



## **Special Parliamentary Committee on 2022 General Elections**

13<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Inquiry held at  
National Parliament State Function Room

Inquiry into  
2022 General Elections And Elections In General

PART 2

### **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  
Honourable Steven Pim – Committee Member

### **Witnesses**

Mr Simon Sinai – Electoral Commissioner  
Mr David Manning – Commissioner– Royal Constabulary PNG  
Mr Ivan Pomaleu – Chief Secretary to Government – Chairman IDEC  
Mr Steven Nukuitu – Deputy Secretary Operations – Finance Department  
Ms Marlene Philip – Department of Finance

***TABLE OF CONTENTS***

**INTER-DEPARTMENT ELECTION COMMITTEE ..... 1**

**ELECTORAL COMMISSION..... 9**

**ROYAL PNG CONSTABULARY ..... 16**

**DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE..... 24**

**CLOSING REMARKS..... 34**

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Good morning everyone. We have here the Chairman of the IDEC and the Police Commissioner as well. Commissioner can I call you up, thank you. So we can do this all together. We will continue until Mr Sinai; the Chief Electoral Commissioner comes. Thank you, Commissioner.

Mr Pomaleu thank you for coming. Now, you are the Chair of IDEC, which is responsible for the supervision of the 2022 General Elections, could you explain to the Committee what IDEC stands for and elaborate a little bit more on the role IDEC generally plays?

### **Inter-Department Election Committee**

**Mr IVAN POMALEU**(Chief Secretary to Government –Chairman IDEC) – Thank you, Chairman, and good morning to you and all the committee members.

Mr Chairman IDEC stands for the Inter-Department Election Committee, I guess for the benefit of everyone IDEC is the administrative committee that is established and co-chaired by the Chief Electoral Commissioner and the Secretary for the Department PM and NEC.

I checked its history and it might have been established in 2007, we could not go back to establish the basis of it. I suspect it was an NEC Decision that required an internal election committee to be established to take responsibility to coordinate the inter-departmental involvement in Election planning and conduct.

Mr Chairman, the composition of the committee includes of course the Electoral Commissioner, the Secretary for PM and NEC, and also the heads of the disciplinary forces, the Secretaries for Treasury, the Attorney-General, Provincial Affairs which relates to Personnel Management as it relates to coordinating public servant's involvement in all elections.

Historically, I checked its forms up before the elections are conducted and maybe earlier but really at the behest of the discretion of the Government, and then the committee then forms to effectively coordinate and build into the election planning, resourcing, and conducts.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, very much. Now, just some follow-up questions on the initial questioning of the Electoral Commission, their input suggested that IDEC started late in the 2022 Elections. Are you able to make some comments on that?

**Mr IVAN POMALEU**– The 2022 IDEC began to meet around the third quarter of 2021 and that is when we started meeting. Our meetings were normally conducted three weeks but during the election conduct it was weekly meeting.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– The report from the Electoral Commission said that alot of their procurement occurred quite late or they were not able to bring certain essential items that were required or purchased for election on time. Was there any way IDEC could have speed up the process?

**Mr IVAN POMALEU** – IDEC could have, I guess our effectiveness is the function having budgets in place for the conduct of the elections. The Electoral Commissioner would be in the best position to confirm. Intentions to build a lot of the budgetary requirement around 2021, I don't believe they get everything they needed for that to happen. So a lot of planning could not proceed and resources was also an issue that led to the delays in procurement.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Who influences the decision making process for budget?

**Mr IVAN POMALEU**– We play the coordinating role in the submission of budget to government. We required each of the state agencies to submit their budget and their requirements and security administration. With the common roll requirements, they presented it to us, but they always have flexibility to go directly to the Treasury for that. We coordinated the budgetary but that is also subject to the normal budget process.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– So what you are saying is that all of the budget requirements or the election preparations that was supposed to come in 2021 did not come.

**Mr IVAN POMALEU**– I believe so. Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Thank you. Mr Deputy Speaker, do you have any other questions?

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**– Thank you Chairman and the Members of the Committee, Chairman of IDEC and Commissioner of police.

You have a report to be presented and Chairman, perhaps if the Chairman of IDEC could be allowed to present the report so that we can mention also our questions to your presentation. If that is okay.

**Mr IVAN POMALEU**– Thank you Deputy Chairman. I have a paper which I brought in this morning with your permission Mr Chairman, I would go through. I won't read everything but I will just word through the few issues that I think are important for us and for your committee's consideration. But if I could phase my presentation by acknowledging the importance of the process that we are going through. It is important because it reflects the Prime Minister's intentions and his overall address to the Parliament. One of the key things that he emphasized was to ensure we sort out the election issues.

I also want to acknowledge the role that we played that is a bit administrative. In the context of performing that role, Mr Chairman. The forms that we use about what is important, and we hope that we could share that as part of your process that require attention and hearing.

We at IDEC recognize the challenges that we had to be faced with in the conduct of the elections. We looked at the lessons that came from that and we have given some thoughts on a few things which I wanted to perhaps highlight; I will come to that.

However, in the context of the IDEC, one of the things that we've talked about in our work was the need to have a bit more mandate prescribed in law so that we are able to have a permanent operation in terms of the IDEC processes; being able to provide some oversight. I have had those conversations at different forums: one of the things that we recognized is that, election is a five-year cycle.

In a lot of ways, our experience, concentration and efforts to begin planning and execution of elections occur twelve months out, fifteen, eighteen months; that's probably not ideal. We need a process that recognizes that the lead up is just as important in terms of planning and preparations. We would talk about the common roll; this is an effort that requires five-year effort than a six-month effort. We have highlighted a few things that I wanted to share; the common roll is number

one. The Common Roll in 2022 is clearly flawed; we recognize that there's many as 50 percent of some of our population did not have the opportunity to cast their vote. It is a bad record of our democracy and enfranchisement of our people is the foundation upon which we built a system of government and therefore, to deny that opportunity to one person is probably not ideal.

We've proposed that the way to do it is to develop an entirely a new Common Roll; and that roll can potentially be able to scale up and recruit staff well ahead of the election process. The other issue that we faced in the 2022 election is to also look at how we assign powers that can be performed by the returning officers, officers at the headquarters and the Electoral Commissioner that speaks to the efficiencies that are required to conduct elections at a full phase so that important decisions are made as and when they are required to be made. In the administrative and planning process it's important for us to inset sustained training and support programs that are rolled out well before the election takes place.

We must create clear expectations and identify roles and responsibilities and the mandates in law that are formed by the security teams, electoral commission and the provincial administration in supporting those elections. It's important also to conduct one-day polling and that's a matter that is important and records from 2022 election speaks of a conduct that required more than one day. We need to build in unexpected administrative issues that come up and build up inefficiencies that they inherent in these places where you could be scheduling withdrawal of security forces ballot papers but the reality on the ground requires more time than what we have planned and scheduled for. We need to talk about dedicating polling facilities for women and people with disabilities. We subscribe to those important international requirements and it's good to have those facilities that separates those faced with challenges coming into to vote.

We should look at ballot papers for open and regional seats that are clearly differenced. Also look at legal reforms in amending constitution on organic law to quarantine funding and resourcing. And perhaps based on experience look at clarifying provisions of the organic law that relates to setting and extending dates for the issuance of the return of writs and ay grey areas that requires the law. The members of the committee would have been aware of a period during the conduct of the election where we became very concern about overshooting all constitutional time within the conduct of the elections. Those of us who were behind the scenes became quite concern about how we make it work and it sits comfortably within the law and the Constitution, declarations of members, formation of government it continues to be within the framework of our constitution. Chairman, I would propose that those are some of the areas that require clarity so that when we come to the next elections, we know that at this time we need to stop because we run out of constitution directions.

Chairman, if I could move into election security and just propose again and that is something that all of us recognize that our democratic process must continue to be underpinned by a safe and secure voting environment. There are places in our country that people went and cast their votes without fear and there were other places that we cannot say the same thing about. And while we work very hard to make sure that the election is conducted fairly. We also need to recognize and we at IDEC recognized that our security personnel must be well resourced, fully secured and our numbers are not that great and I am sure the commissioner will speak on that as an important challenge when we come into scheduling polling and he obviously

needs to ensure that a particular location is secured and immediately move the numbers to different parts of the country, to make sure that those areas are also secured. And when you stuck with a prescribed number it becomes a big challenge to make sure all parts of the country and the polls are secured so that our people are able to perform their democratic process correctly.

I am sure the commissioner will talk about reliable communications equipment and our market is not as great in terms of air support. *\*(We can have all the money to hire or charter but they are limited and if they run out of regulations)* hours that eats into the schedule. And those are just realities on the ground that are important. I think one of the issue about security is to think about defining the powers of the security teams and the Electoral Commission, so that it is very clear how they inter relate, particularly on the ground as it relates to a running management of the election process. I am sure commissioner Manning will highlight that as an important matter but we did recognize that as an important matter.

Training and support which I have talked about briefly but we need a very focused training and support for the electoral commission. We in the city have had to defer the elections by a week almost because our electoral officials have not been ready. This is not a good excuse in the city but it speaks the wider issue of making sure that we have time and resourcing well before the process begins to have those trained and ready to go.

Structural reform is part of the issue and I think the PM has instituted through the Cabinet. A consultation process about potentially electing the Prime Minister directly. Those are important directives that we need to be thinking about, for improving elections going forward.

