

## **Press Release**

The Office of the Regulator mindful of its responsibility under the various Acts governing its operations wishes to clarify a number of issues raised in the Samoa Observer by Member of Parliament Lealailepule Rimoni Aiafi.

The Member of Parliament has raised a number of issues of importance covering the telecommunications sector. The concerns raised regarding high costs of Internet access is valid and this should be coupled with the limited availability in rural areas. Cabinet has recently approved a universal access policy for telecommunication and providers may now be required to contribute to a fund to ensure that everyone has affordable access, including Internet access.

The issue of misuse of mobile phones for pornographic material has been addressed under new legislation. This is a criminal act and offenders can now be prosecuted. The creation of awareness programs for related issues should be a joint activity involving all of the major players, Ministry of Education, MCIT, NGO, social services and including the OOTR.

In order to address the Member of Parliament concerns regarding staffing, it should be noted that allocations for staff includes filling of several positions including the completely new division to handle the regulation of Electricity services. Regulation of the Electricity sector was recently added to the responsibility of the Office of the Regulator and all efforts are being made to ensure that the Office can be in a position to carry out its mandate.

It would be inappropriate for the Regulator to comment on the MP's views on moving to fill the post of Regulator with a Samoan but the record need to be set straight. The Office of the Regulator was established in 2006, so it is incorrect to state that a foreigner has held the post for 15years. The contract for the Regulator includes a clause to ensure that the Regulator trains locals to fill the post and this has been done, it is expected that for the Electricity Sector the same requirement will apply.

Finally while it is fair to say that synergies exists for regulations of sectors like broadcasting telecommunications and to some extent electricity the same cannot be said for including other non-utility sectors.

The Regulator takes further note of the concerns raised and is in the process of addressing those under its mandate and responsibility. The purpose of this press release is to set the record straight regarding some misconceptions in the Samoa Observer headline story of 09<sup>th</sup> July 2012.