's presentation here on Tuesday morning when the inquiry started. But I will give my personal reflections to the Committee if it's going to be of any benefit.

I'll cover three things, firstly, on the issue of multiple extensions of the date of the return of writs that occurred last year. Secondly, the abuse of the provision of special circumstances declaration. That was touched a bit on this morning with the previous presenter and maybe yesterday and the day before, I'm not sure. Finally, on the issue of Election Advisory Committee, and if time permits I'd like to cover a few more points that have been raised on

Tuesday when I was here and perhaps was covered this morning as well. The issue of acquittal and funding aspect generally speaking.

Firstly, multiple extension of the date of the return of writs. I have not seen multiple extension of date of return of writs in previous elections like last year. First date of the return of writs was fixed on the 29th of July at 4 pm then the second extension was fixed on the 5th of August, then 12th of August, then 19th of August, then 26th of August, then 2nd of August, then 5th of August. This are facts from the national gazettal publications. The Head of State acting on the advice of the Electoral Commission extended the dates. Now according to the *Constitution Section 105* it fixes a time limit. We all know that term of Parliament is 5 years and therefore it follows that office of the members of parliament is five years there is nothing that extends beyond term of Parliament beyond five years. Or for a member of Parliament to occupy that office for more than five years that's the fixed cutoff date. And that's why the *Constitution* in *Section 105* imposes on the Electoral Commission to conduct elections three months prior to the date that is fixed for the 5th anniversary of the last return of writs or of the last general elections, three months' period. So, Electoral Commission has never asked the Head of State to extend for time for polling for instance, date of return of writs within that period. But here in the last General Elections its unprecedented. You have members of the inquiry I have a written submission to the secretariat.

I'll make a few changes there, and there will also be other additional comments and recommendations. I will just go over this for the sake of time. The keywords are, 'fixing return of writs before the fifth anniversary, and again in the *Constitution* it says; 'The Head of State shall fix the date for the first meeting of Parliament in consultation with the outgoing Speaker and the outgoing Prime Minister, within seven days from the date fixed for the return of writs.'

For instance, for last year, if the 29 July was the date fixed for the return of writs. You then calculate seven days from there, which will be the 3 or 4 of August 2022,5 when the Parliament should meet. But last year, Parliament sat on the 9 August, which was a week after.

Here is a scenario, if there are multiple dates fixed for the return of writs, six in this case

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – Mr Yalo, can I interrupt this point? Is this matter subject for a Supreme Court reference at this time?

Mr NEMO YALO – I am not sure and thank you for raising this issue. I'll be careful when I make my submissions here. I was supposed to make that qualifications earlier on.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – Can I just caution you, as a matter of fact, I believe it is before the Supreme Court, subject of an interpretation?

Mr NEMO YALO – Then, I will skip that point. Let me go to the special circumstance declaration.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU– Mr Yalo, that too is touched in that SCR.

Mr NEMO YALO – I will skip that as well. Perhaps, I'll go the Electoral Advisory Committee. I don't think that issue is before the court.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – I believe that issue is also tied to that argument, because the Electoral Advisory Committee would have to be preambled, as matters of fact, pertaining to the issue that you raised earlier.

Mr NEMO YALO – If that is the case, if the Committee permits, I would like to use my time to make comments on a few points and issues that have been raised on Tuesday.

Mr CHAIRMAN – That’s fair enough. As long as we don’t tread on to the areas that are under consideration by the judiciary.

Mr NEMO YALO – Firstly, I would like to thank Parliament and the Government for setting up this commission of inquiry. I think it may be the first to conduct an extensive inquiry following a general election. It is the Parliament’s role to keep the executive accountable.

However, on the Floor of Parliament, I have observed that Parliament is not given that opportunity to adequately keep the executive accountable. Whether it is a permanent parliamentary committee or committees like this, it is really extension of the functions of the Parliament. But in this case, we the people come in to assist the Committee and participate in this process to keep the executive accountable.

In this particular context, the Electoral Commission maybe an independent body, but it is part of the executive, and I hope that the Committee’s functions go beyond and as much as possible, go everywhere else and get their views and contribution from the members of the public.

My first point would be on multiple ballot papers. In the 2012 elections, it was just allegations. But at one point, I have come across a situation in the Southern Highlands Province, where there were multiple ballot papers. I don’t know who produced them. Certainly, it would not be the Electoral Commission.

That issue again arose in the highlands in a particular electorate of the province 2017 elections and that evidence is there were you have the ballot papers that have been counted the total number supersedes the number of people that are on the voter roll, on the common roll. That’s something I would ask the committee to look into as well.

While we’re looking at 2022, but perhaps...our experience is this, every successive election there are new tricks because everybody is familiar with the old tricks in the previous elections so they come up with new ways to corrupt the process. So, its relevant to look at the previous elections as well. On Tuesday, I think it was the chairman or the deputy chairman that raised the issue of provincial returning officer and the police officer. Why are members of parliament concerned with these particular officers’ conduct and you heard this morning, election results are not necessarily determined by the number of votes a candidate receives.

I’ve seen in Southern Highlands it can be determined by those in the counting room and that’s why you will have members expressing concern that all of security personnel and returning officer and provincial returning officer in the counting rooms.

Cost. I would suggest that the Commission also look into the hiring of helicopters because it amounts to millions. I don’t know about the rest of the country but certainly in the Highlands. The Commissioner of Police was here on Tuesday afternoon. I observed in the Highlands this time around in 2022 general elections, police in my view are there to support the Electoral Commissioner and electoral officials. It’s the primary duty of the election officials to be responsible for the ballot papers and ballot boxes, not security personnel. The security

personnel are there to ensure that security of election officials and ballot boxes and not to be involved directly in any decision-making process whether in the counting room or elsewhere. That's something if you look at the police budget for helicopters, it might intrigue your interest for the 2002 elections.

Section 50 Of the Constitution there are three simple words that we are all familiar with, talks about genuine, free and fair elections. In order for genuine, free and fair elections to be conducted, the obligation falls on the Electoral Commission and the Executive Government to ensure security personnel and security is adequate. I didn't see that in the 2022 general elections, especially in the Southern Highlands province where security personnel did not follow through to a particular district and there were seventeen boxes that were hijacked and the Electoral Commission made the right decision not to count those boxes. That goes to the issue of adequacy of security.

The other point that I want to raise and it's a short one but it was raised this morning and I'm happy that Member for Hiri-Koiari raised that point on legal support to the Electoral Commission and in the context of legal fees as well to private law firms. When I approached the Electoral Commission in the end of July 2022 in the context of my own elections, I found one lawyer in that office to receive the issue that I wanted to raise, legal issue and unfortunately, with the greatest respect to that particular officer, he had just passed out of LTI, Legal Training Institute, and I asked if there was a legal team and members of the inquiry, that was the legal team. So, you wonder where the Electoral Commission is getting their legal advice from.

And this is important in critical issues because commissions is got to be independent and to lend support to that important principle of independence, the Committee should have its own legal unit. Fully resourced legal unit, because it goes to the issue of election advisory committee as well. It is a standing and not just generally. Election Advisory Committee is not at hog, it is a standing committee. The Electoral Commissioner is oblige to use that committee, it got functions spelled out too in the Organic Law itself. I made recommendations in my submission to Health. At least one member to be included because currently the Chairman of the Transparency International Board, Chief Ombudsman or his Nominee and a retired Judge or a Lawyer qualified to be a judge but it should be another one. I have also made suggestions of recommendations to my latter submission to Health. Grounds set out for the removal of the Electoral Commission, because currently there is provision just for disqualifications only. But if grounds can be set out for the removal of the Electoral Commission as well. In line with certain Organic Law that provide for Independent constitutional Offices that in my view should be considered as well.

Going back to the legal unit either you have a fully resourced internal Legal unit that with other property land support to the Independence of the Electoral Commission. So the legal support is not given to the state Solicitor General's Office. Either that or you have a resourced Solicitor General's Office with Lawyers who are dedicated for that purpose. Because right now as it was a highlighted by the previous speaker. It is a financial sink hole on the issue of private lawyers being engaged. That should be seriously looked at if we are going to cut on the budget. Going back to the issue of acquittals would it, would highly recommend personally that 2022 National General Election cost be audited either by Auditor General or by any independent Audit. Because that will give us very clear picture of the necessity of certain areas and the adequacy or otherwise or feed of the abuse of the funds. Because we can't continue as a country to spend almost a billion over a billion kina in doing the same thing. By now, almost 50 years we would have learnt lessons to minimize cost.

There is another one that is not in my written submission but I thought about it before I came out here. And this issue was raised with the Commissioner of Police when he was making his submissions on who goes out and prosecutes and how it should be done if Electoral Laws are breezed. On the issue of bribery alone it is a ground for nullified election results. But I have seen in the Organic law Section 216, where there breezes of Organic Law that is been determined by the National Court and recommendations is made to the Speaker, the Public Prosecutor and the Police Commissioner Etc. I'll suggest this committee look at the issue if a criminal offense is determined to be proven by the national Court in the election petition, why would the recommendation be made then by that same court to the police to investigate.