I will stop but Mr Chairman, I wanted to highlight an important matter from the point of view of my role as chairman and we have discussed it. and I know Mr Sinai is aware of my thinking. If there is a way we could potentially insert a governance arrangement, such that the Electoral commissioner is also responsible to a higher body. That is touchy, I understand but if there is a way we could continue to maintain the independence of the process but to ensure that where it matters, there is an oversight. There is some form of accountability that is there to direct and assist the commissioner in terms of some of the important decisions that we made.

I know the Organic Law section 96 provides for the election advisory committee but that is at the behest of the Commissioner but if there is something else in law that provides a form of an accountability. I would speak of experiences in the process where as Chairman I had to fill certain important holes but completely powerless to deal with those issues whether it is review of a process or to deal with whether or not extension of time frames within the provisions of the constitution sit well and whether the processes has been fully covered in terms of gazettal and instruments and things like that.

Mr Sinai and I conduct this process through personal relationship but I don't have any overarching powers nor the ICAC have any directive powers to impose certain things on the process. I am not a legal expert and I can't say how it can be done but I do recognise this as an important issue that needs to be considered if there is a mechanism in place. In my view, it helps the electoral Commissioner and the processes as well and have some oversights on the powers that sits of the process.

Thank you.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Mr Ivan Pomaleu. I think that has already been noted by the Committee and I am thankful that you have made that contribution towards the end.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Chairman and the Chief Secretary to Government. You admitted in paragraph four of your statement which reads ‘*let me begin by saying there's no question that the 2022 national election failed.*’ To realise your statement and acknowledgment that the Parliament did agree with you and therefore the Committee was established in order to make sure that the next national election in 2027 does not follow the same failure in the expectations of our people. You also stated that you started meeting them in the fourth quarter of 2021, how many times did you meet them because the elections began the year after the first quarter of the year 2021. How often did you meet and where was the meetings held and what were your discussion and where your meetings well attended or what happened?

This is because many of the administrative issues that you that acknowledged and those expectations you as a Chief Secretary, Electoral Commissioner Mr Sinai was there, police commissioner Mr David Manning was there, the Secretary for Planning, Treasury, Finance, Justice, Provincial Affairs and Personnel Management. All the key players to manage all the administrative issues with men power security, financing and the electoral process were all in ICAC. What happened and you are now declaring to us that it failed and expectations were not met. You meet regularly and what were you talking about? What happen and you didn't response to some of those issues that everybody knew about around the country before the election and during poling and voting, counting, and declarations?

**Mr IVAN POMALEU** – Thank you, Deputy Chairman. That's an important question. When we come in for staff meeting, we would meet about once in every three to four weeks. In the first round of conversations, we normally do coordination to making sure that agencies begin preparations for the budgets for that 2021 Budget and one of the key challenges during those early meetings were to deal with common roll and how effectiveness depended very much on resourcing. We acknowledge before this Committee that all the key personnel that is part of that committee are important decision making system of government.

Ultimately the authority of allocating resources rests with our firm recommendations and the oversight and final authority of the National Executive Council and Parliament. In that regard when resourcing is made or not made we take note of it. In terms of regularity and attendance, I would say, the meetings were well attended by all agencies, we had some challenges with my friend sitting in the middle when we would normally find some difficulties bringing him to the meeting. He is an important part of the process. He advises on technical issues and his requirements and when he's not there the Committee sometimes becomes hamstrung by the details that we need to deal with.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Chairman, you admitted that you had no legal position with regards to the IDEC. It was basically the administrative establishment through Cabinet decision. In IDEC you had four constitutional office holders and five non constitutional departmental heads. One of them was in charge of the elections in 2022 with its powers and being a constitutional body executive government powers were cut off during that period.

Were you sitting as a lame duck in terms of somebody who was attending the Committee here who had the powers and the law and then you are part of the executive government and then you are trying to manage its security issues with the constitutional office holder, election processes with the constitutional office holder Electoral Commissioner you couldn't make decisions. You were basically Chairman of a Committee that really had no powers whatsoever, one of them has no legal backing but you need to have arm's length from the Constitutional office holder the Electoral Commissioner because when the writs are issued the powers will go back to them. What were you doing in the middle through IDEC? Didn't you recognize that you had no powers whatsoever

**Mr IVAN POMALEU** – We've always recognized that we didn't have any powers. I mentioned in my short remarks earlier that I had a pretty good relationship with Mr Sinai and I

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – It's all about relationships

**Mr IVAN POMALEU** – The reason being that I could only assist perhaps make some recommendations on what should be done. There were instances in the process where I took it upon myself and our legal advisers to correct certain things that were potentially done wrongly. But to direct the Electoral Commission, I've always known I had no powers to direct.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – One area which is not a constitutional body where I believe that you as Chief Secretary and part of the Executive Government would have powers on and that is the National Procurement Committee. That's within the ambit of the Government it's not the Constitutional body. Much of the complaints that we have had from the security team as well as the Commissioner of our Elections was that the procurement processes had a long bottleneck and in fact the Major General of the Defense Force showed us a photo of vehicles that just arrived, after the elections. Why didn't you get on top of the NPC process?

**Mr IVAN POMALEU** – Thank you Chairman that's an important matter. I don't think, in all truth be told IDEC would have had visibility of the procurement processes, let me say it like that. Chairman of NPC is under government; Chief Executive Officer NPC is under government.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So you couldn't communicate like you were communicating with your friend the Electoral Commissioner that procurement was delayed and Election time was there and you can't even make a phonically to the CEO of NPC or Chairman to bring the items for today's NPC Meeting. You couldn't do that?

**Mr IVAN POMALEU** – The way we conducted ourselves, Electoral Commissioner and myself, if there were issues that he had concerns with I picked up the phone and talked to the people that are required to be spoken to on matters of the Budget, where there are delays in the release of warrants for electoral rolls for the purposes of making sure that funds are remitted to the provinces. Those matters required my attention, but the systems made those representations on behalf of the Electoral Commissioner, and his process.

I'm very surprised that certain procurements have just arrived, but if we had known, I can speak for myself and not for anyone else. If we had known that there were some outstanding procurements, we had the mechanism to follow through on matters relating to the electoral rolls.



For instance, where it is that we needed to coordinate between Customs and the Australian High Commission, on the delivery of those and to deal with the storage of the papers when they are delivered on shore, IDEC played a role in coordinating those, in terms of picking up the phone, as you allude to, Mr Deputy Chairman and the members of the Committee.

So, I guess my response would be that, we are useful as long as the issues are there for us to pick up and run. And if, the Electoral Commissioner in his wisdom considers that he is clearly on top of the matters, I would have no visibility, and on this occasion, the truthful answer to you, would be that I did not have the visibility.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Chairman, from the bottom four paragraphs of page 3, you admitted that the electoral roll in 2022 was clearly flawed, and the fundamental that we believed at the bottom line, as you said, the bed-rock of democracy is enfranchisement of our people, nobody must be turned away. But, we know that if the Electoral Commission and IDEC knew, that the 2022 common roll was badly flawed. And you admitted that, close to 30-50 per cent of our people, may have been turned away.

My questions are as follows;

- (1) Didn't you discuss options on this flawed common roll and how returning officers and polling officials could manage this flawed thing on the common roll when people turn up?
- (2) How do you manage it at the end of the day when many of them were turned away?
- (3) Did you discuss how you would have prevented people from being turned away?
- (4) Are you looking at options that polling officials and returning officers powers would have been given to allow them to vote?

For example, if a ward member or a pastor was called upon, em citizen bilong dispela wod, noken salim igo. O dispel, mipela ino save lukim pes bilong em, em mas kam long narapela hap, so noken alawim em long vot, rausim em.

- (5) Why are those things not processed or managed?
- (6) Why do we now say that 50 per cent were sent away?

**Mr IVAN POMALEU**– Thank you, Deputy Chairman. A lot of the remarks are hindsight remarks. The practicalities of discussing options when the polling is running, was challenging. We were aware of an approach by New Ireland on the eve of polling. They had a register of ward recorded that would have provided a much better option for all of us.

For Electoral Commissioner specifically, I understand that what was required was simply an acknowledgement that we could use that and he had the powers to make those (definition). We discussed in hind sight a lot of the issues on building a legal bridge between the provincial affairs law and the Electoral Commission organic law to make sure that its not just an option that he could take or leave but an option that he's required to take on board but as to other administrative options, a lot of our consultations and discussion would be guided by what's provided for and what's legally acceptable within the ambit of the electoral commission's powers. I think very late in the process the decision was made to use the 2017 but we leave that for Mr. Sinai to speak on.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – My last question Mr. Chairman. Given the flaws of the common roll including the ward level processes which we engage in 2027 ward members to upgrade. All that was flawed. Your views on electronic voting.

**Mr IVAN POMALEU** – We discussed electronic voting. We recognized that our country is challenged in terms of connectivity but we also recognized that the base document that would allow normal polling or electronic polling which still be the electoral roll. We need to talk about how we build it up and how we make it reliable and we'll have to talk about the forms of IDs that will facilitate that process, one which could potentially be electronic IDs and potentially voting. The other option would obviously be to look at parts of the country that could go into that direction and look at developing the mechanisms to deal with that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Thank you. Listening to your responses, not just us Papua New Guineans who are watching these proceedings, I think we all are a little bit surprised learning of these things. I want to know when was IDEC aware of all of these deficiencies that you have just discussed? At what point, at what point were you aware that we are going to have serious problems in the elections? At what point? Which month were you aware in 2021? Was it the first quarter of 2022? Was there a point where all of you realized that we could be having serious problems or serious challenges in the 2022 elections?

