



**Democratic Alliance**  
Email: [info@da.org.za](mailto:info@da.org.za)  
[www.da.org.za](http://www.da.org.za)  
P.O. Box 1475, Cape Town, 8000

## **Debate on Vote 33: Human Settlements 2 July 2025**

Honourable Speaker,

We, as the DA, are the anchor of the Government of National Unity. Builders of communities, of opportunity, and of accountability. Our Constitution enshrines the right to access to adequate housing, as everyone in our country deserves a place to call home. The Department of Human Settlements has an immense ethical and moral responsibility.

Unfortunately, however, the Department is lead by a Minister that has displayed the opposite of ethics and morals. If you are accused of co-looting the VBS Bank, you should be in the dock before a judge, and not a Member of this august House, let alone being entrusted with R33 billion of taxpayer funds to house the most vulnerable.

The Minister has not been in her post long, after being moved from the Justice Portfolio to Human Settlements. As one of the most unequal countries on earth, with millions of South Africans being without the dignity of calling a place home, it says a lot to choose a Minister accused of funnelling pensioners' money through a coffee shop.

Over multiple oversight visits, it has become evident that this department suffers from chronic weaknesses in intergovernmental coordination, project planning, and accountability. This misalignment between spheres of government results in duplicated efforts, stalled projects, and wasted funds. In the Free State, for example, substandard Phase 1 projects have consumed budgets far in excess of original allocations, with nothing but poorly built structures to show for it.

According to the 2025 ENE, nearly 90% of the department's R101.2 billion medium-term budget is transferred to provinces and municipalities. Yet poor planning, delayed procurement, and a shortage of engineering and technical capacity mean that service delivery is not corresponding with the scale of funding. Instead of delivering the promised 85,994 subsidised houses, we see underspending, irregular expenditure, and communities still waiting in informal settlements.

This year's budget has downgraded expectations: the number of fully subsidised houses to be delivered in 2025/26 drops to 28,776, from over 41,000 in the previous year. That is nearly a 30% reduction. At the same time, the title deed backlog, which is a crucial aspect of security of tenure, remains



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unresolved. Even though the target for new title deed registrations has increased to over 23,000, this is just a fraction of the housing stock built since 2014.

Speaker, this Department's dysfunction starts from the Minister's doorstep where delivery has stalled and broken entities are in further disrepair. We have seen it in the NHBRC's shrinking inspection targets despite widespread reports of poor workmanship in the subsidy housing sector. We have seen it in the NHFC, where First Home Finance approvals are plummeting, restricting access to affordable housing at a time when inclusion should be expanding.

At SHRA, recurring failures in compliance and governance reflect weak enforcement systems and delayed legislative reform. And at the HDA, a troubling reliance on consultants and concerns over brand protection raise further questions about internal capability.

Worryingly, the informal settlements upgrading grant to provinces has been cut drastically decreasing by 33.1% over the medium term. While the Department claims this is due to budget cuts, it is a shortfall that can be addressed through targeting irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure.

I certainly would not bet any money on this Minister doing anything to clean up shop. If allegations of corruption are true, she would rather buy coffee shops. She may in fact be planning of converting the Department of Human Settlements for her grand relaunch of her 'coffee' enterprise.

We need a professionalised human department sector one that values engineers, planners, and auditors as much as it values slogans. One that links housing delivery with economic growth and job creation, not just outputs on a spreadsheet.

Yes, this budget faces serious difficulties, but as Honourable Mphiti points out, if all else were equal, this budget would be supported. The allocation of R1,6 billion to emergency housing in times of disaster is a welcome addition, and greater support to first-time buyers will go a long way to building opportunity for new homeowners to enter the market and build new lives.

But we cannot trust that the precious taxpayer money allocated to this budget will be implemented or cared for by this compromised Minister, who was only redeployed to this department under the darkest of clouds. She simply cannot be trusted with R33 billion of hard-earned taxpayer funds meant to house the vulnerable, when her failures are so stark and so many.

**FREEDOM. FAIRNESS. OPPORTUNITY. DIVERSITY.**



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Speaker, we as the DA will not rest until the Department of Human Settlements delivers real houses, with real dignity, for real people, including being served under the right leadership.

I thank you.