

DA Parliamentary Review Document

2020 was a year for the record books. A year which will leave future historians scratching their heads at the sheer volume of disasters that hit the world. The biggest of which is undoubtedly the Covid-19 pandemic that infected every nook and cranny of the known world. For too many the year 2020 upended their lives in terrible ways. Millions lost their lives and livelihoods, and everyone has had to adjust to a new normal that included finding innovative ways to work from home, wearing masks when out in the world, and social distancing from friends and family.

For the Democratic Alliance (DA), 2020 has been a year of innovation, with the largest ever virtual elective federal congress of any political party in South Africa held virtually with great success. The opening ceremony and leadership announcement were live broadcast on SABC 2, SABC News, eNCA, and Newzroom Afrika.

South Africans will surely remember 2020 as the year of the extended Covid-19 lockdown that started on 27 March and has yet to be entirely lifted. It will be the year of illogical regulations that sought to centralise power for the ANC government, and in doing so instituted rules from the laughable to the downright dangerous. Trade and Industry Minister Ibrahim Patel sought to impose non-sensical regulations on the sale of clothing and footwear, going as far as trying to regulate how t-shirts should be worn. The Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, took the opportunity to ban the sale of cigarettes – in one memorable instance telling people the correct way to “zol” – and nearly brought the alcohol industry to its knees. But some of the most dangerous regulations came from Social Development Minister Lindiwe Zulu who banned the distribution of cooked food and stopped vital food packages from reaching starving and desperate South Africans by sidelining NGOs in an effort to consolidate power. Had it not been for the DA’s court case, where the SAPS, officials and the Department of Social Development (DSD) and any other public officials were barred from preventing people to exercise their rights to distribute and receive food, thousands might have starved to death.

Despite the many challenges the perpetual State of Disaster has brought, and the efforts of government to seemingly circumvent the oversight role that Parliament plays, the DA has continued with every effort to hold government to account.

Outperforming all other opposition parties, the DA asked 66 % of all parliamentary questions (PQs) in the National Assembly (NA) this year. We submitted 1 893 written questions that matter to our constituencies and South Africans and 423 (49%) to the National Council of Provinces (NCOP). These written and oral questions play a vital role in holding the Executive to account and despite some Ministers doing their best to simply ignore the workings of parliament (read Minister Dlamini-Zuma’s habitual answering of questions with “*not having the required information readily available*”) the DA’s questions revealed instances of either misconduct, maladministration or incompetence that would have simply been swept under the rug otherwise.

Without the DA’s scrutiny, South Africans might never have known that a chartered aircraft was used to fly President Cyril Ramaphosa to the World Cup or that government does not want South Africans to know how much this private aircraft cost them.

It was a DA parliamentary question that revealed students at the Walter Sisulu University’s Ibika Campus were experiencing dire accommodation shortages despite the University being allocated R82 million by the Department of Higher Education and Training in the 2017/18 financial year. The money was

allocated to build a student residence but was instead used as equity for a loan while students are without a safe haven to this day.

In a country where gender-based violence (GBV), child abuse and abuse of the LGBTQIA+ community is an hourly occurrence, a DA PQ revealed that only 1 660 names have been recorded in Part B of the Child Protection Register (CPR) since its establishment in 2010. This part of the CPR is meant as a record of people who are unsuitable to work with children. A question asking why the 10 653 convicted child rapists were not added between 2014 and 2017 were submitted to Police Minister Bheki Cele.

Had DA MP Samantha Graham-Maré not asked a PQ, the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Patricia de Lille's advisor Melissa Whitehead's involvement with the Beitbridge "washing line" border fence debacle would not have been exposed. While the DA has been advocating for Minister de Lille to be to account for the fiasco, she has been trying to scapegoat members of her staff in an effort to absolve herself from all accountability.

It was the DA that painstakingly gathered data and revealed that Parliament spent about R10 million a year on luxury flights for former ministers, deputies, and their spouses. We have asked the Auditor-General (AG) of South Africa to investigate this expense and should the conclusion be that this expenditure is irregular a request for appropriate remedial action to force Parliament to entirely scrap this provision and recover the millions of Rands spent over the years, have been launched.