Because in election petitions when it is a criminal matter the criminal test of proving beyond reasonable doubt is applied, witnesses are cross-examined, so why go over again; the election petition court of disputed returns makes a referral to the Police and relevant authorities, the Public Prosecutor included, to go over the same thing. Why not that court penalize. That is something I would suggest the committee look at, section 216 or the Organic Law. I think that will be my short submission. My main submissions, I wanted to make they may be subject of subjudice as pointed out. I will stop here; if there are other questions, I will be happy to answer.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you Mr. Yalo, I think your points well taken onboard, and we thank you also for the written submission. What I will do now in the interest of time is that, Mr. Yalo, I will excuse you and perhaps after lunch, if you still want to hang around. I am making a decision as to how we can accommodate everyone in the presentations in the afternoon. So, first of all, let me thank you and I will excuse you now, and we will reserve for questions after lunch.

Mr NEMO YALO – Just one more point, excuse me, and members of the committee. This is an important issue, and it happened in 2017 as well, and that is the deferral of LLG Elections. That is a serious constitutional issue that the committee might want to ask questions to relevant authorities. Both the constitutionality of that issue, at the same time, we all understand that, LLG presidents are members of provincial assemblies, and their term of office is intended to terms of members of Parliament. So, when there is deferral, what is the legal effect of it? And why should there be the case of differing? It's the third tire of government that's affected, with the administrative decisions like this. Whether it is funding, or what is it?

My final point: I thing we are looking at an issue of efficiency in the Electoral Commission. That is the question I would like to throw to the committee to have in your mind as you go through as well, looking at all other issues. Thank you once again.

Mr CHAIRMAN (Chairman) – Thank you, Mr. Yalo, you are now excused. Before we break for lunch; I would suggest that our fist session after lunch which will be a 1:35 PM, I will have both, Transparency International and NRI together; and you will both do presentations, and then the committee will then ask questions, and then we will proceed to the next sessions, which has four presenters. So rather than having each one individually, I will have all presenters come at the same time. You will be given ten minutes each to make your presentations and then you will be asked questions by the committee. That way, we will try to be a bit more efficient with our time.

So with that, I want to thank our listeners and follower's viewers around the country for your interest. I am now suspending this session until 1:30 PM. Thank you all very much.

National Research Institute And Transparency International PNG

Mr CHAIRMAN – I had to do an interview with our friends from NBC. I call the afternoon session to order and I invite Mr Richard Kassman, the board director for Transparency International. Could I also invite Dr Osbourne Sanida, the Director for the National Research Institute (NRI). As they take their seats, let me say to the people of Papua New Guinea that, obviously, Transparency International needs no introduction; they have been there for many elections. Mr Kassman will give his own introduction shortly, and of course Dr Sanida, representing NRI. The NRI has been doing studies on the elections since their inception. So, they have records going back and they also observe the elections.

Just by way of background, the committee has asked Transparency International to assist us with the preparation of this report and also NRI. The reason for that is to demonstrate to the people of Papua New Guinea that we are not here to hide anything. The work that TIPNG and NRI have been doing for many, many years is actually going to constitute a part of our report that will go to Parliament. In fact, NRI will be writing the report for us. They are acting as the main secretariat. But you will have significant input from TIPNG and we expect also that they will also sign off on the report we present to Parliament. I'm not sure about the history but this may be the first parliamentary report that Transparency International will probably help sign off on and we will present.

That's enough of the introductions from me, let me welcome Mr Kassman. Mr Kassman, I will give you perhaps 10 minutes to do your presentation and will be immediately followed by Dr Sanida. I will then allow for the members to ask question.

Mr RICHARD KASSMAN (Board Director Transparency International PNG) – Thank you very much, Chairman. I appreciate that in the interest of Transparency International, you have highlighted our involvement as a member of the parliamentary committee which we are most thankful for.

Transparency International has been engaged in electoral activities across several areas. And for the record, firstly and most notably, TIPNG has been involved in domestic election observations since 2007. TI's registered volunteer observers are with the Electoral Commission and has observed the conduct of polling during the National Elections in 2007, 2012, 2017 and 2022. We have always produced observer reports as they are independent and these are being submitted to the relevant authorities over this particular time, including our 2022 Election Observation Report.

In addition to the observation of the national general elections, TI has also observed the 2013 Local level government elections and the 2019 Bougainville referendum and recently, the 2021 Moresby North East by-election. It also played a role as a member of the NCD's provincial election steering committee. The PESE is a mechanism that was introduced in 2012 by the EEC following poor conduct of elections.

Secondly, TI has been actively engaged in seeking reforms to strengthen the conduct of national elections in Papua New Guinea from the observation data and published reports. TI has lobbied for the legislative improvements and the two most notable reforms have been the change in voting from first-past-post system to limited preferential voting system in 2012 and the enactment of OLIPAC. These two that were identified very early in the -

Contribution of TIPNG and we were very active including myself in the promotion and after its enactment by Parliament. In the areas of advocacy, we supported that and campaigned for these electoral laws and procedures and in deed Chairman and Committee we would be happy to play an advocacy role when required as we go forward.

The third area of TIPNG's engagement has been through the Electoral Advisory Committee, the EAC under Section 96 (c) of the Organic Law National Elections and National Local Level Government Elections is established to provide and recommendations to the PNG Electoral Commissioner. The EAC comprises nominees from the PNGEC, the Ombudsman Commission and TIPNG. For instance, I was the TIPNG nominee to EAC and served alongside now Chief Commissioner Richard Pagen as well as Professor John Luluaki, in his capacity he was nominated and at the time was Dean of the Law School. We also speak from this perspective and Chairman and Committee, we really emphasize the importance of this Electoral Advisory Committee and the importance that we ensure that this is well established well in advance.

For the purpose of our oral presentation and to note that we have had the opportunity to submit other written reports including our past observation report. So for the sake of brevity I will not go over the points of each of the points of TI's written submission both with highlight recommendations in response to the three main thematic areas. One person one vote, secondly, voter participation and thirdly, the integrity of electoral systems.

Chairman and Committee, in this oral presentation to our special parliamentary committee. I have firstly, outlined our experience in this area but most importantly would like to reiterate that evidence based policy making is critical when it comes to highly emotive subjects such as the conduct of elections in Papua New Guinea and we're strong in providing our reports to support recommendations that we have made. For TI's 2022 Election Observation a team of 340 observers' election related information in 20 provinces across four regions covering 578 polling places including areas that pose safety risks we conducted 2184 individual voter interviews and these are recorded on file as well. The volunteers we used were registered across our large stakeholder group. Many were engaged in 2017 and 2012 elections as well. In making our thematic recommendations TI has drawn from its historical data set as well as the more recent report as I said One person one vote

Chairman the expectation of elections in our country is that they are free fair and safe. This is true more fundamentally the expectation is that given these conditions they will be one person one vote. This unfortunately was not the case for the entire country with a record showing that 11 per cent of polling places observed by TIPNG did not use the Electoral roll with these rising as high as 46 per cent of the observed polling places in the highlands region. This however it is important to note that is not just a highlands problem or limited to rural areas with one of TI observers in NCD noting that a polling station in Moresby North West and I quote "I witnessed people multiple times, people voting without names being checked

Underage voting, vote selling and bribing. And these occurred at this polling place within a stone's throw away from the St Mary's Cathedral Church in downtown Port Moresby and a little bit close to the Port Moresby Police Station.

Voting in secret is a prerequisite in achieving a free and fair election. Observations were made to establish where the people were able to vote without others seeing who they voted for and the results presented in figure 22 of our reports. Only 51.9 per cent reported that people voted in secret. Observers reported that 17.5 per cent and mostly 14.7 sometimes voted in secret.

However, it is problematic that 12.6 per cent of polling sites observed people never voted in secret. So, moving quickly to address this issue of violation of individual voter rights, Transparency International makes the following high-level recommendations;

(1) Parliament should legislate requirements for an electoral reform. For example, roll information to be made available proactively and freely to the public in both digital and analogue format.

And this was trialed a little bit in 2022. That PNGEC commences update on the role early to prevent issues of multiple voting, underage voting and community violence. This will go a long way to mitigate in these issues and that IDEC and the joint Security Task Force coordinate with the PNGEC to ensure all violations can be reported through a dedicated hotline. And we have noted from the commission so far that this has been raised by the committee itself in terms of the process to submit the reports and the actions or otherwise of the police.

(2) Voter Participation: The second thematic recommendation relates to voter participation in the elections. It is important at this juncture, Mr Chairman and Committee for us to clarify the common point of misunderstanding. And yes, it is a constitutional right for those at voting age and over 18 to vote but this constitutional right can only be exercised and requires each adult to present themselves and to register on the Common Roll.

We have seen time and again commentators saying this is a denial of constitutional rights when their names are not on the common roll. They have to register and respectfully,

I draw our attention to use this analogy of a driver's license. Many can drive a car but you cannot legally drive a car unless you have a driver's license. This important distinction needs to be underlined and the authorities need to ensure that the common roll is available and people can update accordingly.

As a broad recommendation, timely and accurate, monitoring and verification of the common roll is crucial to the successful conduct of elections and this was the key criticism in the 2022 Election. And we worked closely with the Electoral Commissioner for a number of reasons and this was not done in the lead up to the 2022 elections.

(3) Integrity of the Electoral systems; the final thematic area chairman and the committee that I wish to highlight in this oral submission is also the largest and that is being the electoral system. It pertains to the systems and processes legislated by parliament, managed by the PNGEC and enforced by Police and security personnel and the Courts.

With relation to the subject of security personnel, I want to underline that when the police commissioner engages Members of the Defense Force and Correctional Services; they are members of the police force. They are not members of the Defense force and it is so important that we make this distinction and tell our people that they are working under the authority of the Commissioner of the Papua New Guinea Royal constabulary. We need to make this distinction Sir.

