Democratic Alliance speech by

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Wasted potential: Gauteng Department of Sport budget fails to support youth development

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**Madam Speaker,**

The Gauteng Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation (GDSACR) has persistently neglected to innovate and use its allocated budget to address the real challenges faced by Gauteng communities in sports, arts, and culture.

The budget in its current form fails to address the needs of Gauteng residents. In township streets across Gauteng, young children play soccer on dusty roads while officials organise expensive events which have no lasting impact on the lives of Gauteng residents. This budget was this department's chance to change the lives of ambitious young athletes and provide them with the tools needed to nurture their talents. Yet, once again, it fails.

The department has been entrusted with more than R1 billion, but the very people it exists to serve are the ones left behind. The truth is that our townships have become graveyards for forgotten talent. There are no functional sports fields, no vibrant community arts centres where young people can discover their potential. How can we support a budget that fails to change this reality?

The planning and allocations of this budget, like those before it, are recycled and ineffective. We welcome support for grant-in-aid, attention to school sports, and improved library resourcing. But this is not nearly enough. Resources are squandered on one-off events' catering and décor, while underfunding essentials like facilities, youth programmes, and infrastructure.

Glaring examples of misplaced priorities include the Gauteng Sports Awards (GSA), where 71% of the budget was spent on catering, décor, and staging, while only 28% went to supporting the athletes. Additionally, the department surrendered R11 million, which could have transformed soccer fields into sports fields or multipurpose centres in townships where children lack safe places to play.

How can we expect our youth to feel valued when this department alienates them in the budget?

Speaker, it does not end there. Our monuments - the physical embodiments of our stories - stand abandoned. The Women’s Living Heritage Monument remains locked despite R280 million spent on it. The Walter Sisulu Square is now falling apart. The Boipatong Monument and Youth Centre, meant to empower the community, has never lived up to its promise. In Kagiso, the memorial and recreation centre, with a state-of-the-art recording studio, stands silent, the R14 million heritage component vanished with the service provider.

It is not enough to acknowledge our heritage; we must actively work to preserve it, promote it, and harness it to create economic opportunities. These historical sites should serve as vibrant centres of activity that attract tourists, empower local entrepreneurs, and inspire future generations of creatives. Despite their potential, they remain untapped.

It's difficult to understand how this department spent over R159 million celebrating commemorative days instead of using this money to build and maintain real and lasting legacies.

A DA-led GDSACR would have used this budget to create facilities in every township to ignite dreams and nurture talent. We would have empowered communities by building infrastructure. We would have honoured the spirit of heritage through job creation and skills development, not stage lights and sound checks.

This budget does not speak to the aspirations of our communities nor address the socio-economic challenges faced by our people. That is why, we cannot in good conscience endorse it.

Thank you.

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