

## **The ANC government is failing our military veterans**

By **Maliyakhe Shelembe MP** – DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Defence and Military Veterans

Chairperson, the Democratic Alliance notes the allocation of R666.4 million to the Department of Military Veterans (DMV) for 2022/23. The DMV derives its mandate from the Military Veterans Act no.18 of 2011 which requires the Department to provide national policy and standards on socio-economic support to the military veterans and their dependents including benefits and entitlements to help realise a dignified, unified and self-sufficient community of military veterans.

Since 2011, the DMV under the ANC government has still not finalized the policies in order to implement the above mentioned mandate. The fact that the policies on transport compensation and pension have still not been finalized is an indictment to the Department of Military Veterans, including the Minister and the President, given that the Act has been in place for more than 10 years. Chairperson, this alone means the ANC is guilty of gross negligence and the ANC must voluntarily step aside and hand over the government to the Democratic Alliance in order to get things done.

The Military Veterans Act Benefits Regulations, as published in the Government Gazette on 19 February 2014, stipulates clearly that the DMV must, within 30 working days from the date of application for a benefit, notify the applicant in writing of the outcome of the application and the notification must be hand delivered or sent by prepared registered post to the applicant.

Mr Corwynn Christopher Peirs who is a military veteran (force number 80633118) and whose wife applied for medical assistance on 27 August 2019, has yet to receive a notification informing her of the outcome of her application. This is totally unacceptable. It has taken almost two years with no update on the outcome of her application, which clearly demonstrates a failing state under the ANC and the complete undermining of military veterans who risked their lives, suffered psychological trauma and injuries whilst protecting our country and its citizens. The failing ANC must please step aside.

Chairperson, it is disappointing that on 14 of May 2022 in the Northwest Province, the Deputy President, David Mabuza, who leads the Presidential Task Team told the military veterans that *“we are excited that finally the obstacles that were preventing us from dispensing the necessary services to the military veterans have been overcome”*. This is misleading given that the military veterans pension policy still needs to be formally adopted, the publication and amendment of the military veterans benefits regulations to make provision for regulations on pension has still not been done, and the allocation of funds for the purpose of military veterans pension payments had not been shown on the annual performance plan for 2022/23.

The allocation for the Socio-Economic Support Management sub programme, under which pension management falls, increased from R196.1 million in 2021/22 to R230.7 million in 2022/23. Over the medium term the allocation for this sub-programme remains stable which means no additional funds for payments of pension have been made, so for the Deputy President to say the DMV is ready to roll out pension and other benefits is misleading.

The Auditor-General has on numerous occasions raised concerns regarding the vacant critical positions under the DMV. These positions include the Deputy Director-General under Socio-Economic Support which has the responsibility to implement the rolling out of pension benefits for our military veterans, but no action has been taken to implement the recommendation of the AG.

In the third quarter of 2021/22, the Department of the Military Veterans had only used 48% of its allocated budget which is a demonstration of poor performance by the DMV under the ANC government. It is but one of the reasons why the ANC poverty Cabinet must voluntarily step aside before it is too late.

Chairperson, failure to implement consequence management is one of the reasons driving the DMV's inability to finalise the military veterans database and the rolling out of benefits for the military veterans. The Military Veterans Act was promulgated in 2011 but the Act and its regulations are still not complied with and nobody cares to implement consequence management in the ANC government despite this being raised by the AG on numerous occasions. Some senior staff members who are implicated in corruption, irregular expenditure and fruitless expenditure have resigned without going through disciplinary processes. If the ANC was serious about fighting crime these corrupt officials would have been in jail by now.

Chairperson, in conclusion, I want to categorically state that, only a DA government will work to deliver the benefits that are due to military veterans as required by the Military Veterans Act and Benefits Regulations.