Nationally while over two-thirds, this is 68.3 per cent of TI observers reported no sightings of bribery and intimidations of voters. It is still concerning, Chairman, that nearly a third reported occurrences of bribery and intimidation of voters during polling. This is very similar to the 2017 observation as well.

So, the continued prevalence of voters been intimidated, bribed during polling is unacceptable and yet continues to be wide spread. And whether it five or 10 or 30 per cent it is unacceptable and which means that they potentially one could say there are members of Parliament who are illegitimately elected. That would pose a real cause of concern to us and the level of democracy that we as a country expect and promised under our constitution.

So, Chairman as I draw to close aside from the field data collected by TI observers, there are also several other reports that we work in conjunction with other observation teams and know that they have been submitted as well to the authorities. I want to note that they were other several instances of constitutional laws being eroded with the timing of elections, compliance

with the requirements of the Organic Law. This impacted key legal requirements such as display of the electoral roll, polling schedule for objection and verification.

Mr Chairman, multiple times our people are denied, it is a constitutional right, it's not a civil society request that election electoral roll must be published and the needs of process of verification and engagement by our citizen of our country.

The late formation of Electoral Advice Committee in 2027 wasn't in 2022. In fact, Chair, I was nominated and refuse the commission request because we were supposed to have gone to and been sworn in at Parliament. The same day as the Electoral Commission had made his first submission of returning writs.

I took the personal decision that, I could not in all consciousness sign up as the electoral adviser when the Electoral Commission had submitted a large number of writs and it was clear from those writs that one could make the observation of perhaps a majority easily been formed. So was important for my personal integrity and the integrity of Transparency International that, I reluctantly resigned from that commission and did not turn up to be commissioned at the Parliament House. It's a very important committee requiring us to be commissioned in the presence of our Head of State so, it's not an ad hoc committee per say.

So, we would recommend some of the following interventions but the Special Parliamentary Committee should support the tabling of PNGEC's full report of the conduct of the 2022 National General Election in Parliament and then make this publicly available because that's an important check and balance.

The Special Parliamentary Committee should recommend alignment of the Organic Law on the National and Local Level Government elections with recently developed Anticorruption Legislation namely; ICAC and try to improve on that plus off course the Whistle Blower Legislation will improve the overall integrity and enforcement.

The Special Parliamentary should support the proposed amendment through the Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates. Which have been recommended and have been on the table by the Integral Political Parties and Candidates Commission for number of times and off course propose this with relevant public consultation.

We recommend that the police should investigate, arrest and prosecute electoral officials that where alleged to have engaged in corruption during the 2022 National General Elections. Perhaps, they should be coordinated with an MOU with the PNGEC and the constabulary and it will send a very clear message to our officials. Having said that, I wish to place on record that we have participate in several workshop with Electoral Commission.

There a lot of committed and dedicated public servants in the electoral commission and so I need to make that point. However, where there is evidence then I think we need to pursue investigation and successful prosecution and Parliament should commit funding through the national budget or the entire 5-year election cycle with ease of PNGEC's deliverables publicly commit to and report to ICAC on a regular basis.

I am aware that ICAC want to play a longer role in their life cycle and I think we should take advantage, if not the actual members of ICAC as a structure stands at least a branch of ICAC to keep that oversight in between elections. I think that's going to be very important and will develop some important disciplines and develop public complaints processes and an internal autocratic strategy within the PNGEC prior to the 2027 national general elections.

The PNGEC establish and equipped electoral arise committee by year prior to commencement of elections so that important for poll experience, confidence, and appreciation within the overall EC can be establish prior to the national elections.

It's very hard to play the game of football and turn up when the referee calls the team. It's really difficult for all parties involved and as well, it gives us an opportunity to utilise the election committee and candidates get an understanding of the role of the EC which is a massive responsibility to give advice to the commissioner on failing elections, understanding that the final prerogative lies with the commission and that independence must be maintained. So he hears the advisory committee only not a board that makes that recommendation that the electoral commission mistake. It is an advisory committee and the independence of the EC must be maintained throughout as we progress on.

The idea is to develop provincial election committees, terms of reference and signed off with funding at the provincial level for planning meetings in the four years preceding the elections. It has been an observation that were days' cohesion with provincial administrators, police commissioners and electoral commission. That's really formidable obstacle to free and fair elections if I can say so and then of by the recommendation is consideration be given to creation of a commission so the electoral commissioner has commissioners probably similar to the Ombudsman Commission. I think in those numbers with specific roles, responsibilities and duties, the electoral commissioner can share that massive responsibility to conduct the elections and I think there's safety in numbers against the inevitable pressures that come before the electoral commissioner for budget to deal at that administrative level and then the intensity increases during pre-common roll registration of candidates polling and counting. It's immense pressure and we ask that the committee looks at this very seriously. So, again, this is just a sample of our full recommendations containing our report that we were really privileged to work with this esteem committee as you look and undertake your task.

In closing, Chairman, I reiterate your supports, the work of your committee, supports Parliament, State Institutions and our people of Papua New Guinea as we work towards 2027 seeking a better election that will re-establish the public confidence in our elections and I think it's fair to say that over the last three elections they diminished considerably the integrity of our elections. We ask the committee to use our election observation data collected over the years and the extensive reports as you contemplate and consider various recommendations to be tabled in Parliament.

Lastly, Transparency International makes this submission as a long standing partner to the Constitutional processes and bodies established to ensure good governance in our beloved country Papua New Guinea. God Bless Papua New Guinea, Thank you

CHAIRMAN – Thank you, Mr Kassman. And if you don't mind waiting with us while I get Dr. Sanida to speak again if you could give us a ten-minute presentation on your contribution.

Dr OSBORNE SANIDA – Thank you Honourable Chairman, Deputy Chairman and members of the Special Parliamentary Committee. I want to thank the Committee for giving me this opportunity and to the National Research Institute to provide this oral presentation. Our submission of over 12 pages is before you, so all the details are in there. It covers historical context, NRI's role, 2009 sample recommendation and also the 2022 observation as well as the recommendations. Where we focused on the key areas of campaign, polling, counting and

declaration. So what I will do with the oral presentation is not cover everything in there but focus on the recommendations that we believe the Committee should consider.

As opening remarks, the main aim of the election is to elect credible persons to be members of Parliament. And this is to be done through an election system which is processed and guided by relevant laws and regulations. In order for an election to be free, fair and transparent all stakeholders and I mean voters, the candidates, the election administrators, the officials and supporting entities must follow the established laws and regulations.

I want to put upfront that most of the problems that we faced during the elections were due to the disobedience of laws. I want to make that clear from the front. If we follow a lot of the laws we won't be facing too many of these problems.

In terms of the historical perspective, since the first general elections after the independence in 1977 NRI has been doing observation of the elections except 2012. I won't go in deep into the details but in general in terms of issues about the elections is that, the same problems seem to be recurring except that they're recurring with an improvised sort of way to make problems worse. That's our general observation of the elections.

With the details of the issues, I think for the past two days we have heard of the issues but I will focus on the recommendations. Let me go back to 2007, NRI produced a report in 2009 by the late Dr Ray Enere and Cathy Wian, it was entitled 'Priorities for a free and fair Elections and NRI issues an Analysis'. Out of the report there were four priority recommendations that were done then and still relevant now in my view and the institutes view.

(1) Firstly, is the need to implement a new system of voter registration and voter identification. At that time for the 2012 Election I think the issue has continued to be there. At that time, it was recommended that the needs for immediate pilot study on the feasibility of a biometric system. Informed by the experience such systems as well in other parts of the country how they have worked and how we could borrow this and use it. At that time for the 2012 Elections. The point I want to make is that many of the recommendations that we are making they are not new, they have been made overtime so the question is does these recommendations get mentioned.

And on this, I want to commend this Government for setting up this Special Parliamentary Committee, because I see it as a way to put all these recommendations and find a way forward to implement them, so that we actually see results and not just recommendations gathering dust in different places. That is the point I want to make.

This particular issue on voter registration and ID, is the main problem that we need to fix.

(2) The second priority recommendation that was made, was for a central team to drive the elections. At that time, we recommend a team of single, safe and secret ballot. Single meaning, that one vote per person. Safe, meaning the elections have to be safe. We all have been emphasising on secret ballot. So it must be a central team of the election.

It now relates to all the communications that the Electoral Commission does. Everything must be done on this basis so that there will be no problems during election. The concept of the inter-department committees is not new. At that time, this particular report mentioned about an inter-department election committee to guide the 2012 election.

The concept has been there, the question is, how do we make it work? Over the last few days of discussion, it needs more teeth, a legal mandate to be able to carry out it's functions. At the moment, this is a body of departmental heads and key agencies that are working.

(3) The third recommendation that was made; is still relevant now. At that time, we recommend developing national security framework for the elections. This should involve an election security tool kit, that can be headed by the RPNGC. This will include a national set of standards for the conduct of security forces in relation to election offences, and based practice using contingency plans.

Over the last couple of days, we have heard that security issues continue to be a main problem. So, how do we resolve this particular issue? We have heard about the defence force telling us about the coded areas, in terms of whether they are high or low. So, how do we come up with strategies to address this particular issue? In my view, on this note going forward, the security plans need to be developed earlier, and if it needs to be brought to this Committee for us to start talking about security now, and not a few months before the 2027 national election.

