

## **Speech notes by Hon. Van Vuuren on the 2016/17 Budget Vote 1, Office of the Premier – 31 May 2016.**

The Office of the Premier is not setting a good example regarding the filling of posts and the subsequent assessments thereof

1. Functionality of schools and timeous appointment of educators
2. Support to the Departments of Education and Health not producing results
3. Compulsory Competency Assessments which have been flouted

Hon Speaker, we are entering an excited period in the lead up to the 2016 local government elections. A lot of us voters, more than in the previous local government elections are ready for change, and I sincerely hope that this current government is also ready to absorb the change that is inevitable. Hon. Speaker, all protocol observed, I greet you all.

Hon. Speaker during the State of the Province Address on the 19th of February this year the Hon. Premier stated “The creation of better access to quality education is our apex priority due to its strategic contribution in building successful nations and in growing the economy”. He also mentioned that although the matric results of our province were “disheartening”, there were shining examples and centres of excellence that must be acknowledged and applauded, as well as learners who had done exceptionally well in Mathematics and Physical Sciences. There is nothing wrong in acknowledging good work by the learners and educators as well as thanking a few of our secondary schools that are responsible for the biggest weight contribution towards our Grade 12 results, but the honest truth is that the education system in the schools of our province is the weakest in the country, as the province has been continuously underperforming compared to its counterparts.

Honourable Speaker, the Hon Premier has also said in his state of the Province Address that the number of functional schools will be increased by appointing capable principals to lead our schools – sadly this has not materialised. It is alleged that a number of principals in this province were appointed on a new system, referred to as “The Jobs for Cash system” and there was an extension given on two bulletins issued, meaning that appointments of principals will not be made soon and in conclusion, the increase of functional schools have thus been hindered.

The Hon Premier has also indicated in his State of the Province Address that timeous appointment of qualified educators will ensure that there is always a teacher in front of the learner – sadly again this has not materialised. The closing date of a bulletin that was issued and in which a few hundred post level 1 posts were advertised was extended, implying that the aspiration of an educator in front of every learner will not come to fruition, coupled with zero identification of educators in excess at their current schools that will not be directed to schools where they are needed. It is very sad Hon Speaker, and our young ones are the ultimate sufferers of a system that is hopelessly failing them. The Hon Premier has also indicated in his address that the

government is placing a premium on teacher placement. I agree with the Hon Premier – the problem is whether the social partners have heeded the call to behave themselves and do as they are told – which I doubt.

Hon. Speaker, the Office of the Premier is continually giving support to the departments of Education and Health but there is no improvement especially in the department of Education, raising the question whether the cash for jobs has originated in the corridors of the Department of Education during their appointment processes, if incompetence is the barometer, and has eventually somehow found its way into our schools how long will the Office of the Premier continue to provide support or intervention to these two departments if management within these departments is not being appointed on the basis of being fit for purpose?

Hon Speaker, I'm curious to know whether the Office of the Premier has diagnosed the challenges experienced by these two departments and what the prognosis is in order for these two departments to swim the tide on their own.

In future the Democratic Alliance is going to request a report on the interventions and support that has been given to these two departments, and whether these interventions have contributed to an improved service delivery?

Hon Speaker, The Office of the Premier is in a process of repositioning itself and this has resulted in the disestablishment of a programme, because of the restructuring, resulting further in creating supernumeraries who are seen to be redundant. Supernumeraries are created by appointing other people above those already in the system to do the work of which it is perceived that those in the system are not capable of. Hon Speaker, if it is indeed the case that those in the employ of the Office of the Premier are being shifted sideways and thus creating double parked employees, then this phenomenon should be thoroughly investigated and action instituted, because this kind of behaviour does not save the department any money instead it increases the budget for compensation of employees. These employees that are affected by repositioning and restructuring should be given the option to be retrained for their new responsibilities, as opposed to appointing others.

Hon. Speaker, it boggles the mind as to why the Office of the Premier is being repositioned during the middle term of government and why there is no transitional organogram that the repositioning and restructurings are based upon?

Hon. Speaker if the Office of the Premier has no approved organogram at present, how will it ensure that all provincial departments have approved organograms as per the determined deadline? The Office of the Premier should be the benchmark for all other Government departments, but is currently not exemplary in this regard.

Hon. Speaker the Democratic Alliance is deeply concerned with all this repositioning and restructuring taking place without an approved organogram, in that there is no permanent appointee to account for the finances of the Department. The Department has indicated that it will continue not to have a Chief Financial Officer until its final

structure has been approved in consultation with Department of Public Service Administration. Who then is performing the role and responsibility of the CFO in this department? This situation is not viable and intervention is needed.

Hon Speaker, there are so many skilled people from this province who are not employed in this province. Why? Why are people with critical skills leaving our shores, whilst as a province we have a crisis with certain incompetent officials within the senior management structures?

Hon Speaker, as members of the Portfolio Committee of the Office of the Premier, we were informed of officials having been appointed to the Office of the Premier without having undergone competency assessment tests, resulting in a very senior official being disciplined for not undertaking the test herself and for not subjecting those appointed under her to the Compulsory Competency Assessments.

Hon Speaker, the Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA) had already determined in 2011 that all Senior Management Structure (SMS) officials must forego a competency assessment to ascertain whether they are fit for the job that they are applying for.

Competency Assessment is mandatory and not optional as some government department's claim. The directive from the DPSA is that all posts for SMS's must be subjected to a compulsory assessment and if appointed, he/she must be subjected to a quarterly probation assessment report.

It is abundantly clear to the Democratic Alliance that all of these processes and directives were not implemented in the appointment of certain SMS officials within the Office of the Premier. The Democratic Alliance sincerely hopes that consequence management will be applied, and that those responsible for appointing unfit officials will have to account for their actions. We have enough competent people who are waiting to be appointed to posts where their skills are needed – why then, appoint people without skills?

In conclusion let us all agree that we need change in order to improve the lives of our people – only change can bring hope.

The Democratic Alliance supports the report unconditionally.

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