**Mr IVAN POMALEU** – The IDEC back in 2007, 2012 I believe have been privy to observer's report some of which are put out by reputable groups like ?? for instance, a lot of those issues are not new reports, new observations. In terms of 2022 particularly, it came to head our deepest concerns when the schedules came out. That matters of securing locations are going to have problems, when the 2007 roll was announced as the base roll that we were going to use that became quite clear that a lot of our voters would not be in those rolls and that's a couple of weeks before we went to the polls.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So a few weeks before the polls. Just coming back to what you just said. You said that we were aware of these deficiencies in 2007, as early as 2007? We were aware of them in 2012 and 2017. Was there any attempt by any government institutions to fix those deficiencies at any point whether in 2007, 2012 or 2017. Was there any attempt to fix these deficiencies after you were informed? Not you but, I meant the committee you obviously been recently appointed.

**Mr IVAN POMALEU** – Chairman, if there was an attempt it's not obvious, I'm not aware. We went head long into preparing for the 2022 Election but, I'm not aware of actions prior to that so to make improvements.

**MR CHAIRMAN** – So you are not aware of any attempt being made at those intervals to fixed the deficiencies.

**Mr IVAN POMALEU** – No, but the reason why I used 2007 is only because IDEC was formed around that year. There may have been reports prior to that but I'm aware for instances in 2022 ANU has provided their observations and am told that similar reports were given after the previous elections. So, I'm drawing the conclusion that there's enough awareness on what's wrong with some of our processes coming through.

## **Electoral Commission**

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, I'll just go across to Commissioner Sinai now. Commissioner, just hearing all the things that the Chief Secretary have just informed us of. Well first of all let me ask, how long have you been in the Electoral Commission?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – Chairman and the Committee Members, I have been with the Electoral Commission for more than 30 years now.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I want to come back to the information that was just given to us by Chief Secretary Pomaleu. He said that as far as IDEC is concern these deficiencies that we now discussing that came to heard in the 2022 Elections. They have existed and where identified in the 2007, 2012, and 2017 elections. First of all is that statement correct.

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – The electoral roll is the very important document and needs a lot of time to fix it. Those deficiencies that reflected in the reports are from observers and to manage and identifying the actual voters is a work that needs to be thoroughly done

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That's fair enough, we appreciate that. Let me go back to the 2007, you were still in the Electoral Commission, I assume the issue came up of the common roll. What actions were taken to rectify back then? I can ask you the same question for 2012 and 2017 was any action taken. We are now learning of it in 2022 the general public the people of Papua New Guinea em now tasol yumi save. Even though we were aware generally that we had issues. What actions where taken? I am talking generally where there any actions within the Electoral Commission because you are in charge of elections. Where there any actions in relation to the whole of government to try to fix this?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – Chairman, I could remember only one and its overall management control mechanism that late Traven took on board before the 2012 elections. He discarded old roll because we had a problem that's covering 2022 and onwards.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Did that fix the problem?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – When we discarded and trying to do a new roll, it presented a better view into identifying issue but really not much of that satisfactory.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Okay, so you don't have a mechanism to fix these issues. Is that what you are telling us? IDEC doesn't have the mechanisms from what I am hearing? He doesn't have the powers. You have the powers.

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – Yes

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– But you don't have a mechanism to fix the issue, is that what you are saying?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – The mechanisms are there. We have plans, we have policies and programs to cover. Unfortunately, we can't do those things that we want to do in the time that we require.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Why not?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – Because we ran out of time.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Why do you run out of time

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – Because there are no resources as we need it on time. For instance, if I want to run the 2022 Election, we planned in 2019. We had a K92 million budget for Electoral Roll update. Unfortunately, Covid-19 hit the country as we went through. We started from scratch from 2020 that resources were not made available. But it's not only that, I think there is an absence of database system in the country. So I am trying all my best to get the 18-year-old plus especially the people who are eligible to vote from a database that I need to. So when I am given that power and mandated by the Organic Law because the law says I must prepare the Electoral Roll before the Elections.

So I need six months before the election so six months and back before the issue of writs, I should be preparing the roll in time. Identifying the people and voters. Doing verification on the past records on the past roll so that I can now comfortably identify those voters in a particular council ward. We have 6375 plus council wards. Those are our mechanisms; those are our control. Implementation plans are there, activities are there. Our budget is there but I cannot move.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Why can't you move?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – I cannot move because the resources are coming on time when I need it. For instance, in 2020, the Chairman and I, we talk about these things. Like you said, all the departments (inaudible) is correct. When we come to meetings, I am expecting from that professional point of view that I will be resourced. This is the fifth year for election but I don't look at that as an election year, it's supposed to be the advanced election year after 2017 we should be preparing. I came up with a plan for biometric in 2019, K311 million. They talked about it. That was not considered or there were other interests. As far as I am concerned, it's not Electoral Commission's problem. The data base in the country is absent and I am starving to get the information I want. I need information on 18 year olds plus, I would only be prepared to go and comply to the law in six months to verify the voters. I am not responsible to collect the data. I can only collect the data that is for the voters and that will have to be done before six months. And that I have to collect if from a database and I am starving, there is no database.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Okay, from my understanding, we have one lot of data that is handled by NID which comes under Civil Registry. We have another lot of data that is handled by NSO. We have another lot of data and you have heard about the obviously the ward recorders that is handled by DPLG. I'm not sure if there is a fourth one but let's just assume there are three to my knowledge anyway. Is there any attempt to amalgamate the three or at least have the three different organisations talk to each other? What's the issue? Is it a legal one?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – Thank you, Mr Chairman. When I submitted that K311 million proposal to get the data base and also to identify the voters, we made the submission and they came up with directives to implement that and that is including the Director of NID, the Director for NSO and

the Electoral Commission and DPLGO and all of us. So that was just before the elections and it was toward the end of 2021.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– So, what you are saying is that if we manage it complete NID, that information would be useful to you?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – That is perfect because what I need is a database in order to comply with the law. I will collect all this data and go back to the counsel wards and do verifications instead of doing raw.

Yes, you are correct in saying that NID, Census, and DPLGO need their database. Database that is incorporating and integrating all our requirements of all the agencies so the Electoral Commission can piggyback and ride on that and whoever needs that; any developer can obtain it for that matter.

So, I have been trailed within the elections to comply with the law to update the roll to identify 18-year-olds. In fact, we have identified that some of the agencies need to do this database, we need to have database.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Commissioner Sinai, I do not fully accept your explanation with regard to the lack of data. We have been running this country for more than 48 years and that is not the first election. The 2022 election was not the first election in this country, we have had many Common-rolls but the only thing was the Covid-19 Pandemic which I, accept and the lack of a Census which will hopefully be conducted next year. But, we have been running this country for almost 50 years now, and the excuse of no database, I do not accept it.

You just have to admit that you failed to plan ahead and organize yourselves; whether you as the Electoral Commissioner and the other agencies are responsible for giving you the support, Departments of Provincial Government, Treasury, Finance etcetera...

We actually got the Secretary for Finance to admit that they did not plan well although he complained and I told him that he has been there so why didn't he plan well you are just admitting that you didn't plan well in this Inquiry.

So, Mr Electoral Commission, it is the same thing, you didn't plan well. Obviously, many issues came up but we have to admit somewhere that the Common-roll as it was and the way forward we have to stop doing the same thing and we have to find a new approach to address this. Four-year planning is very important in terms of updating the Common Roll and hopefully, our NID processes will be completed throughout the country so that the new bio-matrix and new options that are available can be utilized. But, we will need to look at what is cheaper, manageable, and can work effectively to update the common roll.

So with the Common-Roll issues, my concern still comes back to why under the powers the retaining officers had at the Polling Booth send people away during the 2022 Elections. I am aware of legal options; why didn't you involve those? The powers that the retaining officer has, why?

Now, you are telling us that every voter is very important, we know that is the basis of our democracy but why didn't you manage it then and there, that day?

So, that is a question that hopefully in the LLG Elections coming we can make progress on that we have to have an option given the flawless of the 2022 Election, that nobody in this 2023 LLG Elections will be turned away because we have developed a legal option.

Mr Commissioner, can you advise the committee on what you will be doing in the 2023 LLG Elections given the flawed-ness 2022 General Elections and people turn up how do you handle them? Can you answer that question?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – Thank you Deputy Chairman. If we all can remember back to the past elections, we did electorate by electorate roll. Before 2002, we did whole of an electorate roll and in 2012 we decided to do a ward level roll which is another mechanism trying to control the influx roll, double voting, identification of voters and all of that. So we decided to do the roll based on the ward role which is now seem to be more promising. It is in control where people can concentrate in that particular area and then they joins the polling schedule and as well as all the logistic arrangement.

Coming back to enrollment that is the area where I agree with the deputy. The people in the village are properly being identified by the village people and the leaders and everyone and we know all of that. There a retaining officers and assistant retaining officers who are task because they are borrowed people, by the Electoral Commission during the elections and it is allowed by law. When we appoint them to go and do the work, it is about 335 AROs that is representing LLGs in the country and plus some of those in the cities total to 400 or almost and the RO is 89 plus now and will now go up to 118. All of those they are work from the council ward and then to the next supervisor and coordinator then to fixing and checking and issuing the roll. But the main thing is what the Electoral Commission does is we maintain the electoral roll. We do not do away with it. Only one time we discard it, that was in 2012. Otherwise from there we maintained it. Maintaining in terms of trying to identify and do verifications on the roll.

When we do verifications, we expect that our officers that are appointed are instructed, trained and are equipped with training manuals, training logistics and everything to go as far as the village level to sit with the village development committee and start identifying the people. We call it the walking roll and the walking roll is printed and given in advance so we do a second roll. But when we want to do a second roll we sometimes run out of time. When we have time we normally do that. In 2017, we tried to do that but when we tried to do all those things up to this time, we still find there is still people missing. The options of trying to allow people to come forward and cast the vote for those who are identified in the village is challenging and they are citizens in fact. Unfortunately, they are being turned away because we have a lot of misunderstanding and misconception by all the runners in elections also subject to election petitions, we are bided by law again. So if you have your name on the roll you cast the vote and if you don't have you don't.