(4) The fourth recommendation, was the need to try the electronic way of voting and counting. This I believe, is still relevant today. How do we integrate this system into the election process to make it more effective and efficient? Mr Chairman and the Committee members, these are recommendations from 2009 after observations of the 2007 elections. I believe the implications are still relevant today. Let me talk about my observations from the 2022 National Elections. There are a number of recommendations but I will not cover everything. I will focus only on some of the key areas.

For NRI, we made a strategic decision to not conduct observation in the whole country. We were focused only on the highlands region, for the reasons that a lot of issues that we encountered, happened in that particular region.

So we chose seven electorates to conduct observations of elections and committee for your information on my left are Mr Jeremy Goro, who was the leader of that particular project. So, we did the election observations and as I mentioned in the report you will see details of issues but I want to focus on some key recommendations and then if there are any questions we can answer in terms of the others.

So, number one recommendation from last year's election is again the issue of the main problem which is the common roll. It must be updated and verified by NID or verified by village court officials, councillors, pastors or village recorders. We have been talking about this particular problem. I think we need to find a way where we do not just have the information but how the information can be verified even after you have the common roll. So, one of the points that I will emphasise is the need to use the ward record book. We had a presentation yesterday by DPLGA. So how do we enhance the function of that because the ward record book is the baseline data for any electorate. If we make it work, it will be able to assist in other issues.

The other recommendation I wanted to highlight is the issue of accountability of election officials. How do we ensure that election officials are accountable for their actions? So, one of the main things I believe was that you get public servants, there are also non-public servants involved as election officials. So, the question is if they commit a crime how do we then address the issue? I think in the last few days we have heard a lot of cases that have happened have not been prosecuted. So, who do we address this? We need to come up with a strong accountability mechanism so that those who default in the electoral process are punished. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the main issue in my view is lack of obedience to laws. When we don't follow the law, the person is likely to do the same thing again.

One other recommendation I wanted to mention which the committee may consider is the question of localized voting and counting for which we had in the past, if it is going to support security and logistics issues. Relating to this, one of the big problems we have now is when the polling is done and the votes are counted, they have to be stored somewhere and transported to some other place. So, when it's transported, we have no idea whether it's the same number of ballot papers that will end up in the counting venues. So how do we address that? So, the idea of maybe counting the votes straight after they're cast could be considered, some sort of system, so cut off any issue that could happen in transportation of ballot papers.

One other recommendation for this particular election was the need for review of the criteria for candidates that stand for elections. How do we ensure that the candidates that are elected are going to be effective members in parliament and contributing to public debate for the laws in terms of making laws? So, some criteria. We should not just have anyone just go and stand. There must be some clear criteria, you need to have the skills to be able to be voted in and make important contribution as a legislator

The next recommendation was consideration of increasing the number of Electoral Commissioners. Not having one person making decisions, perhaps 3-5. You still have something along the lines of the Ombudsman Commission. You have the Chief Electoral Commissioner; you have other commissioners. So that the decision is made through consultation amongst themselves rather than one person making the decision.

The last recommendation that we made, I emphasized earlier is to consider and strengthen the ward record system together with an efficient ID System, so that you have the data at ground level which can be used to assist in terms of the Common roll problem that we have been talking about. So Mr Honourable Chairman, these are sample of our recommendations based on earlier recommendations provided by NRI as well as the last report. So let me make the concluding remarks. In the 2022 Nation General Elections, the constant shifting of dates and delay in preparing the common roll, issues with polling stations and polling dates cast out on the integrity of the elections. It is good for a country that elections must be conducted as required by law and on time instead of creating doubts in the minds of the people. The NRI submissions here has provided sample of recommendations as well as the observations for the two election periods that I have mentioned for the committee to consider.

In conclusion it is recommended also that the role of research to inform decision making be taken also included in whatever recommendations that the committee makes and in this regard, we recommend that the NRI as well as TIPNG perhaps should be part of any oversight going forward such as the IDEC so that information can be used directly to inform decision. On this note I want to mention to Honourable Chairman that in the Bougainville memorandum we contributed directly in terms of providing research information to the processes to inform both the government of Papua New Guinea and as well the Bougainville government with the main aim that we wanted the election referendum to be credible in terms of its results. So I invite you Mr Chairman and your members something similar should also be done for elections for the country.

The final point I want to make is the role the importance of voter education. Not just for the current but for the future as well. We need to have effective voter education systems and for the future I want to recommend that education on election should be made part of the education curriculum. When we go to school as children we learn English, we learn mathematics, and the key subjects for us to be able to learn to become useful members of the society. In my view

because election is so very important I believe that children when they are small should learn: what is an election and why it is important? when they grow up they are into that culture. At the moment they are growing out into other different culture where you have to do this corrupt thing in the election. We need to change the mindset, so for the future I believe that we need to include election as part of a curriculum in the election system. Thank you Mr Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you Dr Sanida. First of all, let me thank you and again repeat my thanks to Transparency International, particularly Mr Kassman. I will probably make my comments towards the end so I will allow the members of the committee to ask any questions they may have.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – Thank you Chairman, I too join my chairman and the members of the committee to acknowledge and thank Mr Kassman and Dr Sanida respectfully for your contributions to this committee’s hearing. I also want to make particular note of the recommendations raised. I think they are very unequivocal, very clear and concise. I make a specific note of the incidences and examples you raised in your report of the voting patterns and behaviour of our communities and our response to the electoral system. I do not have any further questions in as far as the recommendations of the Transparency International but be grateful to read up on the materials you submitted this afternoon for future referencing, in case you are recalled to co-relate on the other aspects of this enquiry.

Also on the same token, I acknowledge and thank Dr Sanida for your contribution. Very numerous and various but you raise very pertinent questions that also collaborate with matters raised by the presenters this morning, and also in terms of the structure of the organizational Electoral Commission.

I’m just curious though, I’d like to ask: you proposed in your recommendation for IDEC to be established as a separate monitoring organization? What would its role be? Can you expound a little bit?

Dr OSBORNE SANIDA – Thank you, honourable member; IDEC is basically an oversight body, currently comprising of heads of central agencies, as well as the disciplinary forces. Ourselves, NRI and TIPNG, we sit on the IDEC as observers. An advantage of the IDEC is the coordination; so one of the positive things I saw in the last election is how when there was an issue; we had the Chief Secretary with all the heads of discussing and then trying to liaise with the EC to address the matters.

When I mentioned that the IDEC needs to have more teeth I meant, what are the basis of implementing decisions at IDEC when decisions are made? It should be made clear that when IDEC makes a decision, what is the basis for that decision to be followed? Because each of the agencies represented there have different mandates in different departments. So, we are talking about eh consolidated decision; how do we implement the decision? What is the basis? That is why I was mentioning that there need to be a mechanism to make ensure that decisions that are made can be followed through and implemented.

Mr RICHARD KASSMAN – If I can add a perspective on that; I think we need to be careful because IDEC comprises of more senior public servants and they have day jobs, thus, I was thinking of a body that reports to IDEC.

IDEC in itself is very much coordination and oversight not to manage the elections per say, and I think its very important distinction as well as us remaining cognisant that IDEC and the members of IDEC have critical day jobs, Chief Secretary has a critical role and the secretaries of the relevant departments that form IDEC and the intention originally and I served on IDEC in 2007 and earlier, was that coordination process and making sure that the systems of government responded to support the Electoral Commission run the election.

So, we need to be careful that we don't expect IDEC to become the board of Electoral Commission. That would be ill informed to do that and I think that the recommendation that EC as a Commission, that's where it should be well placed and therefore IDEC's responsibility in coordination ensuring funding and ensuring the constabulary are present as well, very much in a coordination role but then the constabulary takes its responsibility to provide and develop the security plan.

So, there are different functions in that and my caution is that we be careful to try and solve a problem on one side and then create another problem. As important as, and I've seen the benefit of Chief Secretary been involved in multiple elections, as we approach an election, the day job of the Chief Secretary is critical. I also believe that in as we go through and once writs are issued and then polling starts, I think that caretaker role and the importance of the public service machinery to play a role in the absence of ministers is also a critical role.

So, member, I think we need to be looking at that really carefully. I note the previous government chose not to institute a caretaker government situation.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – That the was the question I was going to raise leading on from your initial remarks and so my question was going to be whether or not you had any observations and comments in respect of that period of a caretaker role and whether in your mind we could contemplate that in a legislation going forward as part of your recommendations so in the period of an election being conducted and in the absence of a bicameral system because as you know in a bicameral system elections are not concurrent, they're in-between so when the upper house is in elections, the lower house continues. When the lower house goes to elections, the upper house continues that so there is no vacuum so far as the executive arms functions and roles are intended for governance. So, in this unicameral system that we have my question was whether or not you had any observations or thoughts around this particular agenda of a caretaker regime per say because at the moment we seem to have ad hoc situation and its pretty grey.

Mr RICHARD KASSMAN – So member, I think it's by convention of the caretaker process that, since independence, executive arm Governments of Papua New Guinea have practiced that convention. It was not followed and therefore noted in 2022 that it was not a legal requirement. And chair, I want to underline the importance of conventions. Not everything is written in law, and under the Westminster system of government, those conventions are well and truly tested and therefore are important observations. Member, where you have a 33 member cabinet, 33 ministers of state, though that period, causes in my view a prejudicial situation. Also, its highlighted when during that period and prior to all writs being returned and where counting occurs and it's known that a minister has lost his seat, creating a real concern that is really hard to explain.