Recently, it was also a Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) application that revealed the lack of evidence that a meeting between the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, and her Zimbabwean counterpart took place in September. The Minister still insists that she attended an urgent meeting with the Minister of Defence and War Veterans Affairs, Opah Muchinguri-Kashiri, on 9 September in Zimbabwe and that her use of the Falcon-900 jet to transport ANC delegates to a meeting with ZANU-PF is somehow justified.

The DA has also fought for the Defence Minister to be held to account for her role in trying to whitewash an investigation into the senseless death of Collins Khosa at the hands of South African National Defense Force (SANDF) soldiers and member of the metro police.

The DA has fought for the lives, safety, and livelihoods of South Africans all across the country. In June we launched a 16-point plan in order to safeguard lives in rural communities who are often in great danger of attacks on their lives. These attacks are often extremely brutal in nature with the victims experiencing horrific violence and torture. One of the most effective tools has been the court watching briefs units launched countrywide. These units assist victims of farm attacks and farm murders in ensuring that the crime is properly investigated and brought before the courts. We also ensure that proper feedback is received throughout the arduous process of justice being served.

A debate of national importance was held regarding this scourge plaguing rural communities. And while some parties still insist that this problem only affects minority groups - if they admit the problem at all - and should therefore be of lesser importance, despite the vile nature of these attacks, the DA knows that farm attacks sees no colour or race or gender and that all rural citizens are increasingly in danger of losing their lives in horrific ways.

This is why the DA is advocating for farm attacks and farm murders to be reclassified as priority crimes to ensure that rural police stations and communities receive the necessary equipment, expertise, and

manpower to scrub this stain from society. It is also why we will continue to report all instances of these attacks and murders being glorified and incited on social media as the hate crimes they are.

The DA has long taken a stance against all manner of hate speech that seeks to sow division in South Africa. This year was no exception with numerous cases opened with the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and the South African Police Service (SAPS) to investigate instances of racism, hate speech and incitement to violence on social media – several of these posts were made by senior members of the EFF.

While the EFF has chosen the route of violence and incitement in an effort to stay relevant, the DA has used this year as an opportunity to address the worries of a wide range of constituencies across the country, with the issues plaguing rural communities at the forefront.

It was through DA assistance that Limpopo-farmer David Rakgase now owns his farm after an 18-year struggle with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD). We are continuing to assist farmers across the country with similar problems, as well as a variety of other issues. We will continue to keep a very close eye on the distribution of the 700 000 ha of State land that is set to be redistributed as much of the land advertised are already being successfully farmed and should therefore remain in the hands of those farmers.

The DA has also called for repeated investigations into how drought relief and Covid-19 relief funding were spent as the aid seemingly did not reach the farmers it was meant for. Farmers are the lifeblood of the economy, providing livelihoods to thousands and food security to millions. By allowing its own agenda to cloud its judgment, government continues to let rural communities down.

The DA unequivocally opposes the amendment of Section 25 of the Constitution and we reject land expropriation without compensation. We have long held the view that it's not Section 25 impeding meaningful land reform, but rather the corruption, mismanagement, and lack of political will on the part of the ANC government. When Parliament collapsed the second ad hoc parliamentary committee on land expropriation we welcomed it, as the process was potentially compromised due to insufficient public participation. The second committee's work was also built upon the fraudulent and erroneous work done by the first committee. The DA will continue to fight expropriation without compensation by every means necessary.

To date, the DA is the only opposition party which introduced legislation in Parliament in 2020. We introduced three private members' bills.

