Democratic Alliance Speech by

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DA Spokesperson for Community Safety

Department of Community Safety budget should prioritize effective, visible policing

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Madame Speaker,

Gauteng has a population of approximately 15.5 million people but it sits with 144 police stations which have a 15% vacancy rate and 1169 police vehicles that are out of service.

The Boschkop police station is one example of many other police stations which serve a jurisdiction of approximately 500 square km and serve approximately 50 000 residents, does not have a single vehicle for visible policing and only has a total of 86 police officers at the moment. This is not an isolated situation, but the reality of the majority of our areas within Gauteng.

This is a discouraging picture that should have us all worried and rightfully so, when the majority of us are not feeling safe. It is clear that in a province that has a constantly growing population, our police stations, police personnel and police vehicles should also be increasing so as to address the safety issues of the projected future of this province. This is the only possible way that we can work towards a future where we can all feel safe as residents in Gauteng.

We, therefore, welcome the increased budget allocation for the Department of Community Safety. This budget could have the potential to focus on the future and address the shortcomings in this department, but this will all come down to management and implementation and clearly analysing the needs of the province before spending and allocating the much-needed resources.

This budget focuses 27% of its additional funding on Traffic Management. This could solve the ongoing bicycle highjackings on provincial roads, the monitoring of roads to ensure that there are no spikes or dangerous objects placed on roads that cause accidents and even more recently the loss of life, cash-in-transit heists and many other road risks and fatalities.

The DA has been calling for 24-hour traffic police to monitor our roads as part of visible policing, and the lack of funds has always been cited as a reason why this cannot be implemented. We are therefore pleased to see that through this budget traffic management has been prioritised and can finally be declared an essential service as was announced by Minister Fikile Mbalula in March this year. The 133 new traffic police officers will contribute a great deal to this.

The DA has also been calling for more vehicles to assist with visible policing and we are pleased to see that there has been an amount of R27 200 000 allocated for the purchasing of Toyota bakkies to assist with this.

Madam Speaker, I am concerned though, as to who will be the true beneficiaries of this budget item as the department presented to the committee that 20 Toyota bakkies will be procured for the amount of R27 200 000 plus R3 400 000 for branding, radios and blue lights which calculates to R1.5 million per bakkie. I did some enquiries myself with a local dealership and have discovered that a double cab 2.0 Single Turbo Cab 4x4 Bakkie could be purchased for R701 500.00; it can be branded for an additional R10 000, and blue lights and police radio could be installed for R5000. This is if you purchase these items as single items and not in bulk. So, the total cost of a bakkie could be less than R750 000 per bakkie.

This means that for this budget allocation the province should be able to purchase not 20, but at least 40 double cab bakkies. I therefore, ask the question again, who will truly benefit from this budget allocation line item? Those in the department, senior politicians or the residents of Gauteng and will we finally be able to see visible policing through these newly purchased bakkies? Let us approve the amount of money, but obtain more quotes, search for better prices and ensure that we fight to get the best value for money to the benefit of the province. Let this not become another PPE scandal.

The DA has also called for additional mobile stations and safety kiosks, especially in areas like Hebron, Slovoville, Elarduspark, Elspark, Midvaal and various parts of Johannesburg to fast track police responses to crime-related issues. We commend the MEC and the department who have heard our appeals in this regard and have budgeted R5 400 000 for four new mobile stations and 36 new safety kiosks.

However, Madam Speaker, we need to be cognisant of the fact that each of these mobile stations and safety kiosks is still managed by human beings. Officers will be redeployed from the local station to work at the mobile station. This means that we cannot purchase these mobile stations without ensuring that we address the vacancies within the department.

If we don't expedite the filling of vacancies at police stations, these mobile stations and safety kiosks will serve no purpose and will only be stationed locked up in the backyard of the allocated police station. This will become a waste of money instead of a much-needed asset to enhance the safety of the residents of Gauteng.

This problem could be solved by broadening our base by forming partnerships with community organisations, providing voluntary registration of security service providers, provide accreditation to associations and neighbourhood watches and CPFs. The conditional grant for additional patrollers and the DA sponsored Community Oversight Bill could well be a solution to these identified problems to enhance our visible policing.

Madam Speaker,

The DA sponsored Community Safety Oversight private members bill is in its final stages and will be tabled in the house soon. It will focus on these items that all require funding or support to enhance not only oversight of the police but support structures as explained earlier. Funding that will improve the safety of our province, discipline and promote visible policing. We believe that this bill will fit in perfectly with the objectives of this budget and therefore support this budget to bring about a safer Gauteng soon.

I Thank You,

**Media Enquiries**

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