A member that has lost his seat, performs a role of a minister of State, and technically can continue to attend Cabinet to make decisions as a Cabinet member. These are important conventions that are there. It is important that the executive arm leads to perhaps, take greater responsibility and accountability through that process.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – Thank you. If I heard you correctly, we do default to conventions. Conventions is practice, and practice is not written. Practices are going to rely on good faith, trust and very high principles of governance of personalities.

In a volatile democracy as ours, as premised on history of the last 47 years, would you also agree that it might be a prudent practice, an interest of great governance to embed that into an expressed organic law of source, or constitutional provisions with very strict financial powers being defined as well?

Dr OSBORNE SANIDA – Sir, the short answer is no. I believe that we need to encourage a culture of integrity, honour and an understanding of the privilege position. Therefore, I believe and expect greater responsibility, and a higher standard of behaviour from a minister of State during that very sensitive time.

I know it's easy for us to try and legislate for that. We have to therefore, where there is perceived bridges. It's not going to be a clear bridge, and therefore in principle, I would not support that to be enshrined in law.

Honourable JACOB MAKI – Thank you, NARI and Dr Sanida. Thank you, Transparency International for the presentation. I noticed a lot of things. You are independent bodies observing and your observations have been presented to us.

We are team, we the Committee and you all will make changes. You have observed previous elections in Papua New Guinea. We are here to make sure that election in the future, run in the way that we like.

There are a lot of things that we have discussed. There are a few things that I have seen on the field like voting places, double voting, bribery, etc., just to get a winner. From your previous observations, deploying police and military personnel's to a particular field for conducting elections, do you think we have to change our formats to get the outcome, according to the expectation of the people of this country.

Have you analyzed anything that you can present to the committee so that we can do something to protect and prevent, get ready better before we discharge the 2027 elections.

Mr RICHARD KASSMAN – Yes, in our submission we attaching our previous observation reports as well. But there are what we made in our submission is we have tried to pick those consistent matters and highlighting those to be addressed. I don't think it is feasible at all for us to take all the observations and change them in the one hit. I think they need to be prioritized and we work on what is achievable in 2027 but perhaps your recommendations could be over a period of decades, because this is not a quick fix. Its progressive so I really want to make that point as there have been a lot of discussions for example on the biometric process of voter identification.

IT connectivity is improving and that could potentially be a solution but not the solution, so we need to work with improvement in technology. And we continue to be involved in awareness campaigns in the leadup to the elections and we also are involved in trying to improve and we as in us the Ombudsman Commission and other agencies in talking about candidacy criteria. With due respect, Doctor, I think education is not the answer. Because when you look at it, as I was 18 in 1975 and with due respect to many highly educated people in the in this current parliament and you look at the education level in 1975. And some of the effectiveness of what

we have achieved at that time and we have to be careful about saying better educated candidates make a better parliament.

With great risk, I say that respectfully. I think what we want is honest Members of Parliament. And if they are honest and better educated, then that is a plus. I think Papua New Guinea people demand honest MPs. To answer your question; it has to be progressive and I think we have to look at 2027 and see what we can achieve in the short time. And some of your recommendations can move on progressively, that is how I would like to answer your question, sir.

Dr OSBORNE SANIDA— Just to add on, I think what is happening now its basically the way to address and we have not had this opportunity in the past so for the Government to set up this parliamentary committee is I believe is a big change compared to what has happened in the past. We have all these recommendations on the last elections and the previous ones. I will just give a sap shot of the ones that were from the 2007.

I was making a point that a lot of these things we have observed and made recommendations in the past but there were no mechanisms for us to put it through for consideration. Now this provides us with an opportunity with the special parliamentary committee. I am not just talking about NRI and TI recommendations but the rest of the people that are bringing in their recommendations. and it is providing opportunity, the chairman and your committee for us to work together so that we can address the issue.

One of the thing in relation to the issue that I want to mention is that we have more than 800 languages, different cultures and some of the things cannot be explained by even politics. So, may be one of the recommendations you should consider how, we need to maybe have that analysis on how the culture affect the behavior of people during the elections. That can be the challenge that we face because if something is ingrain in someone's culture, we can bring external traits to change them but they will still continue. So how do we change the culture so that they follow the election culture by law rather than their own traditional law.

I wanted to add that, thank you, Mr Chairman.

Honourable ELIAS KAPAVORE – Thank you, Transparency International Richard and NRI for all those such a reason in the last couple of elections. I'm in the Opposition, the Chairman and the other members are in the government. I'll like to thank the Marape-Rosso government for establishing this important committee.

We have reports and assessments done during 2012 to 2017 elections and it is the commitment of those governments at that particular times and to actually commit themselves to implementing that from the government agencies from NRI and other stakeholders who giving the reports to us.

My point is; it is important that we have this committee and we will be having also recommendations and reports. I'm content of my Chairman and the committee here to make sure that these reports and the recommendations should do not collect dust. We need to make sure that we improve and care for public trust again to the election process that we have in our country. We are here to do this and I just want to give my support on be half of the Opposition to making sure that we implement the necessary recommendations to be established good trusted credible systems of elections into the future. Thank you.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU— The culture of elections that is now being absorbed by Papua New Guinea culture and custom and the social structure. There are issues raised in various election petitions of undue influence hence, only about two or three grounds that one can raise; one of which is bribery, illegal practices by electoral officials and undue influences.

My question is this; in your mind do you agree that the provision of food at the campaign is a Papua New Guinea custom and culture. The provision of food at the election rally or around

the polling area in your mind is that bribery or undue influence. These are the observations that you noted in the submissions that these are the practices that are rife in this country. Do you agree that there is now a very Papua New Guinean custom and culture; Melanesian practice?

Dr OSBORNE SANIDA – In practices, that is what’s happening and in PNG when there is any big event there’s always food. The question of undue influence, I think it needs to be link to the end result. Did the event contribute to voters voting or what’s their direct influence in terms of how it affected because sometime the event will be general feast done before election?

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – In the Papua New Guinean custom, when you go to a house and if a cold water is offered to you, that’s Papua New Guinean, that’s a very Melanesian custom; correct practice. When a food is offered to you at a visitor’s place at another person’s house that is considered as a very Melanesian custom.

When a person is hosting an event such as church, rugby or any other events for that matter and provides refreshments that is being considered as Papua New Guinean custom. Why you do not do that and issue an aspiring leader born into a leadership tribe or bloodline and a person is not able to provide that. How does that sit for a person of that stature in relation to that community? In the context of Papua New Guinea custom and shouldn’t that be considered very Papua New Guinean and Melanesian so to speak?

You will agree that in our recommendations we should really look at redefining what really is bribery and undue influence.

Dr OSBORNE SANIDA – Thank you, Honourable Member. I just made my point a while ago about the importance of looking at how does culture affect us and within the culture we need to assess and see what constitutes undue influence and what is cultural practice. Just on this, I mentioned the need to ensure that when the laws and rules and regulations are very clear so that when we implement, we know what is undue influence and bribery of that nature. So they are in the electoral laws and if they are not clear they need to be relooked at and revised to make it spot on and that these are the circumstances of what is undue influence and what is acceptable cultural practice so that when we implement the law its very clear that this is the crime and this is the penalty for it.

Honourable KEITH IDUHU – Correct. Law is the reaction or reaffirmation of social practices.

Mr RICHARD KASSMAN – The custom and traditional practise has been overly used to defend corrupt and illegal practices. The issue of reasonableness yes, its reasonable that we provide that we provide some food and I think that is very important and it’s a cultural practise and I think it’s the extent of that where it goes to another level and overboard. That is a concern.

Where a Sitting Member of Parliament uses state money in his campaign, that is illegal and unacceptable and that Member of Parliament during that campaign period should be prosecuted for using Government money to do that. It brings also into question when during this time where Members of Parliament need to be extremely careful when they are visiting and undertaking their normal Parliamentary and Ministerial duties. I think we need to be very careful of excesses. It is very important that there needs to be process of when executive government are using for example the Kumul and helicopters during a campaign period paid for by taxpayer’s money and I want to place that on record and this is really important and those who are in the Opposition at the time are at an extreme disadvantage.

Coming back to the provision of food and things like that I think its an important practise that should be encouraged as a young leader going in, its expected of you to do that but it comes back to that reasonableness.

Other important part is the question of undue influence are we using that in that manner? There are large sums of money, large amounts of food, there are fibre glass dinghies and other things that are moved around during that time and I think those are clear, there must be a demarcation. There must be a sense of reasonableness that needs to be done.

In our culture as motuans, we pay bride price but its not a monetary thing. It is assumed by those who are not familiar with the motuan practise that it is not a monetary transaction.

So when we are looking at this we need to make sure we are not confusing a practise such as bride price as being a form of bribe, when you don't understand to process of that and the relationships through that and the exchange through a process like a bride price it can be easily manipulated and for those who don't understand, can view that in not its cultural context

Honourable KIETH IDUHU – That could be considered undue influence. Unduly influencing a woman.

Mr RICHARD KASSMAN – I think the law of our country if it serves me right that polygamy has not been approved but it's definitely practiced so perhaps we should not go there at this forum. Thank you, Sir.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Thank you Mr Kassman and thank you Dr Sanida. Your two organizations are very important so far as the Committee is concerned. Realistically, we only have three years to do what we will recommend on the Floor of Parliament by June. If you can crystalize in phased manner 2023, 2024 and 2025. We will leave out 2026 because it's the beginning of the Election mindset. Those three years, both of you tell the Committee what recommendations should we take on board after we present the recommendations on the Floor this year. Which ones should we do in 2024 then 2025. We need to be practical. we know that our country does not absorb big reforms very very well and Mr Kassman you were saying cascading it over two decades or so or perhaps going back and thinking I'm requesting if we can crystalize the issues of common roll where do we fit it in, planning security, legislation, voter behavior all those things.

