



Democratic Alliance
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Debate on Vote 5: Home Affairs (Good Hope Chamber)

Honourable House Chairperson, Honourable Members,

The Democratic Alliance rises in support of Budget Vote 5 for the Department of Home Affairs. While this budget is not without its constraints, it reflects meaningful, measurable progress that is helping to grow our economy and create jobs. This is precisely what the Government of National Unity's apex priority demands, namely rapid, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth through job creation.

Over the past year, we have seen the Department transform from a site of administrative frustration to a hub of innovation and delivery. A year ago, Home Affairs was facing a crippling backlog of over 306,000 unprocessed visa applications, some dating back more than ten years. That backlog has now been completely cleared.

This is far more than a technical achievement. It has removed one of the biggest blockages to economic activity. Businesses can now hire critical skills. International students can register on time. Investors are no longer stuck waiting in limbo. Most importantly, this clearance has made it possible for the Department to implement a range of forward-thinking reforms, such as a points-based work visa system, a remote work visa, and the Trusted Employer Scheme, positioning South Africa to compete globally for talent, capital, and entrepreneurship.

Among the most exciting of these reforms is the Trusted Tour Operator Scheme, or TTOS. By simplifying visa processing for vetted group operators from India and China, the Department has opened a gateway to the world's second and [fourth](#)-largest outbound travel markets. Since February this year, over 17,000 tourists from China and India have visited South Africa through this scheme, visitors who would not have come otherwise.

And this matters. Our tourism sector contributes 9.5 percent to GDP, employs 1.46 million people, and creates one job for every 13 international visitors. According to international travel data, while Australia welcomed 1.4 million Chinese visitors in 2023, South Africa welcomed just 93,000. With TTOS, we now have the tools to close that gap and create real jobs in the process.

But the Department is not stopping there. The TTOS will soon be expanded to include MICE tourism, Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions, as well as international artists and sports professionals. This is an exciting development. It will broaden the reach of TTOS beyond leisure travel and open the door to high-value travellers and international events, positioning South Africa as an attractive destination for global conferences, sporting fixtures, and cultural festivals. This aligns powerfully with the Department's digital transformation agenda and with our country's strategic positioning as a world-class event host.

And as this happens, the Department is also strengthening service accessibility. In the coming months, new DHA offices will open across the world, enabling South Africans living abroad to receive their passports and Smart IDs within 30 days. This is a long-overdue improvement that will serve

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professionals, students, and families alike, ensuring they are not disadvantaged by distance. It is also a powerful message to the global South African community that they remain connected and valued.

The ETA, or Electronic Travel Authorisation, is also on track to go live in September for short-stay tourist visas. This AI-powered system will ensure that tourist visas are processed online, securely, and without corruption. In time, the ETA will be extended to every visa category, becoming the cornerstone of a fully digitised immigration system.

Home Affairs is also leading with impact on the civic front. This year, a record-breaking 3.6 million Smart ID cards were produced and delivered, 500,000 more than any previous year. These documents are more than IDs, they are passports to opportunity. They give young people access to education, employment, financial services, and voting. We urge the Department to increase its annual Smart ID target from 2.5 to 3 million, as recommended by the Portfolio Committee.

The Smart ID rollout is part of a broader vision, HomeAffairs@Home, that will allow citizens to apply for key documents entirely online, including a future digital ID and secure digital wallet. The Department is also rolling out live capture systems to health facilities and bank branches, bringing services closer to the people.

Inclusivity has also taken centre stage. For the first time, Smart IDs were issued to 1.4 million naturalised citizens and permanent residents, recognising them as full participants in our democracy and economy. In another victory for equal recognition, Muslim marriages are now officially reflected on Home Affairs marriage certificates.

We must also acknowledge the important recovery under way at the Government Printing Works. Once plagued by technical failures and backlog, GPW is stabilising operations, introducing new digital products, automating passport dispatch, and laying the foundation to become a Digital Trust Centre for the state. This shift will support secure e-government, regional trade, and innovation across departments.

But to truly unlock this potential, we recommend that GPW profits be ring-fenced for three years. This will allow for reinvestment in modern equipment, infrastructure, and digital services, and reduce the reliance on outdated printing infrastructure. Having surrendered over R1.7 billion in past surpluses to Treasury, GPW deserves the opportunity to reinvest in its own future.

Chairperson, this budget is not perfect. More resources are needed, particularly for infrastructure, staffing, and technology. But what cannot be denied is this, the Department of Home Affairs has turned a corner.

It is no longer just a service department. It is becoming an economic enabler, a jobs engine, and a driver of dignity and inclusion. It is attracting tourists, retaining talent, empowering citizens, and rebuilding public trust.

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The Democratic Alliance supports this budget because it supports results. It supports transformation. And it supports a future in which Home Affairs helps South Africa grow faster, inclusively, and with dignity.

I thank you.

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