

Budget Debate on Vote 30: Communications and Digital Technologies

Natasha Mazzone, MP

DA Shadow Minister of Communications & Digital Technologies

A Country with Little Ability to Communicate

After what can only be described as a laughable interrogation into the countless entries that fall within this department, all draining the National fiscus, and so many that could be incorporated into the same entity, one can see that this department is nothing more than a job centre for the ANC and a place cadres are sent when they have to be moved from other departments, or need a place to go to be employed.

Apart from SITA, I saw little to no enthusiasm or possibility of functionality, and we have to honest, given the state of the Post Office, who is going to trust the Post Bank?

Without a doubt, the biggest concern for the department is the South African Post Office.

It can now be declared without any doubt that the ANC has the reverse Midas touch, everything in touches turns to broke, the gold is long gone.

The struggling state-owned entity has been in a dreadful economic state for years and has now reached a new low in its financial crisis.

Since 2013, the SAPO has been losing millions in taxpayer money and these losses have been steadily increasing. As a result, has been forced to cut its workforce and shut down.

We are told yet again that the SAPO has developed a bankable strategy to transform the entity and make it profitable for business once again – a new strategy suited to this age and time. We have heard and seen it all before, the question remains: who stole the billions of rands and where are these massive bailouts supposed to come from?

MyBroadBand reported that in the company's latest financial statements for the period ending March 2022 showed that its debt was R4 billion more than its assets, and it owed over R4.4 billion to its creditors.

SAPO was placed in provisional liquidation this month following a creditor approaching the Pretoria High Court to recover back rent. Legal experts from Barnard Inc Attorneys noted that the company is technically insolvent.

Management and creditors have until 1 June 2023 to argue their case, said the legal experts. During provisional liquidation, a company's assets are temporarily frozen – allowing for investigations into its financial status.

The Court has appointed provisional liquidators to manage SAPO's assets, verify creditors' claims, and collect debts. Private companies are now competing with the failing entity as the legacy institution struggles to adjust to new consumer demands and awaits another bailout. Another bailout? Where is the EIGHT BILLION rand in bailouts it has already received. At what point is there just no more money left?

The group received a bailout earlier this year from the National Treasury amounting to R2.4 billion; however, this was not enough.

The company has been a consistent drain on the economy and is another example of mismanagement at a state-owned entity. Some have argued that its liquidation would be more beneficial to the country than trying to get it to run profitably.

It has now reached such a crisis point that Postbank Spokesperson, Dr Bongani Diako said social grant recipients can continue to use their expired cards at ATM's and Point of sales without the need to collect new cards or switch to other banks.

How can we not see the corruption and mismanagement this will cause, the writing for a disaster is on the wall, but the most vulnerable of our society are told that this is great news and they don't have to worry.

Here is the cold hard fact, South Africa could very well end up with no Post Office, as bizarre as it seems, it is the harsh truth no one is willing to admit. And yes, it's an absolute disgrace!

The fact is, we all have to worry, all of the time, and the reality of the situation is SAPO is a state captured entity as per the Zondo Commission Reports, and we dare not rest until a full enquiry is done and those who have destroyed a county's basic utility like a post office are sent straight to jail. Our time is short, but the evidence is there, follow the money trail and it will lead us to those who fed from the trough. We did it with ESKOM, and Chief Justice Zondo has made it clear we have a job to expose all those who robbed South Africa blind, and mark my words, find and punish them we will.