I'll be looking at 2023 after we present the Budget, the Committee will make sure that this is done, and we tick that box off, 2024 we tick that box off, 2025 we tick it off and we say the country is ready for a better election in 2027. Can you tell the Committee that there are so many different recommendations practically and realistically how will we organize ourselves and address 1,2,3 or only five of them rather than ten of them? Because when in after the 2007 elections and 2009 the recommendations were made only four of them, Dr Sanida you said nothing was done. We don't want this Committee to follow that pathway so if we can crystalize a set of recommendations actionable, realistic, practical that's what I personally am thinking about and as you are finalizing the report and I want an action plan to be done.

2. Mr Richard Kassman, there were also many other observers and Dr Sanida they came over the years and in this election the Commonwealth came and other international observers came. Is there a report and I'm looking for a report as an member of the Committee. I would want to see a report where you go through the entire 118 seats.

Mr Kassman, in your report you said probably 30 per cent of the MPs came through the back window, not through the normal process. Is it just 30 per cent or is it more? If so, how do we as a State and as a nation, deal with those things. Why did we allow them to come through a legislative framework that we are arguing about today, that is not fit enough to take action there and then?

Declarations were made to some candidates that we thought should never be declared winners. They should be declared failures. The former Electoral Commissioner came in the morning, and said this should be declared as a failed election. But, another person sitting in that office declared them. The public needs to know that when observers come and present these information, some of these information are hidden in the dust of archives. It is time that we let the people know.

Only the disputed returns process, allows those issues to go to the disputed returns process. We as a country, have a dilemma. Realistically, we had to start changing key areas that we need to sort out in 2027. This Committee can then say that the next election will be better.

Dr Sanida, in your observation of the seven electorates in the highlands region, that is the region where much of the election matters arise. I was looking at the list of your observations, and in my opinion, you didn't conclude that all those seven should have been failed. Did you get scared?

All the issues that you observe are very serious, but you came short of telling the committee that in your opinion, those members should not have been declared winners. That is the type of information management that we need. When agencies of State are responsible for gathering data, that data must be turned into information because information is power. Data has no power but information does. When you twist data, and you hide the information that should come out of the data, then people are denied of that information and data. This is the dilemma that we are having.

Mr Kassman, I was told by somebody that has been observing the past five elections, that in some electorates she named the electorates.

The number of voters just multiplied ten-fold. They actually went and interviewed voters in those electorates and then those individuals said, mipla no vote ya, ol arapla tickim ballot papers tasol. Why is that information not coming out to the committee? Yumi poret tumas, that's the message that I am giving, yumi poret tumas. This is a public hearing. This is where we must hang the dirty clothes out so that they can be cleaned up. We must begin it.

Information that observers gather, if it requires that information to make a decision, to declare that particular election in that particular electorate failed, sutim ikam hariap. Even if it means you go public, even if it means you go to the court with an individual who is standing, that's the type of system that we have wrecked in this country. Planti hait, hait. Like ol wantok haitim ol criminal na polis hat lo painim dispela criminal. Everybody is protecting each other.

I wanted to make that point that this is the place where we ensure that, Dr Sanida, Richard Kassman, TI ya, yu bikpla name ya, yu! TIs got big name, transparency, accountability, I expect you to come with a list to this committee and say out of the hundred and eighteen members of parliament, this, this, this, they came through the window. Possible to bring that to the committee? We are politicians. Even if you name us, em nau. We are trying to build the country called Papua New Guinea. We are trying to make sure the institutions of state are strong enough

to carry us through to this big event called elections which we are not used to, em Western system ya, bikpla stap na yumi bihainim bikpla lo our culture.

This election process ya, we are struggling now after fifty years but I understand, we are on earth and not in heaven yet. We can still make mistakes. Nobody's perfect. That's why God created earth so we can make the mistakes that we do. But the point I want to raise is, as deputy chair of committee, I need the information. We're not going to go to court and say, you, you're report says that you shouldn't be a member of parliament. Its not the committee's job.

But we need to build a mindset change with powerful information, with truthful information so that in the future people know how to vote, people know that they must be enrolled, people know that when they walk in a polling booth nobody will change their mind, ol yet mekim decision. The Major General was here yesterday. He said we already knew the hotspots and he showed us the map. I told the Major General why are you telling us the hotspots now? Why weren't the hotspots known three years ago and we took action? Guns were moving into those hotspots? Why were we just watching them? Where were they coming from? Was MPs or candidates bringing them in? What happened and then you come and tell us now that you got hotspots noted? System failures in our beloved country. Nobody wants to take action.

IDEC ya, yupla sanapim yah. Even we were told yesterday, Electoral Commissioner never attended. Members of the IDEC committee have to go and pull him out of the office. Head of the agency of an event does not turn up for that important meeting? So forget about IDEC, it does not work. I hope you have got the message. My message is give information, noken haitim, dispel pasin bilong haitim na geligeli nabaut yah, you are not fit to run a state.

Let's be honest with this, many observers have come. Many reports are hiding please if you know any report bring them out to the committee. For my intervention, I am looking for the both of you. We have three years left, what are the things that are realistically we can deliver that will positively impact 2027 election. Thank you Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Those are pretty hard heating words so I will not let you respond to them.

Mr RICHARD KASSMAN– This is unfair. I would like to respond.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Okay, I will let you respond to that.

Mr RICHARD KASSMAN– Mr Deputy Chairman, first of all, the scope of the observation reports have come and I have put these many observations down and they have come from relevant government authorities. Number 1; the responsibility and the accountability to look at those recommendation lies squarely with the state and lies squarely with these very Members of this Parliament of this very house we are seated in. The process, I think you mentioned IDEC, it is a coordination committee. The responsibility for the appointment of the Electoral Commissioner, the responsibility to manage the Electoral Commissioner is the responsibility under the office of the Prime Minister.

The conduct of the elections and the way our laws are and the court of disputed returns. There were lot of court of disputed returns. That statistic on its own is an indication of the concerns raised by failed candidates. I think we can't judge on the successful court of disputed court of returns. Because many are won on technicalities. The role of the independent advisory committee if that was properly instituted and powered, then that would play that role in assisting the commission and advise to fail elections. In the role that I played on two elections, there were numbers were we could have recommended and we had discussion with the Electoral Commissioner to fail elections. There was no apatite within the Electoral Commission

to pursue that and it was very difficult for us to get reports from the Electoral Commission to substantiate what we had understood and information that we had received. Which on primacy should have continued a conversation based on relevant Electoral Commission Report that we could have easily failed the elections. So the lot of it is to do with the administration of that. It is certainly and I take embrace to the fact that you insinuate that we covered up or a favoritism. Definitely not.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN – Can I interrupt. Sorry with apology, I did not say that. I am saying that there were events that took place and I read the report of Dr Sanida, seven electorates You look at the issues – all the rules were broken. Only one fellow ticked the ballot; there were interference at the polling booths. So, we just let it go like that? That is the point I was raising.

Mr RICHARD KASSMAN – Yes, widespread block-voting; people of Papua New Guinea, surprise surprise, block-voting is illegal. You all know that; officials know that; the police know that; everybody knows that block-voting is illegal. If we took on that alone, block-voting in the 118 seats there would be a lot of space each year.

The most important thing that we could ask for as institutions here is the full compliance of the law and the re-enforcement full budgeted. It's the budgeting starting now before 2027, and that management of that budgeting so that the processes can take its course.

Perhaps not too much change to the legislations except for the organic law and a wider commission. But apart from that, I think it's just the compliance of existing law and that parliament which is its responsibility must budget each year to ensure that the EC has adequate funding and monitor the EC so that it can carry out its duties and be better prepared before the next elections.

Mr CHAIRMAN – I think we've spent considerable time and I want to thank both of you for your patience. You are amongst friends, and it does not sound like that when we get a bit agitated. As you can appreciate, I think a lot of Papua New Guineans are frustrated by elections and by the failure of our institutions to respond. That goes both ways.

We've seen the recommendations – I think a lot of them will be incorporated because that is what we want to do. We don't want to cover up something. We want to make sure, even for me personally, there are insinuations that I somehow cheated and won my seat and I take offence to that. I would like to be able to take all those people to court who accused me of cheating and to be able to jail them if I could because it impinges on my integrity and all the people that support me. Therefore, we all feel aggrieved by the process in some way. It's not about what I feel aggrieved about. It's not what the losing candidates might feel aggrieved about. I think it's about all of us, being able to come to a fair referee if you like. And that has been missing; and that came through in both of your reports. And I think we should just put it all out in the open and be able to prioritize the things we can do. Like for me personally, if we can fix the Common Roll and get it 90 percent accurate, then I think it will solve 80 percent of our election issues.

If we can have video cameras in the counting rooms for example. So that makes everybody happy that, look, the counting officials are not playing up. There can be simple mechanical things like that we could do that eliminates 80 percent of the problems.

We are going to struggle with certain electorates where you got people with say 10,000 machines guns, hanging around trying to influence the outcome of the election; we accept that. How we deal with that, well that's a totally different issue where the security people can tell us. Whether we send in tanks or; how do we deal with that? That is a different issue.

