

Reopening of Home Affairs long past due

By Angel Khanyile MP – DA Shadow Minister of Home Affairs

House Chair

We are facing unprecedented times during the Covid-19 pandemic, where tough decisions had to be made on whether to preserve lives or livelihoods.

When the President announced the initial 21 days lockdown to allow time to prepare for the pandemic, we welcomed the call and offered our support. I wrote a letter to Minister Aaron Motsoaledi pledging my support and availability should he need assistance from the official opposition.

When level 5 of the lockdown was announced, several Home Affairs services were not made available. Only the issue of death certificates, re-issue of birth certificates and ID documents were catered for. On level 3, registration of new and late births and marriages were also allowed.

We cannot, however, carry on excluding the application of new IDs and passports or passport renewals. Especially when there are still officials who are at home whilst earning a full salary.

While every official's health must be taken into consideration, we have on numerous occasions requested the Minister to fast track negotiations with unions to ensure that officials are able to work on Saturdays.

The Department of Home Affairs has had an ongoing issue of long queues. If the Minister does not allow the Department to fully reopen all its services, it will be confronted with a huge backlog that it will be unable to resolve.

Members of the community turn to the DA for assistance. Currently, we are attending to queries that date as far back as 2017, where people have submitted their applications and have to date received no response.

We have also experienced a pure lack of appetite to serve from some officials at the Department who ignore our emails for weeks. We strongly suggest that all officials be trained on *Batho Pele* principles.

We are aware of the high rate of positive cases in the Eastern Cape and Gauteng.

In the Eastern Cape the following Home Affairs offices have been inaccessible: Mdantsane, King Williams Town, Suterhum, and as a result funeral parlours are struggling to conduct burials without death certificates.

Gauteng is experiencing similar challenges. The Department needs to allocate more officials to assist with the issuing of death certificates to ensure smooth flow of burials. If they don't, mortuaries will overflow, and bodies will decay.

There are also shocking allegations from a whistleblower against the Acting CEO of Government Printing Works, Alinah Fosi. These include:

1. Questions about whether she's qualified for her position as CEO;
2. The alleged use of taxpayers' money to buy business class tickets to travel with friends to a "workshop";

3. Intimidating Government Printing Works' employees;
4. Unnecessarily hosting a workshop of approximately R500 000 at Bela Bela; and
5. Overseeing appointment of suppliers for this workshop without following due processes.

Ms. Fosi has purportedly been shortlisted and interviewed for permanent appointment as CEO of the Government Printing Works.

Surely, should Ms Fosi be appointed as CEO at the Government Printing Works, she wouldn't want a dark cloud hanging over her head.

The Department must rest assured that the DA will leave no stone unturned in ensuring that the investigation is conducted, and a full report is provided.

The Minister told us he has referred this matter to HAWKS. We hope he will provide the terms of reference and a case number in his response.

We must take lead and ensure that all allegations of wrongdoing are tested.

Ms Fosi must also know that no amount of intimidation will make us turn a blind eye on any allegations.

We do not support this budget