



North West Provincial Legislature Office

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NW Provincial Legislature, Unit 1, Mmabatho

Debate

Budget – Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation

Hon. CJ Steyl

22 July 2025

Honourable Speaker,

To debate the R776 million budget for the Department of Arts, Culture, Sport, and Recreation is quite a difficult one.

It also does not help that this department is wrongly classified within the social cluster when, in fact, it should be incorporated within the economic cluster.

That is, Arts, Culture and Recreation are economic activities with massive economic potential.

It requires a paradigm shift.

It is only then that this recognition will unlock the support needed to advance this economically viable sector.

The R750 million allocated budget is not enough to maximise the economic potential within this key sector.

The North West Provincial Government does not have an integrated economic master plan; if it had, it would have recognised the potential of job creation within this department.

The Donkervleit, Noyons, and Klein Marico Recreation Centres are still not economically viable despite the almost R14 million allocated towards their upkeep in this financial year.

Again, recreation is an economic activity, and yet, these trading entities lie dormant.

Honourable Speaker,

It's been a year since I was first introduced in committee to the Mmabana Arts, Culture, and Sports Foundation, and very little progress has been made to stabilise this entity.

Last year, we listed a litany of governance issues at Mmabana, and all of these persist.

Mmabana will receive just over R130 million in this financial year.

Money that should be earmarked for the development of artists and athletes and advancing and protecting the diverse cultures of our province.

Instead, Mmabana will consume almost R90 million of its entire budget in salary payments to officials that fail to meet the basic requirement of their roles.

Honourable Speaker,

Mmabana uses almost 70% of its annual allocation to pay salaries.

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In short, the entity currently exists merely to pay lip service to supporting arts, culture, and sport.

In committee, we are told that the turnaround strategy from years ago was effective, but today, the entity still sits with an Acting CEO.

In fact, the entire Mmabana is staffed by acting officials.

MEC Thlapi, this is not the kind of acting Mmabana is supposed to support.

This environment grows a culture of toxicity and impunity.

Especially considering the persistent stand-off between the Board and the Foundation's acting management.

In all fairness, considering the dilapidated state Mmabana finds itself in and as part of government's budget and programme rationalisation exercise, this Foundation should be dissolved.

The R130 million allocated to Mmabana can be better applied to tangibly support this sector through other means.

Honourable Speaker,

We have long maintained that sport development and infrastructure should be a key focus.

Sadly, there is almost no real funding available to establish new sports infrastructure, and funding made available goes towards mere cosmetic maintenance at dilapidated sports centres.

The construction of libraries is delayed, and when completed, they remain closed due to either a lack of staff or the staff appointed deciding when they want to open.

Libraries can be knowledge centres, but many lack the qualified staff, connectivity, and equipment needed to support accessing the knowledge economy and supporting entrepreneurship.

It is a travesty. The failures of this department and its entity deny so many talented individuals the opportunity they need to elevate the North West's arts, culture, and athletic potential.

Honourable Speaker,

Sports and culture used to be incorporated into the Department of Education.

Honourable Premier, it would be better to return to this alignment. It is within our schools where talent is unlocked, nurtured, and developed.

Our schools require sports infrastructure, where young athletes can receive the training and the education needed to excel not only on provincial and national platforms - but also to take North West to the international stage. Likewise with artists.

Honourable Speaker,

This department can do so much better.

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We know that provincial museums are falling apart. It brings into question whether art and historical artefacts are being well maintained.

There is insufficient funding for museum curators, restoration specialists, general staffing, safety, security, and programmes to amplify matters of artistic and cultural significance.

There is huge potential in formalised partnerships with museums, both nationally and internationally, to promote shared exhibitions and share conservation and restoration efforts of culturally significant artefacts.

We need to know what the asset register of culturally significant artefacts is.

What is the financial value of this collection? Are these artefacts adequately secured, exhibited, transported, and stored?

We know that North West can boast of amazing sporting and artistic talent.

That is because there was a time when sport and art were considered crucial as part of driving economic growth.

For almost 20 years this has no longer been the case.

Today, this department basically presides over the funerals of great artistic and sporting heroes or waits for winners at the airport to bask in the glory of their victories, which this government had very little to do with.

This needs to change. There must be a realignment.

Until then, the Democratic Alliance can not support this budget.

End.

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