There are no other provisions that are allowed by any way. If the village development committee can identify the citizens in their own wards they can vote.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Can I intervene Mr Commissioner?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– I think your explanation is clear. Alright, can you tell us, how do we fix that? How can this committee assist the three of you in your role to resolve this issue, so that by the time we come to the LLG elections we can have a document or roll, whether electronic or not, that is

full prove that we can all rely on? What can we do in the next twelve months to achieve that outcome? You are the expert on elections you have been doing this for 30 years. Can you tell us?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – Thank you Mr Chairman. My gut feeling about this environment and then coming to see how best we can take better approach in acceptable manner would be to identify on a portal role, I'm thinking about portal role.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Can you repeat that or may be move closer to the microphone? Explain what you are talking about.

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – The identification of the voter is an issue now all around. LLG is the truck that we want to hop onto to identify those and confirm the voters; but the plans that we have in place, I am thinking is to have a photo roll as an identity.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– What is a photo roll?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – so we take a photo and maybe fingerprint, like we did at Kupiano, and we have the roll or Ward 5 Kupiano Ward; and we are now trying to try that again at the Moitu Koita Elections this year. Thus, we are in the process of planning and going about trying to do that. So if that works then all the provincial managers in the province will come together and have a workshop to train everyone, so we can present a report, including all expenditures, election plans, all to you. Maybe, by way of fingerprint, if possible but we want to see a photo roll is done in the village and then issue another ID card which is the Electoral Voter ID against the voter that we have already which we have a serial number against; which will be issued as soon as enrolled.

When we issue them, they will be asked to present it during the time of polling; so this is to start off with. We cannot go automatically into biometric because its quite complicated, but we start off this which is also close to biometrics.

In PNG we need to identify people with photos; and I think to some level, we can control some of those things which some people might want to try and manipulate, or they have done something wrong in the process alone the line; from the Electoral Commission to the ward level. So the tracking system is way down there, therefore whatever they are filling in is coming from right down there. So, the filtering system needs to be identified by way of real identification.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Any other questions?

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Just one more, Electoral Commissioner; just remind the committee; how much funds were allocated for the 2022 Elections to you, not the security forces; and do you have a report of how much was actually budget and how much was actually expanded, on an itemized basis.

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – Yes, I have an overall budget expenditure report copy here. Three from the 2022 Budget.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Could I ask that you hand reports up to the committee please? Before you speak to them. At the same time, Commissioner Manning, we would request the same of you as well.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – We got the reports, thank you. In some of the public statements which we made, that you received over K600 million; if you can confirm now because from what we are reading here is K788 490. That’s your report and how much was expended and also you did make some public statements regarding how much was set aside for election petitions. I want you to answer that and also how much do you still owe the officer? Because there complains coming to us that they have not been paid yet. How much you still owe and how much you held back for the petitions and how much you have spent? Lastly, can you advise the committee how much were paid to the law firms representing electoral commission?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – Thank you Deputy Chairman, on the budget you will notice that its K343 million and the K460 million that I mentioned earlier was including the budget that supposed to be for election petitions and the elections which are options or assumptions that there will be because of previous experiences. The budget for 2017 was K500 million and we were given K279 million is that written there but I can recall that clearly. In 2022 election in the budget book, it was K340 million but we received K311 million. These budgets were proposed in 2021, that’s the budget and we hope that everything will be okay but when the time came, we had limited time and we had one week remaining to deliver the elections which the police commissioner was aware of the situation.

During the process we tried to speed up all the counting’s within one to two weeks because we had no time to return the writs on time. and the report reflects that and those people discussing about payments and some got missed up with some of those who were never paid. The vehicle hires and logistic we have locked it to time and amount and we paid accordingly to that. As for the police personnel all sorted out on time. We planned for LLG by LLG count because of time limit and the people back in each province had issues because people didn’t get used to it and force the returning officer to take more time to count boxes and that’s when plans got distorted on the way. We did manage to pay all the service providers their bills and those we complain must have been engaged by the returning officers and assistant returning officers who got missed out on the payment.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Just for the record, on your report all the warrants from Treasury to conduct the 2022 Elections were released to the tune of K311.3 million and then of the expenditure out of the K311.3 you spent K310 511.58

You are now left with our funds available of K788,419 as per your report just for the public to know as we have been quoting different figures but that is what is on record at the moment. My second question was regarding your legal fees. As you have made public announcements as this is how much you have put aside for the LLG Elections or the by–elections.

And this is how much the EC is paying those who represent the commission on EP matters and you need to clarify that.

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – Deputy Chairman, the Election Petitions; I think the laws allow for that to seek fair justice in any election run and so it is something that lived with the elections and that is the last bit, not the least but the last is still there, which I will come to. The EP has started in a very smaller scale back in the 70s and then it started building up. The state solicitor tried to help us attend to those petitions up to today; from the 1997 Elections and back the number of Election petitions increased to a level where we need a capacity to manage. So, when we try to manage



those, I see that with the EP, is all legal and it has to be managed within that context. the workload developed and became bigger and greater and we needed out sourcing.

This started somewhere after the 2002 Elections onwards, up to 2012 and till now.

We, for instance want to have a look at the 105 Election Petitions that were filed 2002.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– I will just get specific in the interest of time. Who determines the rates for the lawyers? Is it the lawyers themselves or is you on behalf of the Government? How does that work? Do the lawyers just stand up and say, here is my bill, I want you to pay for it or is there a process where, you look for value for the people of Papua New Guinea? How do you do that?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – Thank you, Chairman. For me as a government agency, I need a guidance in terms of this lawyers’ pricings. There is no regulated rates and I do not know whether there are any but I have expressed this at the IDEC level.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– How much are you paying the lawyers?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – They come up with the bill and say this is my bill for this EP and when they give me the bill, I have no other vetting process or anything that I follow.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– So, if I had a law firm and you gave me a contract, I can just write any invoice after and EP and you pay.

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – They outline the activities that they do; like a phone call, photocopying, studying, all of those,

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– On average; one EP case; how much are you paying for one court case?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – I think it is K500 thousand. So, it is costing K500 thousand to defend one EP, but it again depends on the different stages, what we call the status hearing, pre-trial and then the competency, the trial, Supreme Court. Slip rule and go to cost.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Still I mean it’s a happy hunting ground, if it is half a million per case. And we should be lawyers defending EP cases, I would think. So, I think that is something that you need to look at.

I think you got to come back to us with a suggestion and you set the rates. If lawyers want to come and work for the government we set the rates. They do not come tells us. This is public money we have got to be little bit more fragile with public money. The other thing is who appoints the lawyers? Is it you? The Attorney-General or who does that?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – The Electoral Commission makes the appointment in consultation with the State Solicitor and the Attorney-General.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– The next one is on hire cars. This applies to you as well commissioner Manning. I noticed in the documentation we are paying a thousand kina a day for hire cars. Who sets these rates? Is it again the companies themselves or, who does it?

### **Royal PNG Constabulary**

**Mr DAVID MANNING** – Sir, we are guarded by the Department of Works, through the PTB branch that sets the rates as from the last election.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– What are the PTB rates?

**Mr DAVID MANNING** – There are different scales dependent on the type of vehicle that is on hire. 10-seater or land cruiser is K1000 per day and there are others, depending on the model of the vehicle as well as trucks and buses. So, we abide by those rates when we send out tenders for potential service providers to provide that service for us.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– In the case of the police, how much did you spend? I have your report here but how much did you spend on hire cars?

**Mr DAVID MANNING** – The information has been provided to the committee.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– I do not see a specific item for hire cars. Ah! Here it is, K20 million for hire cars.

**Mr DAVID MANNING**– That covers the whole country.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**–And that is kind of usual for elections?

**Mr DAVID MANNING** – I have the figures for 2017 to compare, I think through some very strict procurement process, we have managed to manage it a whole lot better than the last elections. It is per our requirement set around the realistic figure that we are expected to spend on; on such services and I understand that in previous elections we have gone above and beyond that. But this time around we have tightened up the procurement process to ensure that we pay for what we use, rather than pay for a service and have a lack of accountability of how many days or weeks we use a particular service, so we have tightened that up. It could have been a whole lot more, if we had not brought about those expenditure reforms with these elections.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– The committee commends you for that. As we should always be looking to save money for our people. I thank you for your report. Back to you, Commissioner Sinai; how much did you guys spend on hire cars?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – I really don't have the real figure but majority of the funding is.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– You have K46 million for transport, does this include hire of vehicles as well? Its everything, including chopper services and boats. You have here Kundu Pay Polling as K73 million. Is that for allowances?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – For all workers.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– So, if you paid this much in allowances, have all the electoral officials being paid their allowances?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – We have a system that captures names in the province, a provincial application where all the team composition is entered into the system and we control it here. There is a fixed rate for counting and polling. So, we calculate according to that and commit into the Kundu pay which is a management tool used by the bank so we don't want to carry cash around so we transfer that money according to the bank accounts details that they sent.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough so, you were given K311.3 and the cost of running the elections fall within that or did you go over? Do we have any outstanding claims against the state for been still un paid for the 2022 elections?

