

Budget Vote 33: Human Settlements

Speech by Dr Ntombi Khumalo MP, DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Human Settlements

Thank you, House Chairperson,

Everything we do is governed by principles and values that we subscribe to, including budgeting and the process thereof. The budgeting process is governed by principles, including transparency, accountability, participation, equity, non-discrimination and equality ... well the human settlements budget may have followed some but certainly not all or most of these principles.

The reality is that the budget process is not limited to the point of allocating funds for certain functions but includes accountability, which year in and year out, seems to not be a priority, and as a result, the citizens of this country foot the bill for lack of accountability. There are millions of South Africans waiting for houses, for which money has been stolen.

I'll give one example of the many across the country: hundreds of millions were spent on a housing project in the Eastern Cape, Komga, Amathole District Municipality, Extension 10, which was aimed at delivering 1 140 RDP houses, now known as BNG for farm dwellers. Instead of houses being built, what was delivered though was 1 317 funny excuses for toilets, 76 of those toilets were built on a flood line which now has to be demolished. All those millions and no houses to show but toilets and enrichment for top dogs. The Mantashe family and Zulu saga continue to be with the SIU and of course the absence of answers and accountability, for over 11 years.

This Department is marred with corruption, maladministration, and unprofessionalism, and that is a fact! This Department is nothing but a messy crime scene.

The APPs for the Department and plans for the upcoming financial year, if visualized, one would certainly picture paradise where all citizens are looked after, respected, afforded dignity and their right to decent and good quality shelter by a caring and accountable government.

Instead, chairperson, the opposite is the reality of many South African citizens who still wait for shelter, and of the many that have received houses from this government, very little care has been taken to ensure that the houses being delivered to citizens are of good quality, are safe to reside in and are suitable for their specific needs.

The ANC government has been comfortable simply ticking boxes all around and having people live in houses that are falling apart as early as 3 months after handing them over to beneficiaries. And as per the norm, no consequences whatsoever. Department employees and entity staff continue uninterrupted. Perhaps the most welcomed filling of vacancies in the Department and entities will result in some positive change in the lives of South Africans.

Chairperson, the APPS on paper certainly is looking good, much like the many policies of this administration that are perfect and admired worldwide yet the implementation leaves much to be desired and admired. The Department and its entities are cruising on an island so far from the realities of many citizens of this country. There are a lot of monitoring and evaluation reports written and very few changes to benefit citizens, that emanate from those reports.

While one cannot deny that many provinces, with the Eastern Cape topping the charts on failure, are simply not performing, there are people still awaiting relief for disasters that happened as far back as 2017. It is clear that the failure of areas such as emergency relief, is a result of poor leadership and the absence of a will to act and deal with corruption. In the upcoming financial year, provincial

departments will no longer have the Emergency Housing Grant, for failures it could have nipped in the bud.

While it is worrying that the practical plans to deal with victims of disasters have not been well thought out, particularly the temporary accommodation arrangements during the 7 days in which the much welcomed Alternative Building Technologies are implemented, we hope this innovation from the Department will not be another opportunity for a looting spree when victims of disasters need to be supported, because it will be business under the very same people who have failed to step up to the task of serving vulnerable citizens of this country.

While unblocking projects is a good plan, it must be noted that there are over 600 blocked projects throughout the country, with only about half in works to be unblocked, and noting the urgency in which business is conducted in this Department, it is clear that not all blocked projects will be unblocked and completed in one more financial year from now.

We should be concerned, that targets and plans are increasing and the capacitation priority is not increasing accordingly.

We all should rightfully so, be concerned that the form and location of land developments, human settlement projects and informal settlement upgrades do not often respond directly to the government's commitments around spatial intent and transformation, but on paper, it all looks rosy.

We all should be concerned about the 1 million title deeds backlog and the challenges associated with the issuance of title deeds and only 7% were issued in a whole financial year.

We all should be concerned about the poor performance of informal settlement upgrades and the poor performance in as far as the upgrade of informal settlements is concerned.

We should worry that despite the minimal budget increases annually, the agenda of delivering decent quality shelter to those who are in need does not increase.

I'll say it again, South Africa deserves better, and South Africans will use their power through the ballot, to boot the non-caring ANC out and welcome a caring government that will conduct business under principles of equality, freedom and equal opportunities for all.

Thank you, Chairperson.