

Speech notes by Ross Purdon, MPL – Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture budget Vote

Hon Speaker

Hon Premier

Honourable Members

All our guests in the gallery

Good afternoon to you all.

Today is the first day of Youth month with specific focus on the 16th of June. According to the latest statistics published by the South African Institute of Race Relations, 41 % of our population in the Eastern Cape is below the age of 18.

Unfortunately there is not much for our youth to celebrate at the moment.

According to the same statistics, the unemployment rate in the Eastern Cape sits at 42, 5% which is the highest in the country. Sadly most of the unemployed in our province are young people ranging in ages between 18 – 30.

The Eastern Cape also has the highest percentage of children living in poverty out of all the provinces. This situation coupled with shocking education results (actually the worst National Senior Certificate pass rate in the country last year) and serious health issues such as the high death rate of young initiates does not paint a good picture here in our province.

Our youth in the Eastern Cape don't have much to celebrate at all!

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This sad situation emphasizes how important it is for the Department of Sport and Recreation to strive to uplift our youth and to provide as many opportunities to as many young people as possible.

Sport develops openness and respect between different groups and individuals. This leads to a better understanding amongst all which is so important.

Sport also cuts across race, ethnicity and territorial boundaries.

Given the right talent (and we certainly do have a lot of talent in our province) with hard work and support, South Africans from any background can succeed.

It is against this background that emphasises how important it is for the Department to meet their targets. Targets such as the number of athletes participating in sport programmes which stands at 16 567.

They have also set themselves an ambitious strategic objective to increase participation in sport and recreation by 10% of the total population of the Eastern Cape by 2019. The aim being to improve the quality of life of citizens of the Eastern Cape.

We will be watching the Department carefully as the budget for Program 4 (Sport & Recreation) shows us 66% increase for management and a 10% decrease for school sport. We would like to see these percentages reversed.

We were also informed that the Department has set aside R11 million for the completion of the Butterworth swimming pool. Please note the word COMPLETION! This has been on our agenda for a long time now and we sincerely hope that it is completed this financial year!

Another area of concern is under Program 3- Libraries and Information Services. Their new infrastructure projects are budgeted to cost R16, 4 million. The concern is that R6, 4 million out of the R16, 4 million is allocated to design and feasibility studies (R5, 7 million for design). That is a lot of money for design leaving only R10 million for construction. The Department will have to keep us informed and provide us with details.

Under Cultural Affairs, an extra R10 million has been allocated to Museum Services which is a 15% increase. This is welcomed as many of our museums are in urgent need of upgrading.

Heritage Services are 2, 3% down on budget and this is of concern as it has come to my attention that the ECHRA (Heritage Authority) Permit Committees have not been sitting lately. This causes much difficulty for Town Planners and developers amongst others. These committees have to sit regularly and should not be held up by budgetary constraints.

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It is pleasing to see that one of the focus areas under heritage is to compile a register of heritage sites that need to be graded. These registers should be done for each municipality and would eliminate a lot of tension and uncertainty.

Honourable Speaker, the Democratic Alliance has also noted an increase of 12, 2 % (approximately R4 million) for Goods and Services under Program 2 – Cultural Affairs.

We were told that this budget was increased for institutionalised days.

We will be watching closely to ensure that these days don't become election rallies (I'm referring to whatever is planned for the next 2 months).

Honourable Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to wish Lusapho April and any other Eastern Cape athlete who will be representing our country the best of luck in the Rio Olympics starting on the 5th of August. That is 2 days after the Democratic Alliance winning many more municipalities and metros.

The Democratic Alliance supports the report.

Thank you.