**Mr DAVID MANNING** – Yes, some of the vehicle hires that seem to but we had a controlled with the ROs and AROs where the ROs will use hire vehicles for two months. This is because in the previous elections they have gone ahead and used hired vehicles for more than 12 to 24 months so we stopped this practice starting in 2017. In 2022, we maintained that policy of four months two months.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, fair enough. I commend you on behalf of the Committee for putting some controls in place. Back to the question, do we have an outstanding and if so, how much would that be approximately?

**Mr DAVID MANNING** – It would be less than K10 million.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Commissioner Manning, for the police do have any outstanding beyond what you were given for these past elections?

**Mr DAVID MANNING** – Nothing for this selection Sir. We made attempts, of course would be seeking or securing services of past service providers for our past election operations so we took steps to pay the areas that was incurred in previous elections so that we started on a clean state and ended on a state in this elections. There are couple of them that I need to verify but it wouldn't amount to K100 thousand this time but 99 per cent of most of our service providers have been paid and we've walked away from this election free.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Thank you.

**Honourable ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you, Chairman. The Electoral Commissioner Mr Sinai, on the second page of your financial reports, you have dates of those money deposited by finance department which adds up to K210 million and you said you've received K300.3 million. Where is the other K101.3 million?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – The overall expenditure is on the top. The expenditure reports from the bottom to the summary on top. On the trust account, K210 IFMS was allocated and the total is K311 million and then the expanded is K310 so we have a balance of K788 million.

**Honourable ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you, know I get it. Chairman ICAC, straight after the 2022 general elections, have you had a brief or debrief with the all the stakeholders?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – Yes, we've had a couple of deep briefs and we intend to hold more elaborate one when all the stakeholders being that some of the observers seen as well as talk to the issues that we need to deal with administrative really. They will obviously, Chairman be issues that you'd be wanting for us to take up a swell will be guided by the directors of your Parliamentary report as well and there is any intention to convene ICAC for those purposes.

**Honourable ROBERT NAGURI** – Last one for me, Chairman. Mr Ivan Pomaleu, during your lead up meetings towards the elections, we had some red hot spots around the country -

**Honourable ROBERT NAGURI** – Regarding law and order issues, the possibility of issues arising during elections. In those meetings how would you analyze the sharing of that intelligence information in those meetings to counter for activities that are building up of firearms with possible issues during elections where there's good interactions amongst the IDEC leading up to sharing of information letting yourselves aware of what's expected in certain areas.

**MR IVAN POMALEU**– The composition of the IDEC also includes also the security agencies but also concurrent we also have the National Security Coordination Committee that runs information shared through that forum. Commissioner Manning would probably competently the details of sharing intelligence. But the general discussions within IDEC recognizes those hotspots and defer to their disciplinary security teams to deal with those issues.

**Mr ROBERT NAGURI** – Commissioner Manning in your opinion where we had the failed elections declared in certain areas. If you had shared intelligence properly, how would you advise the Committee and the public. Would we have avoided these circumstances or we wouldn't have expected something like this but it just happened and it caught us all off guard. How would you analyze your intelligence?

**Mr DAVID MANNING** – Thank you Sir. In as far as the burning of the Markham electorate is that the hotspots in terms of or what we experienced during the elections operations or the information or intelligence that we received

**Honourable ROBERT NAGURI** – The Electoral Commission the office is on the ground were they giving you enough information that you would expect something like this to happen so you have to prepare to counter this in those areas.

**Mr DAVID MANNING** – Sorry I just needed some clarification. So in as far as what I said in our last hearing we did assess that the majority of the country would pose a significant security challenge for us. As to the intelligence information a report that came from the Electoral Commission there wasn't much in that area. We relied on our both PNGDF, NIO and the RPNGC through its National Criminal Intelligence Units have provided that information to us. But the question is whether or not we should have been expecting more information on intelligence from our Electoral Commission counterpart, the answer would be yes. And whether that was forthcoming, the answer would be no sir.

**Honourable STEVEN PIM** – Thank you Chairman IDEC, Commissioner Sinai and Commissioner Manning. My question is having going through your budget and through your presentations. Much of your budget probably one quarter of your budget is spent on transport in terms of transport and hiring cars. The Government is funding you every time when you want to run the elections and it's a five-year process. Why can't you have a plan in place where your respective organizations they need cars. And transport is a big issue why not we order in advance the number of cars that we need for the elections and you own them and distribute them throughout the country and let your PPC on the ground to use them, and then when the election is over, why can't we keep those cars, instead of hiring? This is an inherent problem where you know it will still occur. When there is an election after five years, you will still have to hire cars. Do you have any plans to propose to the government that you need cars to re-fleet, instead of hiring?

**Mr DAVID MANNING** – Thank you, Sir for your question. Yes, we did develop procurement plans well ahead of the 2022 elections, and we have made attempts in the previous elections as well. Of course, it is subject to the availability of funds. I would love nothing more than to have our own fleet to deploy during elections. And at least, we will have fleet that we will continue to use well after the elections. Unfortunately, that wasn't forthcoming in terms of the budget to procure vehicles to the numbers that we required.

We did purchase numerous vehicles but it was still insufficient. We have to fill the critical gap by hiring vehicles. We do have plans now, and thankfully this year and over the next three to four years, the procurement plan will completely eradicate the need for hire vehicles.

We have started the procurement of vehicles this year through the Japanese Embassy to procure directly from the factories in Japan. This will cut down the middlemen, and as far as our vehicles in this country, we will be procuring directly from there based on the specifications and numbers of the vehicles that we require.

As far as the elections are concerned, unfortunately, we are not in a position to procure the sufficient number of vehicles for us. Some of the experience that we faced in this election was different from the others, we were conducting this election on the back of the pandemic. There was a significant supply challenge around the world. Even now, we hear stories of vehicles that were purchased some two years ago still yet to be delivered by vehicle dealers in the country. During that time, we faced a very real problem. We are committed to ensure that come 2027, we should have very little need for hire vehicles. Thank you, Sir.

**Honourable STEVEN PIM** – Thank you, Commissioner Manning. That would be really good. I hope the Electoral Commissioner do take into account because your budget expenditure on hire cars is close to K50 million. You should find a way to put an end to this. The Chairman for IDEC with your committee, should think outside the box on how to arrest these kinds of situations, when we have the 2027 elections so that we do not go into the same process of hiring cars.

You can talk amongst yourselves and find a way to bring back order, provide the advice to the government, get enough money, order enough cars, and then you can use the cars to distribute to your departments, and provinces. Most of our provinces do not have the vehicles to run around. The business of hire car is booming and everyone wants to venture into that because that is the only business where you can make instant millions. Thank you.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – I have two more questions to ask. The first one is directed to the Chairman for IDEC. In your recommendations, you recommended an overall governance body on top of the Electoral Commission and relook at IDEC’s future structure and give it a little bit more legal standing. My questions are as follows;

(1)Should there be three commissioners rather than one Electoral Commissioner?

(2)What is your view?

**Mr IVAN POMALEU** – Thank you. There are a couple of important principles, Chairman and Deputy Chairman, getting to a point where important legislative decisions or statutory decisions become shared not just by one person but by a group maybe, two, three but also by having a certain level of oversight that continues to be brought to bear on the planning and conduct of the elections. Having an ability to influence resourcing by law would be important just to take away the powers of Parliament and NEC but a mechanism that allows that committee or that structure to impose on resourcing agencies is to release funds on time.

Perhaps, an important legal work that continues to be expected of the Electoral Commissioner is probably a responsibility that needs to be shared between a few people or a mechanism higher than, it could well be the election advisory committee but perhaps write it into the Organic Law that that process is automatic or sits as an ongoing advisory committee and not as I said in my remarks at the behest of the Electoral Commissioner but it’s an automatic thing that sits above him that can direct and coerce and make sure that certain things are done on time, certain important advisory process are adhered to. I think he’s getting his advice from lawyers that have state accountabilities so that they take responsibility if those advices are flawed. I think I’ll answer it that way.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – I understand you’re going to hold your summit? So, if you can hold it earlier because the committee would like to present our report sometime in June so we will need a recommendation from the summit.

**Mr IVAN POMALEU** – Yes, we are working on confirming dates.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – My last question is to the Electoral Commissioner, I’m aware of an inter-office memo with regards to the disposal of 133 Foton 4x4 Chinese Government donated vehicles. I’m worried about the process, I thought that any public vehicle should go through the Board of Survey before being tendered but I understand there is an internal memo going around that Electoral Commission staff only have been given the privilege. Where will those proceeds go to, consolidated revenue? I mean you are part of the financial accountability governance structure and so, I’m asking this question. Public is raising this question, are these Chinese donated units, at a cost of about K15million going through an internal procurement process without following the normal public procurement process through board of surveys? Maybe by NPC and then publicly tendered? Can you respond to that allegation?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – I think our official routine information must’ve leaked out to you. It’s under normal process of BOS system and even given to anyone as yet. Not even paid Just a talk. It’s not even paid, it’s just an administrative discussion to dispose them. We had about 133 but we shared it with the Police and Defence and everyone and so the few that we held back and some are in the

provinces. So, we are in the process of trying to identify the way forward into trying to dispose them.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Proceeds?

**Mr SIMON SINAI** – Proceeds are normally paid to Consolidated Revenue and then it's consulted with NPC procedure.

**Honourable JACOB MAKI** – Thank you, and good morning everyone. I just want to bring us back to one of those questions that we have discussed. It's happening back at home and I have witnessed it. So, I want to share it here. The team we are here now; the Electoral Commissioner, Police Commissioner, Chairman IDEC and all of us here. We are trying to solve the issues that being occurred and we want to prevent it from occurring, so that's why we are all here. So, the election process being conducted the previous one; our common rolls being floated during 2017 elections. We have witnessed, seen and then we are here to fix it one way or the other. If we don't fix it, we are looking for disaster in 2027 general election.

