

SA artists do not trust the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture

By Veronica van Dyk – DA Deputy Shadow Minister for Sports, Arts and Culture

Honourable Chairperson, Members and all attending this virtual meeting

The revised budget indicates that R250 million additional funding will be made available to artists and athletes. At least it seems as if the DA's calls for reopening the process are being considered.

What is of huge concern is that this money will be transferred to the National Arts Council, National Film and Video Foundation and Art SA to manage.

The NAC was recently in the media because of the Public Protector's report reflecting that the CEO, Rosemary Mangope, abused the NAC's Expired Projects and Surplus Policy by applying unlawfully for funding under another entity's name without their knowledge. It was also exposed that the NAC footed her internal legal bills of almost R600 000. This with money that could have supported our artists.

Figures provided to the committee previously indicated that more than R108 million (R108 090 863) of the original relief funding has already been spent. The latest presentation indicated, however, that only R40 million of the R150 million was paid out to artists. This is quite confusing.

Artists have little, if any faith, in the Department, and neither does the DA.

On social media there is an outcry from artists who say they are tired of asking when they will be supported.

Parliamentary questions submitted by the DA revealed entities of the Department of Arts have spent almost R40 million on legal fees and consultants in the 2019/2020 financial year alone – what a waste. This too could have been used to support artist in this dire time.

The total budget cut is 16, 9% across four programmes, almost a fifth of the main budget.

In Programme 3, the arts sector's budget was reduced with 17, 4%. Programme 2 Recreational Sport and Development suffered the biggest reduction at almost 32%, which is concerning given the fact that SASCOC and smaller federations are on the brink of bankruptcy. Lots of competitions will not be able to take place after the Covid-19 lockdown is lifted due to lack of funds by federations. The DA hopes that the unexplained R57 million allocated to non-profit institutions will be used to support the federations.

And when will regulations for non-contact sport like dancing, yoga, tennis and even drive-in theatres be gazetted?

Also concerning is the reduction of transfers to the heritage institutions, the National Heritage Council, National Library of South Africa and the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA), as well as cutting the budget for community libraries.

People in cultural occupations make up about 3% of all jobs in SA. This rises to almost 7%, 1 million jobs, when you include those working in support occupations in creative industries. Without assistance these industries will not survive. The arts sector does not need short term job opportunities as outlined in the job creation plan for the cultural sector subsidised by state subsidized entities; we need sustainable opportunities to survive beyond the pandemic.

With this adjustment, R68 million of R120 million will be allocated for sport and recreation to the Provinces and Municipalities grant. With only R95 million allocated for artists transferred to provinces, will the funding made available actually reach the artists?

The artists do not trust the Department in this regard, neither does the DA.