But the ones that can be done where I think the vast majority of our people can assured of a fair election; so once we eliminate that, then as you correctly suggested, we can look at other fixtures down the line that eliminate the problem completed. However, that is not going to happen if there are certain elements within our society who are more than willing to resort to illegal means to gain power or hang on to power and we know some of those electorates.

Some of them, there's wars going on right now, the Defence Force told us yesterday that they're still deployed in the Highlands dealing with election-related problems six seven months after the elections.

So, we know where these things are happening. What we've got to do is be honest about them and put them down on paper and I think for the first time we put them on the floor. There are some of our colleagues who will be unhappy with that but this is a country, it doesn't belong to one person or one clan or one tribe, it belongs to a thousand different tribes and if nine hundred tribes desire a peaceful, safe community where they can conduct things like elections then they should be assured of that and if the other hundred have an issue with that then I think the majority rules as it were in a democracy and these are the things we are trying to pursue and we are all on the same side.

So, with that can I thank both of you and I look forward to having an unadulterated, if I may use those terms, report that we can produce together and deliver to the floor and implement. So, I thank you both, Mr Kassman, Transparency International, Dr Sanida and you are now excused.

I will now call on our last contributors for today and we have a few of you. Could I call Mr. Russel Kitau, Mr. Mark Meninga and Mr. Morris Ikui to present themselves and in the meantime those of who may want to have coffee, tea, biscuits but keep the noise to a minimum. In the interest of time, I will continue to run the hearings.

Welcome gentlemen, we were supposed to have a lady but apparently, she didn't show, I'm disappointed, I hope we can have more women, so in future if there are any women who would like to present, we will be having the regional consultations after this and perhaps one more in Port Moresby before we finalize the report. So, if there are any women or women's groups out there who wish to present their petitions before the committee, I'd like to let you know that we would welcome your input.

I'll start from my left-hand side, Mr. Morris Ikui representing church and youth. I will allow you perhaps seven minutes each to present. There are restrictions on the floor, parliament too when we speak so I'm going to be pretty tough on the three of you. So please go ahead, Mr. Ikui you have the floor.

Children and Youth Representative

Mr. MORRIS IKUI (Children and Youth representative)– Thank you Chairman, Honourable Allan Bird. I would like to acknowledge, before acknowledging, I was the former United Church Children and Youth Ministry coordinator for the last ten years. I've been working with the young people and children in the church and communities and also in the societies. I would also like to acknowledge and my experience in 2007 election, 2012, 2017 and also 2022. I've

been one of the officials and also the presiding official for those four consecutive elections. I would like to acknowledge Honourable Allan Bird, the members of the public hearing committee and the Members of the Parliament, our stakeholders and the people of Papua New Guinea

I would like to apologise that my paper was not typed.

To introduce my topic, 'Generation lost in the election process' – 'Involving today's young in tomorrow's democracy'. The 2022 General Elections brought darkness in the mind set and lives of our young children and young people. Most of our youths were dragged into heated debates, arguments, hatred and created bitterness among themselves.

We created a white elephant, an enemy that crippled our society and stole the values and lives of our young generation and our people. It's like two elephants fighting each other in grass heads. It is now time to involve today's young in tomorrow's democracy. I quote 2050 vision to begin my presentation.

Papua New Guinea Vision 2025

In December 2008, the Government of Papua New Guinea tasked a national planning committee, with the responsibility of setting a visionary development strategy to guide the nation's socio-economic development. The result of the work, is the Papua New Guinea Vision 2025. The aim of the Vision 2050 is that, it will transform the people and nation by reforming the mind set and attitudes of Papua New Guineans. It is thought that this will change the mind set and attitude and will provide direction to reform and align the nation's institutions and systems to make PNG become a smart, wise, fair, healthy and happy society by 2050.

Youth voter participation

In moving today's young to tomorrow's democracy, the definition of youth; for purpose of the project, youth generally refers to the young people under 30 with the voting age of 18 in the vast majority of our country.

Political socialization of the next generation

Young people should vote to develop a habit of voting from the start. And this ensures high turnout in the future. Getting them to vote is part of the political socialization. It compasses two aspects; behavioural and attitude involvement. Behavioural means; acting politically on the basis of attitudes, preferences and opinions, such as by discussing political with others, participating in political events and through voting. Attitude involvement means acquiring knowledge about how government works and of public affairs, as well as developing an interest in an opinion on political issues on the day. The socialization agreement is specific to young people to be considered

Mr CHAIRMAN – Mr Ikui, I appreciate your speech. This is a special committee inquiry into the elections, so I would like to request that you restrict your comments to just the elections if you could, rather than to repeat all the government policies. We do appreciate your in-depth knowledge. Please, can you go straight to issues to deal with elections in the interest of time. I need to allow the other two to also contribute.

Mr MORRIS IKUI – Thank you, Mr Chairman. One of the points that I would like to raise is the election culture. The national election seems to becoming a cultural thing in the past and present where most of our people, both old and young, thrives on families and friends are all confined into. We need to break away from the election culture, norms and values.

Therefore, I suggest the following;

(1) Conducting mock elections in schools.

Students will be educated in the earlier stages to know the election processes. One of the concerns that I raise here is that, lower the voting vote from 18 to 16 years old. This will give more consistency for young people to participate more effectively in their formative years.

(2) Appointments of returning officers

Appoint law abiding citizens. People who can grip unto the law. I also thought that former military personnels. For the 2027 I prefer one of the electorates

One of the former captains was given the position of Returning Officer and he did very well. And one of the areas that I saw was the separate youth roll and this will help us on a clear indication of our young people participating in the elections from 18-30.

Education department has to reschedule their curriculum or the planning as it always affects children during elections. That is one of the concerns I have identified as a young leader relating to children in schools. And there must be tougher laws imposed for underage children participating in the whole election process; where candidates and supporters are being involved. Children are also involved in the election processes.

We might use bottom-up strategy where we can help our national elections. One of the major concerns that I have seen as a pressing and polling official is a lack of election awareness, delaying of roll updating, delaying of allowance for temporary election of staff, lack of funding, poor coordination and facilitation on the roll out of the 2022 election. Poor coordination and awareness, eligible voters missing out, those are some of the things that I saw in the last election. And because of the timeframe I think I have raised two recommendations for the committee to ponder on. With that thank you Mr Chairman.

IY Foundation

Mr CHAIRMAN – I now move to you Mr Mark Meninga and you have the floor sir.

Mr MARK MENINGA (Director IY Foundation) – Thank you Chairman and your committee members. Firstly, I would like to take this time to thank God for electing you to this position and that you are now in this committee to look into the issues of election that has been affecting the country. my being here is not to address issues, I am here to say that I have a tool that may help address the issue. There is a document before you. This is only a draft due to time I appeal to this committee that if there is another meeting please I need to make a full presentation on this paper that I have.

We have had presenters talk about the issues on common roll and all these, the concept that I have come up with has taken me well over 20 years to have this idea and now I have it before this committee. Being a teacher and teaching in a remote place, living with local communities; later serving in a provincial office and as far as the national department of education as a TFF manager. As I work through these areas, data was a very common issue and today we are still talking about data. The issue of data remains and there is no one coming up saying that they have a solution to this.

The IY foundation is a community-based organization purposely formed to come up with this concept to assist in addressing the issue. And to address the issue, I feel that if government agencies cannot help solve the issues then why not you as our leaders. This committee will be in a position to restore, reform and modernize the electoral system but more importantly Papua New Guinea. The database for previous presentations, if they cannot implement it or coming up with something more reliable or comprehensive then, I feel that this tool is made available. I want to appeal to this committee that, I have the tool which the honourable members of Parliament can start off with. The paper that I have before the committee, I have prepared it for

all the 96 open members and the 20 governors. I will have them all done as soon as when I update the latest changes to the LLGs and the ward because I went to LLG office to get the latest, they told me to go to Government Printing.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Mr Menninga, I appreciate your in-depth presentation. This committee is looking into election and not looking all over the place so if, you have contribution to make in relation to the 2022 elections or past elections.

This is not just a committee where you can present everything, it just about the elections. So, can I ask you to stick to the issues of elections, if you have such a contribution to make.

Mr MENNINGA – Thank you, Chairman. I acknowledged what you are saying and all I am trying to say here is the ward profiling, we know something that this country needs. For Papua New Guinea to be developed and the issues that we've been addressing is without database, we cannot prosper.

For example; if I can just go through few questions that I have. As leaders do you know the actual population of your district and total number of illiterates.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Sir, sorry this is actually not related to the elections so, I have to ask you to perhaps later, we've got your written presentation and if there is nothing specific to do with the elections then, I am going to the next presenter.

I hope you understand that we have very specific Terms of References, we cannot go outside our Terms of Reference. And everything you are now saying to the committee is outside of our Terms of Reference. So, we cannot entertain it, I hope you understand, em orait ah.

Thank you, Sir for your contribution.

UPNG Political Science Representative

Mr RUSSELL KITAU (Political Science Tutor-UPNG) – Good afternoon honourable Allan Bird, Chairman of the Special Parliamentary Committee and I also like to extend that to Deputy Chairman and honourable members of the committee.

I am sitting here today rather to present to the committee the submission was basically based on a project that was carried out by the Political Strand at the University of Papua New Guinea. So, I am a tutor with the Strand and I am here with another colleague of mine as well, but couple of us sort of went through a project to try and assess the transparency and openness of election data. So, basically what the project was centered around so we trying to see if election data is available for the general population to consume.

