Democratic Alliance speech by

**Bronwynn Engelbrecht MPL**

DA Gauteng Spokesperson for Social Development

**GBV victims suffer double blow as victim empowerment facilities are not user friendly**

Date: 6 March 2023

Release: Immediate

Madam Speaker,

I would like to share the story of Naledi, a delightful 12-year-old girl, bubbly and full of life.

Her mother worked till late, and her uncle, who owned a store, took care of her. Then, one fateful day after everyone had left the store, he accidentally dropped a box on the floor, asking Naledi to help him pick up the contents quickly.

Before Naledi realised what was happening to her, he was on top of her, pushing and hurting her with a force that her young body could not withstand.

When all was done, her uncle gave her R50 and told her never to tell anybody; otherwise, he would never help her mother again.

With a torn and broken body Naledi went home too terrified to tell her mother. When Naledi stood and didn’t want to sit at her desk, her favourite teacher realised something was wrong.

During break time and in tears, Naledi eventually told her teacher what had happened.

Immediately, her teacher took her to the police station. Unfortunately, the station was very busy, and they had to wait for their turn. Naledi was scared and wanted to run home and hide under the bed.

The teacher tried to explain to the police what had happened, but the officer said Naledi needed to speak for herself. However, Naledi didn’t want to tell the officer because everybody in the station knew her uncle and she was too scared that she would be humiliated and laughed at.

The policeman insisted she speaks loudly and by that time everybody in the station was looking at her and she started crying all over again.

Her teacher insisted on a private place to talk, and they went to an office. There they sat holding hands till another female police officer arrived and told them to come back the next day because there was nobody that could help them as they were a small police station; they did not have rape kits or a social worker to help as she lived far away.

Naledi’s still is not a once-off occurrence.

Of 143 police stations in Gauteng, 22 have no victim empowerment facilities; and many do not have rape kits. Victims like Naledi sits and shiver in the police station while the staff are insensitive and ignorant of how to handle victims. Many of the stations are understaffed and do not have experienced and trained officers.

The high incidents of violent crime in this country have created a society of victims. Naledi had her beloved teacher, but other victims face this shame alone and in isolation.

The National Crime Prevention Strategy intends to be a victim-centred restorative justice system focusing on the needs of the victim to establish multi-disciplinary victim-empowered services.

Yet, research by Nel and Kruger suggests that while almost 50% of the victims would have appreciated specialised services, only 4% received this. The current support services for victims of crime and violence are limited, fragmented, uncoordinated, and therefore also ineffective.

We have failed to meet the needs of many crime victims when it comes to empowering and assisting them.

We must empower our communities with information so that they can stand together against this scourge of violence. Education about GBV must start at home. We need to inform, enlighten, and engage all stakeholders through school and youth programmes.

All police stations must have well-equipped Victim Empowerment Programme facilities that are warm and inviting for the victim who needs emotional support from trained officers.

The DA demands that our police stations be fully equipped with experienced and trained officers in victim empowerment practices. We need a victim empowerment room in every police station that is fully equipped; we need victim-friendly rooms with soft, comfortable chairs, warm fluffy blankets, soft toys to give comfort and gentle music to calm the soul.

We need more sufficiently funded NPOs near police stations to provide a service with highly trained and accessible social workers.

Madame Speaker, we must ensure this is done for Naledi and all the other voiceless victims of crime.

I thank you.

**Media Enquiries**

**Bronwynn Engelbrecht MPL**

DA Gauteng Spokesperson for Social Development

082 376 1022

**Buchule Putini**

DA GPL Media and Issues Specialist

067 412 1043

**Buchule Putini**