Why, I'm saying this because my Deputy Chairman have said something; the voters being sent back. We have places like in the highlands you can't send a voter back, they will insist to vote. In coastal areas they listen and obey, but in the highlands and other places they won't listen. So, that's why I've seen one polling place they have shared the ballot papers because the common roll was not updated properly.

The same common roll has been used in 2012, 2017 and 2022, there's never been a change. I have seen in places there were people being sent working with the councilors, village recorders, and they have sent updated common rolls into respective areas but not being updated and it's not being issued at the polling places. That's what I've seen. So are we going to do it again and resubmitted or what are we going to do to solve this problem to fix amicably. So that we don't have to face it again. What are we going to do now? The common rolls that the commissioner have it now are not in order so, what are we going to do now?

We have to do it, so that we can make recommendations to the Parliament. This committee will assist you and you will assist us so, we can present a report to the Parliament and fix it amicably. So, we don't have to face it. Security personnel will not face it, if we fix it. So that's why I'm putting the question here on the floor our discussion that how are we going to fix this issue. We have talked about many issues already, so how are we going to fix that. The common roll system, we have to contribute idea to fix that now so that we can make a final summary recommendation to the Floor of Parliament. We are going to present it.

Thank you.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I think there was a statement so I'll rap up here. Before I thank the three of you, I just wanted to acknowledge the financial reports from both of you the Police and Electoral Commissioner. We thank you for that and you note the concerns of the committee. And I want to commend you also for at least managing your resources well so that we are not faced with exorbitant cost from the elections and hopefully we can bring the learnings across to subsequent elections.

The recommendations from the Chief Secretary are taken on board and I just wanted to say this to the three of you because you are probably the most important people when it comes to conducting the elections.

Everyone else plays a supporting role but the Police and Electoral Commissioner, you guys are right up front. This Committee intends to fix the elections, make sure that we don't have 80 percent of the problems that we are facing now and when the information that you have given to us particularly around the fact that we have been aware of these problems for some time. We have just never taken any action. I just want to assure all of you that that's what this Committee is here for. We will make the recommendations to Parliament. Parliament will adopt the recommendations hopefully by June or July. Once those recommendations are adopted this committee will continue to exist and this committee will follow up on a regular basis to make sure that all of the recommendations are implemented. So I just wanted to assure you of that and we will be playing an oversight role, potentially right up until before the 2027 Elections where new will disband. Hopefully in future, you will continue to have this committee to continue oversight elections until we get them right. And your words Chief Secretary are very pertinent, the electoral process it underlines our entire democratic system and if we don't get that right we are going to face all sorts of problems.

In any case, I like the idea of photo idea. I think we need to work on that and figure out how to develop it, how to protect the database because once we build the database then we have to be assured that nobody is going in there and manipulating it again which is one of the common complaints in a lot of places.

So as far as the public is concerned all of the issues that the public has with the potential challenges that could be inherent in the system, we need to fix and you have given us a lot of new information and new insight into areas that many of us were not aware of certainly I wasn't and so I wanted to thank you for that. I wanted to assure you that whilst we may be doing our job on behalf of the people to call you up, you also know that you have a responsibility. I mean the two of you are constitutional office holders.

So our job while we are trying to understand what the issues may be and we are beginning to understand them is also to help you to do your job better. There's no point us coming out here with a big stick and hitting everybody over the head and not being able to put in a fix that can continue to work for our people.

So I just wanted to assure you all of that and thank you all again. Thank you both for the financial reports. Thank you Chief Secretary, if we need you in the future we will call you. You are now excused. Thank you very much.

*(Lunch Break)*

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the afternoon session of the Parliamentary Committee on the 2022 National Election Review as well as other elections to learn lessons so that the 2027 Elections can be better. I welcome every one of you back to this afternoon's session.

In the morning we had the pleasure of having the Electoral Commissioner, the Police Commissioner, the Chief Secretary to the Government, and also the Secretary to the Election Coordinating Committee. We had a very good session with them.



This afternoon is meant for the Department of Treasury, and the Department of Finance, we thank you for coming. We have with us the representatives from the Department of Finance, Ms Marlene Philip, and Mr Steven Nukuitu, I welcome you both to the inquiry.

As you will be well aware, you are protected by the privileges of parliament so anything you say or present is protected, don't worry about what you say to the Committee because under our laws you are protected. So we urge you to respond to the questions and also to the outstanding matters when your secretary was present himself. If our people can recall, when we had the Secretary Dr Ken Ngangan with us we actually requested a written report to be presented to the Committee. I am glad to report to our people throughout the country who are listening or watching, that the Department of Finance has now brought before the Committee a report on roles and responsibilities in the 2022 National General Election. On behalf of the Chairman and our Committee, we say thank you to the Secretary and his team for complying with the directions of the Committee.

We will give you the first privilege to go through with us in a nutshell, not in full but as you may recall some of the key questions that we asked the Secretary for Finance then.

There were three questions basically. One is, can you explain to the committee the major components of the election funding? How much from the departments did each of the major components receive? Was the election funding made available on time? What are the instances of delay for the release of funds and last one was, what are some of the recommendations you would offer as a department in terms of improving the financing of future general elections?

There were other questions that were already asked and that was in relation to whether other sources of funding were also recorded by the department for example development partners. Did they come through you or did they go directly to the Agencies of State, like the Defense Force, the Electoral Commission and the Police. We understand that they were given direct funding in terms of cash or in kind and we wanted you to make sure you give the Committee that information so that the committee can surely know. The reason they are calling you back is about the bottom line issue. How much did each of the key agencies get in managing the elections in 2022? How much did they actually request but how much did they actually receive and when did they receive them? Did your agency make some impact in terms of the issues that we all have highlighted? One of the key issues the Electoral Commission, the Defense and the Police including IDEC chairman this morning said is the delays in release of fund that leads to late procurement.

The committee really needs to understand as one of the key agencies the committee needs to understand the financing processes, why delays took place and more importantly how can we improve in terms of financial planning, release of funds and availability on time so that the requirements of this once in a five-year event called the National Election can be done better. We just want you to tell us from where you are sitting, how you identified some of these issues through the report that you have presented. And if you can highlight some of the key issues, you as a department experienced leading to the delays. Either Ms Marlene or Mr Steven can now take lead. Thank you.

## Department of Finance

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** (Deputy Secretary Operations-Department of Finance) – Thank you Deputy Chair and Chairman of the Special Parliamentary Committee. Firstly, let me convey my sincere apology for coming late to the committee and also I would like to convey my Secretary's apology. He is actually gone to do his medical check. Hence Marlene and I are here.

Just basically on the questions that were asked for us to present. We have actually included in our report which I presented. The report only covers the PNGEC funding that was given we didn't cover the other agencies that were given funding for the general elections like the Defense, Police, Ombudsman Commission and Attorney General's Office because warrants were directly given to them from the Treasury. For us, the funding component which was given to the PNGEC we core managed, hence the reason we provided the break up.

So in the report that is presented before, you received K311 million and K300, 000 so per the extract from the IFMS system K16 million was used for printing and production, awareness, K3.5 million was used, and K3 million on the ballot boxes, for rentals, K1.7 million, for the storage fees, K1.8 million was used and for the media K1.5 million, for provincial subsidiary trust accounts that's for the 22 provinces, K51 .9 million. For the temporary election workers as per region, NGI was given K12.8 million, Momase, K17 million, Highlands region, K43.1 million and southern region K14.3 million all totaling up to K87.3 million, that is for the temporary election workers. On the same extract for the accommodation, K18.7 million was used, and then for the polling and early counting preparations for the 22 provinces, K40.6 million was used; for the allowances for the 22 provinces, K6.4 million was used.

For the chopper hire, K34.8 million; another component for air transport hire, K1.5 million; for the sea transport, K2.7 million; and for the land transport, K2.2 million; another component for vehicle hire is K10.2 million. The amount that was spent in the HQ by PNGEC for the new vehicles purchased, K3.2 million; and other operational expenses accumulates to K2 million. For the legal fees, K2.9 million; for the purchase of CCTV cameras for 12 polling sites, K4.8 million; for the ballot boxes, K3.8 million. That leaves us with the total of K9.4 million which to date is still in the bank account. So in total, it amounts to K311, 300 000.