If we are able to do that we hope that having open data will contribute to them having more detail on elections for them to be informed and to make better decisions in election time. So, what we basically did in this project is we have basically observing throughout the 10 to 11-month period starting from the end of 2021 to October 2022. We were basically trying to implement the open government partnership. We were trying to see what information on elections actually available and we basically monitoring fifteen election processes. Those process to name a few, it's in the submission as well, you can read later but some of them are polling stations, polling party registration, ballot qualification, voter education, election results, election complaints and disputes and all that kind of stuff.

But we monitored those 15 processes for the 11 month period to see because under each particular process there was a specific data set, for example if you are looking at polling stations we're looking at what information about the location of the polling stations that are available and also if the workers that are assigned to each polling stations also available so under each

particular processes, we have data system for monitoring. What we do is after the whole 11-month period we do a scoring exercise which basically help us determine whether or not one process can be regarded as mostly open or partially open or not open meaning that if it's not open you really don't have as much information available. It's partially but you have some available at maybe it wasn't released on time or it wasn't released in a former that's easily accessible for regular people or it's not available on the internet. We are basically looking at the official web sites of the election managers which in our case will be electoral commission.

So within that 10-month period, we were basically monitoring those processes and just to give you a summary, most of the process that we basically evaluate them and came up as either partially open or not open meaning that a lot of intermission that he or she would like to be available are not available at this point.

I guess the point of our submission is to try and improve the status of open data in PNG. Maybe it is not as big of a priority as it should but it's a work in progress and we would like to make sure that leading up to the next elections we actually have a contributions or try making it openly and having more open the other elections.

So, based on our observation, we come up with a couple of key findings that I would just run through really quickly. The first one is that low levels of education access to information and demand for election data put a little pressure on the keyboard is to actually make election not available to the public. The second one is, slow move to utilizing online connectivity and the untimeliness of updating online information systems.

I demonstrate the need to better utilize the systems. While we feel that key legislation is also available online and its open process. There is little public awareness on these laws Fourthly, the voter lookup system we believe is a very good innovation but the implementation of that can be strengthened we reckon. Fifth is the official data on security incidents and is really a key data set to assessing our ethnic fragmentation and other interrelated factors contributed to drive high levels of election related violence.

Sixth, the challenges in gaining access to data from public institutions with key roles in the election or indicate a prevail and culture of reluctant actual release of the information of public interest. We did encounter a lot of closed doors to try and get information in regards with this project.

Seventh, budget and campaign finance data seems to be the most difficult data sets to obtain. In our case, that process has been label is closed or not open.

Second last, the lack of funding has affected the preparedness of the election management body to deliver the election and ensure that key data is made available to all stakeholders including candidates, voters and observers in a timely manner and the last key finding is poor management at limited technical capacity which let ineffective and untimely implementation of some of the electoral activities.

Even though we have a couple of different recommended for different stakeholders such as voters and election management body, I will only put forward the ones that we feel important for the government and the lawmakers which basically include prioritizing election funding for the next year. Elections to be refute a lot of the information where we monitoring comes under the work of Electoral Commission because maybe didn't have the funding to actually get them prepared time, there was really busy focusing on other things so they didn't really have time to

maybe sit down gather particular data sets cleared up and put it up in a format that is disseminatable.

We believe that prioritising funding for elections can actually contribute to the election management body. Conducting a nationwide census is important to address legacy issues with the electoral roll. The main purpose of our submission is to put to the committee that open data should be a priority and we feel that moving forward into the next election to put a bit more effort into trying to increase open data so that people can be informed can make better decisions during elections. That's about it.

Mr CHAIRMAN – Thank you, young man. Any questions Members? I would be interested and a big supporter of open data and it adds to the issue of transparency and I don't think we should be hiding things. If information is available, we should be making them available. You have given us a written submission and it's with the committee right? With that I now excuse all three of you from the committee hearings. Thank you very much for your contributions.

Closing Remarks

Mr CHAIRMAN – In closing I want to speak to our people out there in the regions that the committee will be touring the country to get submissions from people who are interested around our regions, let me say this very categorically that we are all aware the problems and we empathize with everyone who feel aggrieved by the process and whilst we would appreciate that people would come and say look I have been hard done by this manner or that other manner and that is fair and we expect to receive those sorts of report and we don't anticipate that that will take up the bulk of the hearings. Our job is not to find fault or to prosecute fault. We are to find out where the bottlenecks are, what are the issues and to recommend fixers.

Our target is to take a completed set of recommendations and findings to the Floor of Parliament either by June or July. As you heard from the Deputy Chairman that we think this is going to take time to implement and we don't want to be running hearings for the next two years. We want to try and be a bit more strategic and do our work so once we conclude as you can see the transparency international and NRI have got substantial data including a lot of the complaints from losing candidates for many, many, elections. That will form the core of our report. What we are interested in is more than just the complaints but recommendations and the contribution from the regions will help us to focus our efforts on what would be the most important recommendations we can implement within the next two or three years.

The work of the Committee will be to monitor the implementation of those recommendations. Put it this way there has to be significant changes to the way electoral commission does its work. I think that become very clear over the last three days of presentation. There has to be legislative changes in the way that we may need stiffer penalties for those who commit election crimes and we may need when during election time people complain nobody attends to those complaints and we may need a mechanism in place to deal with those complaints during the election process. When you listen to our security forces they are saying planning for the next election should actually start this year. We shouldn't wait until 2026. All of these things we think are practicable and can be implementable we want to institute work on those particular recommendations, and then to monitor the implementations.

So, if there is legislation that needs to be taken to the Floor, then the Committee will be taking them to the Floor to have them enacted. If there are structural changes that need to be done to

certain organisations so they work better, then we will be recommending them and we will be holding those who are responsible for implementing those changes accountable. I want to make that clear to the public.

Yes, many people are upset, some rightly so, some not so rightly so, because there are many people just listening to some of the presentations and try to take advantage of the system, and who at every election become more and more creative about how to do illegal things. The issue of reforming our electoral processes must be a continuous one. Aside from the switch from first past the post to the limited preferential system, this is the first time that we are looking at trying to do reforms and to do it in an institutional way, which we look at the whole approach to government, and not just make one change. If there are changes that needs to occur in different places that will add to the outcomes, that is what we are going to do.

To clarify to our people, the elections are the most fundamental part of a democratic process. If the elections do not work well, it the undermines Parliament and our institutions, because it affects all of our appointment processes. If people feel that members of Parliament are there illegitimately, then they lose trust in that system that works on oversight and works on appointments. That is what we essentially have.

But, if you backtrack a little bit further, our people needs to take ownership of the process. That is very clear from what happened in Bougainville. We have heard various people speak about the Bougainville experience. The Bougainville experience was probably one of the most successful outcome in our history.

A lot of work went in there, and the Bougainvilleans themselves took ownership of the process. This is a key learning that we need to take across. If you are going to have a successful election outcome in any electorate, the people must own it. This is something that is difficult to quantify and potentially difficult to achieve because it comes back to our own cultural practices.

If we are used to carrying guns around to force our will on others, that is going to take some work, and perhaps, military and police intervention to change that culture. In other places where people are relatively peaceful and law-abiding, and are willing to do the right thing, we can achieve those by improving some of those processes. If we have a good common roll, good processes and if people trust the electoral officials, and we have cameras in the counting room, then perhaps, that will go a long way towards reducing the level of mistrust that exist in our communities.

Just to let you know, there have been considerable findings already. We will be coming out to your provinces. Look out for the schedule, it will be published after the Parliament sitting. Again, you have had a bit of an experience over the last couple of days, about how we expect to conduct these hearings. I apologised to those we may have seem to be a little bit harsh on. That is only because we want to find solutions. We may press some people a little bit more vigorously because we want to get your honest answers to these proceedings.

I say again to everyone that participated, these are properly constituted hearings by the Parliament and you are protected by the Parliamentary privileges. So with that, let me thank the people of Papua New Guinea for listening in. I also want to thank all the participants who have been with us. I want to also thank my members for your patience. Our people may think that siting here and listening to people all day is easy work, until you try sitting for a few hours and you will see how difficult this gets.

Tomorrow is the remembrance day for the passing of the Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare, our founding father. I just want to make this comment, that these institutions were set up by him and his peers. A lot of people asked about his legacy and I want to say that, their legacies are these institutions that we need to protect. This is their legacy.

This is Sir Michael's legacy. His free elections, his rights for women, his equal opportunity for every Papua New Guinea regardless your ethnic group or your church affiliation. This is what its about and so remembering his legacy, think this is one effort towards protecting a part of that legacy. In fact, a fundamental part of that legacy. It starts with elections, its starts with one person, one vote in secret. And that is the legacy that this committee is working to try to protect and I want to urge our people, you have to trust someone sometime. And if you think that all members of parliament are corrupt, if you think we all ended up through the back door, then all hope is lost for our country. But if you can accept that there are some few good people around, if you can accept that, and if you can come to us and be honest with us and straight with us and trust us to see this process through to it s completion and hopefully, I don't have any solutions, I don't think this committee has any solutions for the lack of power, you have to talk to PPL about that.

I don't think we can solve the Forex problem, that's either Central Bank or someone else. We are here to make your elections free, fair and safe and secret. That's what we are here, hoping to achieve, so we can help you with that. So, thank you all very much, God bless you all and have a safe long weekend. From the special committee on parliamentary election, I now declare this session closed. Thank you all very much.

(End of Day 3)