**EASTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE**

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Bhisho

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Speech notes by Vicky Knoetze MPL – Taking the Legislature to the People – Report of the Portfolio Committee of Roads and Public Works.

***“EPWP must be a catalyst for creating real sustainable jobs”***

* EPWP grant money not properly accounted for.
* Short-comings of EPWP that must be overcome for it to be a success.
* Close correlation between quality of work and number of jobs -- value for money.

Honourable speaker, honourable premier, honourable members and guests,

During preparations for this week’s sitting, the Portfolio Committee of Roads and Public Works visited EPWP’s as well as various roads in the district.

Firstly, with regards to the EPWP it was determined that there is a lack of reporting on EPWP grants due to a lack of supervision by the department itself and a lack of co-operation by municipalities.

The EPWP is supposed to be aimed at creating employment opportunities and is further supposed to be a multi-pronged attack on poverty. In other words, it must be a social, economic and political attempt to reduce poverty.

There are still various short-comings in terms of EPWP’s:

1. If it is not implemented correctly it can divide communities as it is open to political interference and is completely flawed in its application.
2. It is open to abuse and there are plenty of examples of these projects causing conflict in communities. It is always the same people getting the EPWP jobs, not everyone gets an opportunity to benefit and these jobs are not being distributed equally among members of the community.
3. There is a complete lack of monitoring and supervision of EPWP’s. If these programmes are not monitored and supervised it will fail and be nothing more than fruitless and wasteful expenditure.
4. The EPWP must not be a process that abuses the poor to fight political battles.
5. There is no proper accounting of EPWP grant funding. A perfect example of this can be found in Steynsburg where an amount of R 1 Million for the EPWP grant funding is not properly accounted for or fully utilised, this is due to non-submission of documents and a complete lack of capacity. 40% of the incentive grant is still with the department.
6. EPWP’s are struggling to spend their budgets, such as the one in Steynsburg. This is however occurring in all spheres of government. This has a negative effect, not just on service delivery and the implementation of sustainable infrastructure, but it has a negative effect on the poor. Government’s failure to spend its budget in terms of EPWP, failure in terms of capacity and reporting and to get simple processes in place are failing the poor. Many people sitting here today are being failed because government can’t get simple process right.
7. Government must be transparent with the beneficiaries of EPWP’s. Government must play open cards with the beneficiaries of EPWP jobs. EPWP jobs are not permanent jobs, it is temporary. Many beneficiaries are labouring under a misconception that they are being employed on a permanent basis.

Yes, we all support the creation of jobs; government must however focus on creating an **environment** in which sustainable jobs can be created. Without sustainable jobs people will always be on the first step of the ladder to lift them out of poverty, only to take a step down back into poverty after a short period of time.

The EPWP must be a catalyst for creating real, sustainable job opportunities that will grow the economy otherwise it will be like standing in a bucket and attempting to lift yourself. There must be a close correlation between quality of work and the number of jobs awarded. Focus must remain on value for money.

The EPWP is a good concept that can be successful as demonstrated by the DA-run Western Cape Government.

Honourable speaker, during these oversight visits it further transpired that there are substantial problems in terms of Service Level Agreements (SLA’s), for example the Elundini Tinana/Tabase bridge in Mt. Fletcher. An amount of R 4 million has been allocated – nothing has been spent not one cent. The project had to be stopped by the department due to no-compliance by the municipality of the OHS requirements. During heavy rains this road is not accessible to the public including learners. There is clearly low or no capacity in municipalities to understand and report on SLA’s. This must be monitored by the department and the department must further assist by capacitating municipalities before even entering into SLA’s.

Honourable speaker, the committee further assessed the state of roads in the district. It was found that some of the roads in Venterstad was completely inaccessible, it was found that re-gravelling projects had to be stopped due to non-compliance with OHS requirements in Elundini Municipality and that most projects for the upgrading and maintenance of roads in the district was still in progress and not yet complete.

It must be ensured that incomplete projects are fast tracked and completed, that stopped projects are investigated; problems are rectified and completed as soon as possible.

The bad state of roads in the Joe Gqabi District has a negative effect on tourism and the economy which in turn has a negative effect on job creation. Like arteries to the heart, roads are the lifeblood of the economy. The upgrading and maintenance of these roads must be a top priority.

Honourable speaker, this committee visited the EPWP’s in the Joe Gqabi District Municipality in order to, amongst others, strengthen intergovernmental relations and contribute to assisting the department in its implementation of infrastructure delivery and the recommendations in the report speaks to achieving these objectives.

The DA supports the report by the department.

Thank you.