

## **Government must act now to avert crisis in Sports**

By Willem Faber- DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Sport Arts and Culture

Hon Chairperson, Members and All attending this virtual session.

Covid19 has forever changed the world we live in. Thousands of people have lost their lives and everything has come to a standstill. Despite these challenges, now is the time to pick up the pieces and move forward.

World sports and local sports authorities must look at means and ways to reintroduce sports as soon as possible. The livelihoods of our sportspeople depends on this Government's ability to act now. This can be done responsibly in order to keep athletes and spectators safe from this devastating virus.

Sport has the ability to create hope in these times of despair. It can give people an outlet to deal with present challenges and hope for a better future, free from the current misery.

In our not too distant past, we saw how sport helped South Africa to heal divisions of our painful past, break down racial barriers and unite us in ways never thought possible. That is the enduring strength of sports that should never be underestimated.

In this revised Budget for the 2 departments that have now been combined, 32% of the Department's budget cut is on programme two. On Recreation Development and Sport Promotion, the budget was cut from R1.46 billion to R1.1 billion.

R 480 million was suspended. Most of the funds were taken from Provincial and Local government transfers.

We know that in order to create champions, we have to start at the foundation phase. It is therefore important to see to it that infrastructure that was built for this specific function is maintained. Sadly, we have seen that Provinces and Municipalities have systematically neglected to maintain sports infrastructure facilities during the last few years due to financial constraints.

This budget cut will be the proverbial final nail in the coffin that will see neglected facilities go to ruins. Minister, this must be seriously looked at as we do not have the money to start rebuilding these facilities from scratch again. The golden rule going forward should be to maintain all our facilities to the best of our ability. It is time for this department to play an active oversight role and hold local governments accountable for the maintenance of these sports infrastructure.

On Sport federations, we have a situation where most small federations are struggling financially and risk bankruptcy in the next few months. Private sports sponsorships have dried

up as a result of Covid-19. The key question is, how will the department ensure that these small federations in SA survive financially beyond Covid-19? Perhaps the department should re-access its priorities in this budget.

Cricket South Africa presented their recovery plan to our committee after going through one of the worst and stormy administrations in its history. We are still waiting for their forensics audit and hope that the new management can bring SA Cricket back to the respectable organisation that it once was within the time available.

I thank you