So Chair, for the question on whether the funds were given in time; we also have the copies of the warrants attached. So, the first warrant of K111 million was issued in February; another warrant of K50 million was issued in April; the third warrant of K20 million was issued in June of 2022; the final warrant was issued in July, which was K41.3 million, which totals up to the K311 300 000.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Steven, those are the warrants, but when did you start raising the CFC and then cash?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Amongst the competing priorities, as election at the time was the priority, the CFCs were raised as soon as the warrants were issued and at the same time, we also had the ransoms ware and we set up the computer systems at Vulupindi Haus (Finance Department), so many of the agencies were also committing and printing cheques at the Vulupindi Haus. As well as for the PNGEC, they were also printing the cheques at the Vulupindi Haus. Amongst competing priorities, we gave them the priority to print the cheques. Defense and police did the same they came and they committed the funds in Vulupundi Haus and printed there as well.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Continue

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – So Chair, the first K100 million given to PNGEC was actually for the election preparation and the awareness of the general election so.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – As you are telling us Mr Nukuitu the warrant came in February 2022 so you are admitting that its late in terms of moneys for awareness and preparations so forth. It should have been done in 2021. So, what's your explanation?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Thank you, Department of Finance's role is to execute the budget and for warrants Treasury is responsible for it. Therefore, any funds which is above K100 000 we did the clearance on time.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – About the bank account we are also interested in the provincial account what happened and when did you deposit and what were those funds allocated for in the provincial election account? Is it the whole 22 of them or only some were established and some didn't? What is the outcome of that account?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – We did open 23 sub accounts and the account numbers are included in the report. To date the provincial accounts, they have nil balances because they were used as a petty cash and as per their request funds transferred into the account.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How much in total that went to the provincial account?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Chair, K51.9 million.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Who was in charge of these provincial accounts?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – As per the trust instrument and the finance instructions that we issued for the election the mandatory signing officer for the main account is the Electoral Commissioner or alternate is the Deputy Commissioner and the counter signing is the Secretary for Finance or his alternate Deputy Secretary. For the sub account the mandatory is the provincial election manager or alternate the provincial election manager and the counter signing is our Finance Manager or his alternate the provincial expenditure officer.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – When are your expecting those reports to come back to you on the provincial accounts?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – As per the instruction they were supposed to send us the report on a timely basis but to date we haven't received any thing as yet. So, we are in the process of now acquiring reports from the provincial representatives.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So what are you actually doing in making sure that the reports are in?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Yes, they are supposed to send us the report but to date we have not received anything.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What are you doing for them to bring the report to you? Are you writing letters or calling them up? Holding an expenditure workshop or what are you doing?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Exactly, that is right. Through our usual internal process, there is a division responsible for the provinces, so we have been communicating through the First Assistant Secretary and his Assistant Secretary responsible for the regions to communicate with our provincial representatives to submit the reports. With that, we also plan to have a workshop at the end of this month or early next month to remind them. We have been reminding them but to actually run through the process of reconciliation because it is not only the election funds that we usually ask them to provide reconciliation but all funds that are transferred to the province as per the mandated role, they should provide their reconciliation reports back to us so that we can report through the secretary and through the Minister.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So, as of now no provinces have submitted any report whatsoever on election related expenditure.

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Yes, zero reports received from the provinces.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – In your view what does the trust instrument actually say on the expenditure item on this subsidiary account? What is the usage for the provincial trust account?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Chair, on all trust accounts that we should as well as the trust accounts for the PNG EC. All agencies are to report on expenses that they receive. It is a mandatory role that they provide reports every month.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – I am aware of that but I am asking for the specific trust account for the provincial account. What does it say on the expenditure, what items do they procure and using these funds for? Are the electoral officials' wages part of that provincial account? What are they using it for? We understand the Provincial Election Manager is the mandatory signatory and his Provincial Finance Manager.

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – That is correct, anything that is related to the elections should have been taken care of by the PEM.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Like what?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – The allowances, pre-polling awareness and the allowances for the election officials, that is included in there as well as temporary election workers.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – The reason why I am interested in what expenditures was because in some places like in my own area Abau, the counting was delayed because the officials never received any allowances and they never got their lunch or dinner, because the company that catered

for their needs was not paid, therefore, closed their services forcing all the officials to go on strike. We had to wait a couple of days before the funds were made available.

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Chair, for the election, it was the sole responsibility of the PNG Electoral Commission. For us; our role was to support them through funding.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – All the procurement, you are using the National Procurement Act through the NPC process?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – That’s correct

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – One of the concerns raised by the Electoral Commission, the Police and Defense was that the procurement process through the NPC was one contributing factor to the delay in the purchase of services for the elections. Did that complain come to you; because your secretary was part of IDEC, he was a key member. IDEC was receiving many of the complaints. The procurement process through NPC which delays in release of warrants and funds and the long procurement process. You did not look at other options for the election requirements?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Sir, in order to procure, assist PNGEC and the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary, they have requested for their Special Procurement Committee and a special program and committee was set up in PNGEC and RPNGC as well in order for them to procure goods and services to the amount of K5 million so whatever goods and services that you are procuring which was above five million, they were to go back to NPC.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So, NPC establish their own defence, police and electoral commission procurement committees up to the limit K5 million.

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Not for the defence, only police and the electoral commission. They have actually made a request to Department of Finance.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – They have requested for their own specific NPC to the limit of K5 million.

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Yes, K5 million.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Do you know when those were established?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Sorry, Chair, I cannot recall the specific date but we have records of all those committees’ as well.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How do you manage the nomination fees paid by the candidates?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Thank you, Chair. For the election nomination fees, there is a trust account which was created for the nomination fees to be deposited. The total records of candidates contested the 2022 general election was 3595 so each of the candidate paid a fee of K1000 so in total K3,595 000 was collected and deposited into the PNGEC trust account. So, as per the

instrument, the funds deposited into the trust account, there is fifty-fifty sharing so fifty per cent of the fees are to be remitted into the Consolidated Revenue Fund and 50 per cent of that to remain in the trust account.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Who uses that remaining 50 per cent? Electoral Commission?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Correct!

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – what does the instrument say about that fund that you sit?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – The trust instrument says that 50 per cent of fees are to cater for the court of disputed returns and other expenses like the reimbursements for the top candidates.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – I don't understand reimbursements; we don't have reimbursements.

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Reimbursements in Court of Disputed Returns.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Court of Disputed Returns so that's basically for the legal fees.

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Correct!

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – You are saying in the report that the other 50 per cent that supposed to come back to the Consolidated Revenue has not come yet. When will it come and why hasn't it come?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Our secretary has actually written to the PNG Electoral Commissioner to remit the 50 per cent of the funds.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – It's already eight months after the election and you haven't got it yet? No respond yet? What do you do if it doesn't come?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – We have actually monitored the trust account so if they don't, we can continue to remind and direct them to send the funds into CRF.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Okay any other comments from the members of the Committee

**Honourable KEITH IDUHU** – Mr Nukuitu thank you, for the report. Just a quick question on the reports from the Electoral Commission Manager. Does the trust instrument specify the reporting period? Or does the financial instruction prescribe a reporting period

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Correct it does

**Honourable KEITH IDUHU** – What is the reporting period?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Our initial reporting period is all reports must be submitted and received on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of each month that's our standard reporting time.

**Honourable KEITH IDUHU** – And you say you have not received any such report?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – No report as yet

**Honourable KEITH IDUHU** – So what are the consequences of not complying to the reporting time

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – The finance instruction is issued under Section 17 of the Public Finance Management Act. And any non-compliance is a breach of the Public Finance Management Act. So if the Secretary has to invoke his powers then they can be penalized.

**Honourable KEITH IDUHU** – When do you think the Secretary could invoke his powers?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Chair and Committee members, the Secretary can invoke his powers anytime.

**Honourable KEITH IDUHU** – How many of the monies issued are at risk of not being reported? Or now have been breached of that important requirement.

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – If the funds are not received then if the PNGEC uses the funds not for its intended purpose then it's a great risk that, that may occur

**Honourable KEITH IDUHU** – Is there a duty of the Secretariat to call for the report?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – That's mandated for the Secretary and spelled out in the PFMA

**Honourable KEITH IDUHU** – So he is obliged by law. So how much of this money was subjected to that reporting required. What's the total amount?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – The K600 million which was allocated for the general elections.

**Honourable KEITH IDUHU** – So K600 million is going to be reported on.

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – No reports so far. We have not received any reports from Defense, Police, Ombudsman Commission, CIS, NBC, NIO.

**Honourable KEITH IDUHU** – All state institutions obligated to carry out the National General Elections have not reported correctly.

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – They are duty bound to provide reports as per their status of the position. So as the CEO of any institution, they should also provide the reports. It's also their responsibility to provide reports to Finance.

**Honourable KEITH IDUHU** – And who’s responsibility is that to invoke those reports

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – In terms of Financial, our Secretary can be able to invoke but I think as per the PSMA requirements. The Department of Personnel Management can be able to can be able to do that.

**Honourable KEITH IDUHU** – Are you aware that as per the line of questions, these funds were partially intentionally intended for wages and stipends for election workers

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Generally all workers who were working during the elections have been paid out of that funding as per the Budget by the Electoral Commission

**Honourable KEITH IDUHU** – If I were to ask you whether wages were paid, that would be a futile question, you wouldn’t know at this point?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Correct, unless we receive the reports, we can be able to see the acquittals of how much money was spent and for what purposes.

**Honourable KEITH IDUHU**– There should be some urgency now, do you agree that the report should be called immediately

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU**– Correct.

**Honourable KEITH IDUHU** – Thank you.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Honourable Jacob Maki

**Honourable JACOB MAKI** – Nogat.

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – So Chair, we have actually put one last recommendation that you have requested. For us, in terms of the elections, we believe that to prudently manage the finances, the funding should be left alone to the competent organisation, which is rightfully the Department of Finance.

PNGEC should be left alone to manage the elections. In our personal view, they were managing the funds than managing the elections. Thus, the reason why we did not achieve the good results of the elections because when we give funding to agencies, they forget about all their core responsibilities, and they manage the funding. When this happens, many of the agencies fail in their core responsibilities. So the role of PNGEC is to manage the elections. The funding can be left alone to the Department of Finance or Treasury, a committee or body that can be able to oversee and manage the funding.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How would you structure such a highly centralised system where things are happening right around the country, at different times and we heard complaints by the key agencies that you have mentioned; PNGEC, police and defence?

The poor timely release of the funds for the activities to be actioned. How will you structure your recommendation?



**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman. In our reforms of improving the financial management system of our country, the Department of Finance is working towards digitalization of all payments.

Currently, we are doing that partially. We got the types of payment services that we are offering;

- (1) G2G – That is government to government. We are electronically remitting the funds to the provincial governments and the state bodies.

