

## **BUDGET VOTES**

Vote 25: Justice and Constitutional Development

Hon. CT Msimang, MP

23 July 2020

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Dear Honourable Members, the IFP believes the Department of Justice is an essential service whose functions have long been crippled by the lack of resources.

The impact of Covid-19 on the services rendered by the Department of Correctional Services, the National Prosecuting Authority and the Office of the Chief Justice are palpable.

The further reduction of finances allocated to these entities serves only to compound service delivery issues and the weaken efforts against corruption.

Our prisons are perennially overcrowded, increasing the risk of the spread of the virus to inmates and officials. Regarding this, the IFP wishes to recognise the DCS's efforts in reallocating funds for PPE, as well as in reducing capacity at facilities by placing low-risk inmates on parole. This has eased overcrowding by 21% and while we have far to go, serves to counter the spread of Covid-19.

The NPA has been understaffed for years and the absence of the commitment to rectify this only lends to poor capacity. It is not prosecuting at the expected level, particularly corruption-related offences. Up to 700 prosecuting positions must be filled to effectively prosecute crime, which has remained rampant throughout the lockdown period. The budget adjustment has frozen essential hiring processes and taken crucial funds from the NPA and the Special Investigative Unit.

The internal reprioritisation of funds, while commendable, will be unable to effectively address these problems.

The IFP has long been calling for the establishment of an independent, well-resourced anti-corruption Integrity Commission, under the auspices of Chapter 9, to investigate and prosecute high-level corruption in the public service. This Institution will strengthen our constitutional democracy and is even more vital now, with the release of large amounts of money for essential procurements.

The IFP acknowledges the DoJ&CD and the development of a Criminal Case Backlog to alleviate the case backlog in the courts. This is another problem that has plagued our justice system for decades, overburdening courts and affecting the rights of citizens.

The IFP remains concerned by the limitations that the pandemic has placed on the services offered by the courts, as only certain criminal and civil cases may be heard for now.

We support the budget.

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