1. The **Fiscal Responsibility Bill [B5-2020]** was introduced as a response to South Africa's rising debt levels as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP) between 2008/2009 and 2019. The Bill seeks to address the rising debt levels by introducing statutory fiscal rules aimed at containing national debt and debt service costs in South Africa. These rules will be binding on government and will ensure that our macro-economic outlook improves but will be flexible in order to permit the National Treasury to opt for a strategy that is most attainable and maintained in the long run.
2. The **Public Finance Management Amendment Bill [B13-2020]** seeks to address the continued slackness of the ruling party to table annual reports and financial statements in legislatures. It sets a time-period within which the annual report or financial statements of a department or a

public entity, and the audit report on those statements, must be tabled in the National Assembly or a provincial legislature.

3. The **Pension Funds Amendment Bill [B30-2020]** seeks to provide much-needed financial relief to those crippled by the outbreak of Covid-19 in the country. It seeks to enable pension fund members to obtain a loan, secured by a guarantee from a registered pension fund, to alleviate financial pressure during an emergency.

Apart from these Bills, the DA also has several Bills in varying stages of development, which will seek to keep the ruling party accountable and address various problems faced by ordinary South Africans.

The DA has not allowed the pandemic to stand in the way of holding not only the Executive, but also those in other positions of power to account. We have made some headway in removing Advocate Busisiwe Mkhwebane as Public Protector (PP). Adv Mkhwebane has proven time and again that she is not fit to hold that office and has sullied the good reputation the Chapter 9 institution once held. Under her reign, the office of the Public Protector has turned from an effective guard dog to a sleepy puppy. A country like South Africa, where corruption is the order of the day, can ill afford her incompetence.

We have also continued to hold the Executive to account despite the State of Disaster effectively trying to bind Parliament's oversight powers and the National Corona Command Council (NCCC) falling outside that mandate.

The DA requested debate of national importance on the Covid-19 pandemic was held on 5 March 2020.

Even before the initial Covid-19 lockdown of 21 days was announced, the DA offered tangible solutions to help fight the spread of the Coronavirus, and to government's credit, many of our solutions were employed.

COVIDConnect, the official Covid-19 support service, was launched after the DA called on government to improve and create daily communication lines for Covid-19.

Government accepted the DA's proposal on Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) reprieve. The proposal allowed for businesses to skip UIF payments and expand UIF coverage to better protect affected workers.

We launched a WhatsApp line to report police and SANDF abuse and advise the public. This gave members of the public the opportunity to report any acts of assault, abuse or bribery by law enforcement officers and allowed residents to ask questions regarding their legal rights during the Covid-19 lockdown. We also launched a Covid Corruption Hotline, where members of the public can blow the whistle on corrupt activities committed by public office bearers and law enforcement officials relating to the enforcement of Covid-19 measures or the distribution of relief aid.

The DA launched an online platform to link government and local manufacturers to source critical personal protective equipment (PPE).

It was also the DA that challenged government's use of racial criteria when determining who would benefit from Covid-19 relief aid.

2020 was also the year where South Africa's fiscal horror story due to years of malfeasance and looting became more apparent than ever. Faced with rerouting money to fight an international pandemic, no amount of fancy footwork could hide the daily tragedy of South Africans' lives at the hands of the ANC government. Whole provinces were completely unable to shore up vital defenses, with the those in the Eastern Cape facing the frightening prospect of dying in overcrowded hospitals where rats run amok, and blood and feces-soiled linen are the order of the day.

And yet, to this day, the ANC government has again chosen to put pet projects ahead of the lives of ordinary South Africans. They have chosen to yet again bailout SAA, instead of spending money where it's desperately needed – health care, education, housing – and this in a time when Covid-19 has still not left our shores.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic laying the ANC government lame, the DA has actively proved we do not just do better where we govern in the Western Cape, but we have done better nationally for all South Africans.

Finally, the DA would like to recognize the work and contributions made by our late colleagues, Belinda Bozzoli and Thandi Mpambo-Sibhukwana. Throughout this pandemic, Belinda fought passionately in the interests of learners and students across the country, while Thandi fought tirelessly to alleviate poverty and unemployment before sadly passing away in June.

We send strength and condolences to Belinda and Thandi's family and friends and to all those who have lost loved ones during this time.