

Budget Debate on Vote 5: Home Affairs

Adrian Roos, MP

DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Home Affairs

House Chair,

The vision of Home Affairs is presumably a South Africa where identity, status and citizenship are key enablers of citizen empowerment and inclusivity, economic development and national security.

On all these counts, Minister, you have failed. You have failed to ensure that the most vulnerable are documented and have access to opportunity. You have failed to deal with the visa backlog killing economic development. You have failed to safeguard our national security as the likes of Bushiri waltz in and out of South Africa.

And you would expect to see bold measures in this budget to address these issues. Instead, this budget continues to fund a cycle of cadre deployment, corruption, lack of caring, lack of basic services and no consequences.

If we start with citizenship empowerment, my colleague will(has) unpack(ed) this but I was reminded of the tragic consequences recently when a person who tried to apply for late registration of birth for four years and was refused access to hospital during this time, finally receiving her citizenship only to be diagnosed with cancer. Had it been detected earlier this South African would have survived.

No such problem for Thabo Bester, though. The man arranged another body in a prison cell as his own and when it comes to considering his late registration of birth our Minister just takes his word for it that he is the Thabo Bester born in a Soweto hospital in 1986 - no need for DNA testing. When the DA calls for free DNA testing for indigents you are as evasive as the Guptas.

We need a Home Affairs that cares, we need a Home Affairs where every person is important.

You say this it is because of undocumented foreign nationals. But it is you. In a 2015 briefing in Parliament, then Deputy Minister of Home Affairs Fatima Chohan said, and I quote: "We are going to make screening more difficult because most [of those] who are taking up late registrations are failed asylum seekers who have not left the country."

You said that your failure to deal with asylum appeals was an issue of money, but you then received an extra R146m and by September last year had processed less than 1000 of the 131000 appeals. In the mean-time South Africans are being put through hell to try and register their births.

Six years after the project Lokisa report exposed rampant corruption in Home Affairs' refugee offices what has happened to officials who make money out of keeping the problem going?

Under the ANC government the number of companies patrolling our borders has been reduced from 35 to just 15. You now have a Border Management Authority that is capacitated with millionaire managers and 200 so-called border guards. If undocumented foreign nationals are streaming in, why don't we hear about mass arrests by these 200 border guards? If they are posted at our border posts, why do we receive daily complaints of corruption and lack of staff at Lebombo and Oshoek?

You allow undocumented foreign nationals to enter at will and lock out investors. Unless they are, of course, UAE Royalty. We need a Home Affairs where every person is treated like royalty.

The DA will take this funding of millionaire managers and increase border patrols and force multipliers. We will explore an E-Verification system for employers to check work permits and we will decisively process the appeals of failed asylum seekers.

Minister, you have successfully presided over an environment where everything is for sale at Home Affairs and put our country's national security at risk. We see Pakistanis being arrested on national television for producing fraudulent documents, but ANC cadres doing exactly the same thing in Home Affairs offices get to leave with all their takings as you refuse to press criminal charges.

The 2019-2024 medium term strategic framework lists an Apex priority of Home Affairs as supporting economic transformation and job creation through the implementation of a revised visa regime and issuance of visas and permits to grow the economy. This is not economic transformation and job creation for cadres but for all South Africans.

Why is it taking so long? A survey conducted by MBO Partners found there were around 4,8 million digital nomads worldwide in 2021 and they spend an average of R55000 to R90000 per month – that's an estimated R5Bn per month that could potentially be going into our economy and the thousands of jobs that go with it.

The only economic transformation you seem to be interested in is transformation of the bank balances of cadres deployed. People are sick and tired of double standards. Being told to

tighten their belts while you splurge. Being made to put their lives on hold waiting for documents while connected criminals get preference. Having to work hard just to keep their job while overpaid public servants underperform without consequences.

The bottom line is South Africans are losing their work because you aren't doing your work.