- (2) G2B – That is government to business. We are executing the funds and payments from the Department of Finance to pay for the rentals and utility payments.

- (3) G2C – That is government to citizen. We are doing that for our salaries.

We also have another reform that was on the non-tax revenue that we have developed but it hasn't been implemented yet.

- (4) C2G – That is from the citizen to the government. That is to collect non-tax revenue back into the government coffers.

In order for us to efficiently manage, we can be able to fully implement the digital systems. We can allow the agencies to commit funding at their locations by the responsible officers and the Department of Finance will execute the payments from all locations into the service providers. That is including the individual persons that have assisted in the election.

By that we can have an instantaneous transfers of funding. That is provided that we have sufficient cash at the Central Bank. For us to efficiently manage, we do have a committee in place.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – If you have K600 million for the 2027 National Election, how will you manage it?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – For instance, if we were to fully manage the K600 million, we would have set up those systems that we currently have replicated in those key agencies that have received the funding.

In terms of the administrative services, they were to do the commitment as based on their work plans, the budget allocated in their locations and send the fund request through the wire to Finance and we pay directly into the individual accounts.

We already have the system working, but its partial, not fully implemented.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – I have a few questions to ask and they are as follows;

- (1) Can you and your Secretary give the Committee some details of your recommendation of centralised system?

- (2) How will you manage it?

- (3) How will you make it work?

- (4) And, whether we can do it through the LLG elections or if you and your team will come back with a recommendation on how you will structure the centralized system?

To me, I'm worried about centralized systems of government. We are now talking more about delegating powers and responsibilities to provincial governments.

- (5) That is why I am interested in how those provincial trust accounts are used?

- (6) How do they become accountable? the reporting mechanism and the penalties if they don't report on time.

So, holding them accountable. For the centralised system, I was thinking if we can go back to the ILPOC system. What you were trying to say is that, the old ILPOC become useless because when they present the ILPOC, six months later there is no money in the system.

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – The old days ILPOC was switched with the PGAS system. The PGAS system must stand alone, so when the funds that were issued through the PGAS system, without any control, the funds were already exhausted and the ILPOC was useless. Through the IFMS, the funds were right on time. Without the CFC, the funds cannot be made available.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – The issue with IFMS is that we do not have internet services throughout the country as yet, even this Parliament doesn't have it, as well as the districts. I believe the IFMS system relies on internet. How do we marry both effectively, for the coming elections, for the new centralised financial system?

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – That is correct, sir. The IFMS system is fully dependent on the internet services. Wherever there is connectivity, then we can be able to access the services of the IFMS system. If there is no connectivity, then the IFMS system can't be accessed. For us at the Department of Finance, when we started rolling out the IFMS system, many of our provinces and districts does not have the infrastructure. The little money that we received from Treasury was mainly used for building infrastructures, which was not our job. Buying generators, constructing buildings, and assisting them with internet. There are other service providers in that space. For instance, we do not have to buy generators, electricity was supposed to be connected by PNG Power to those districts.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So we got enormous problems with IFMS right now. If you are talking about centralising system based on the IFMS, then we don't have the infrastructure to roll it out. We are in trouble. So, why are you recommending a centralized system for 2027 election management of the funds? It is only four years away.

**Mr STEVEN NUKUITU** – In the view of the Department of Finance, if we digitalise the system then we can create efficiency because in terms of the manual processes that we used, it takes time. This process will eliminate four or five steps. So, instead of we going through the manual process and ticking one to five boxes with the IFMS, the system is right in front of us. So, we can be able to execute and do the payment but the dilemma is on the connectivity so through the Special Parliamentary Committee we would appeal that if we can be assisted to rollout or to implement the internet services in our districts and provinces. If the government can make the funding available so that the system that we used can able to efficiently used in the provinces because that's what the future is. That's how we are learning towards the future so many of these physical papers we can then put them on a side and used the distort system.

**Mr DEPUTY** – And with the system you can also know exactly how much provinces have spent right on time.

**Mr STEPHEN NUKUITU** – That's correct.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**– The real time system. Okay, if there are no other questions from my team. Ms Marlene Philip and Mr Stephen Nukuitu, two recommendations that we would want you to come back on;

(1) Is it present to the committee your proposed centralized system? You have to convince the committee that this is the way to furnish a manager of finance in the state not only focusing in the election but hopefully in the normal provision of public goods and services in our country. So, if you can come up with a convincing system usually administered then as part of the committee's recommendation. Would you be able to do that?

**Mr STEPHEN NUKUITU**– Yes

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**– (2) I for one particularly interested in couple of those expenditures; one is the nomination fee that 50 per cent that has not yet come back to the consolidated revenue fund and also the lack of reporting by the provincial election managers through the provincial trust accounts that you have established and the committee really want to see some people being penalized for late reporting. Because it's very important for accountability and transparency is name of the game this day. And so, we need to get the Secretary to take some actions on those officials that are delaying the acquittals of these big amounts of money used at their disposal within the so-called trust instrument the Secretary has signed into. And so, we strongly recommend that these reports are demanded and if not, the committee wants to hear some people penalized for not complying with the *Public Finance Management Act* requirements.

But thank you for coming and thanks for the insights you have provided. Our job is to ensure that the department of finance to make funds available then they are dispensed on a timely manner. The Finance Department helps the Electoral Commission to make sure that it manages the next election better and hopefully your recommendations of a centralized system may help to contribute in making the management of the public funds are much better, more transparent, accountable and efficient. So, thank you, both for coming on behalf of the Secretary.

Submission can be made through our committee secretariat when you are finish with the centralized system please address it straight to the Chairman. So that it becomes part of our report because we've been telling everybody that our report will be presented by the end of June or July. So that we can recommend those important remedial measures we can use to make the next election better.

So, the early you can do it, will give you two weeks Do that and submit it to the Secretariat. And please inform the Secretary that he must invoke the powers that he has on the requirements for reporting on a timely manner so that we teach some people to follow the law. Its money we are dealing with, ino liklik samting, these are public funds. So powers that the secretary has must be invoked, no ken sori lo husait istap. And so the committee wants to hear that the secretary has invoked the powers and that reports are beginning to come in because we will be putting a tab on the reporting and if nothing is coming we will call the Secretary and two of you back again to tell the committee how far the reporting is going. But thank you for coming, you re now excused.

### **Closing remarks**

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Our Treasury team is not here. We will not wait any longer. But on behalf of our Chairman and Committee Members of the Special Parliamentary Committee on 2022 Elections, I want to thank everybody for coming, particularly the morning team that came, the Police Commissioner, the Electoral Commissioner and the Chief Secretary to Government who was the Chair to IDEC and also this afternoon, our team from Finance Department.

As our people are listening throughout country, some of the issues that came up, one of them was the issue of the Common Roll. It is a repeated issue that we have to solve in our country and it will be one of the strong recommendations by our Committee on how to address the issue of the Common Roll in our country. For example, one recommendation, over time we could be going right down to the ward level using ward recorder systems. We need to spend money at the ward level so that the ward recorders are resourced with stationary and everything so at the district level we take charge of the ward recording system and also at the provincial level. So ward recording will be a live update of deaths, births, transfers etcetera so that the Electoral Commission when it begins to update the Common Roll it has enough data to work on, those 18-year-old plus, they can get it out of the existing data.

The other message that came out this morning was, those responsible agencies of State that are managing data are not talking to each other. Our National Statistics Office, our Electoral Commission and NID, these agencies are not communicating with each other. Looks like there is a need for a national government data system so that data system can be accessed by any agency of State like the Electoral Commission. It can go in and get its voter requirements from that database. So the message is that we have to now start preparing early for the Common Roll, not six months before the Election but at least for a year.

That is the reason why we have been calling up IDEC and Finance and Treasury is the money, the budget planning process every year leading to 2027 beginning in 2024, early preparations particularly the Common Roll support must be funded. So that before 12 months or six months latest before the Election the Common Roll is credible. That it has been posted, people have comments on it. Their names are not there, they go and enrol again. So that at least for the 2027 Common Roll, it's better than the other Common Rolls we have had in the country.

And the recommendation by the Electoral Commissioner that they piloted a ward election in Kupiano in my district. They got pictures and IDs and that worked very well.

A person goes to the Polling Booth and presents a simple picture with an ID and your name is ticked and nobody wakes up from the dead to come and vote or nobody from another electorate comes to my electorate to vote and those types of issues.

To the general public if you have those types of issues on the common roll, please do the recommendations to the Secretariats, you do not have to come and appear because you are far away in the provinces. But, if you do have the time, we will announce the time we will be visiting the provinces at the end of this month and early June, and you will know where we will be and you can come and present your recommendations.

Right now we are basically looking for recommendations because you and I know the issues so our job is as a country what do we recommend for the 2027 Election to be free, fair, and safe; that is the bottom line.

For those who have sent in their recommendations, we thank you at this early stage, and for those of you who are struggling to communicate with us, whichever way, please there is still time for you to come to the Committee and make your recommendations. Look out for when we announce our provincial and regional visits and come and see us so that hopefully by the end of June-July the Committee will be able to go to Parliament and tell of all the experiences that we have heard including the 2022 National Election.

These are the things we are able to do immediately to impact the LLG Elections, the By-elections, or the 2027 General Elections and these are things that can be done over time so that 2027 can be better. This can also help us over time so that when the Prime Minister Elections is done one day by the people one time, we will be ready for reforms that will occur in the country.

Thank you for tuning in and thank you everyone for your participation. We will now stop the Committees' work for today and God bless every one of you. Please, take care throughout the country, look after yourselves. Tanikiu bada herea. Tenk yu tru na God bless you.

*End of Inquiry*