

MINISTER'S STATEMENT
PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONAL SERVICES BRIEFING ON
THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DCS
24 OCTOBER 2006

I am humbled by the reception that we receive in the meetings of this portfolio committee whenever we are required or requested to appear before it. The Portfolio Committee's oversight role should be construed and comprehended within the context of strengthening service delivery and also enhancing the capacities of government departments to deliver more effectively and efficiently.

These engagements should be viewed in that context and not as a mechanism to drive a wedge between committees and departments.

A week ago I appeared before this committee on the release of the Final Report of the Jali Commission of Enquiry, where concerns were raised by the Chairperson about the product of the report we had decided to release. Again this matter has been resolved amicably and in a mature fashion. Stemming from that constructive engagement with the committee, I am proud therefore to state that the executive report is being released today in its entirety but excluding the names of individuals who have yet to respond to the allegations leveled against them. Concerns raised by the committee on the earlier version of the report were noted and respected. Furthermore, the entire executive summary will be available on the Departmental website at 13:00 today for general public to be able to access it.

Regarding our appearance before the committee today on the Department's Annual Report, it has to be acknowledged that we are presenting a report that reflects on a drastic improvement and transformation of a department that has had a very bleak image as a result of its historical legacy.

In earnest, all of us know that we took over the reigns of a department that was in shambles with no content in terms of management policies and administrative procedures and systems. Our focus in this last five years focused on building institutional capacity and setting a process in motion of developing the policies, procedures and systems.

The introduction of the White Paper on Corrections that signaled the beginning of a fruitful process of transformation, has created conducive conditions for strengthening of financial management and process.

We need to acknowledge therefore that much has been done in terms of improving on our financial management and compliance in the last two years whilst there is still room for further improvement.

This has been demonstrated by the comprehensive overhauling of our management of systems, structures, policies and procedures, the overhauling of the Human Resource Development Strategy, the development of new budget programmes aligned to our policy framework as well as the auditing, reviewal and overhauling of existing policies to ensure alignment and compliance with policy imperatives so that we effectively deliver on our mandate. This reflects the major transformation period that commenced since 2001.

This transformation framework is almost concluded and the department is moving full steam into comprehensive implementation of outstanding issues. The 2004/05 and the 2005/06 reports firmly and explicitly demonstrates a profound change and major improvement in the performance of the department. In some areas our report may tend to focus towards policy formulation rather than quantifiable indicators. It should be expected that the process of planning and reporting will focus more on quantifiable indicators.

This however should not be construed to mean that had paid little attention to implementation during the transformation era. The challenges of transformation as alluded to above in terms of policy overhaul and reviewal, are quite immense and impact, to a large extent, on effective service delivery as new systems, processes and structures are being introduced.

I will confine myself briefly to issues that I believe we have greatly improved on and will leave the detail in terms of issues of programme performance and compliance to my officials who will deal with them comprehensively during presentation.

We remain concerned therefore by the number of issues we were qualified on. These include issues related to APOPS, Fleet Management, HR issues and processes such as long delays in the finalization of Disciplinary Cases and lengthy period of Suspensions with full pay, Vacancy Rate, management of MEDCOR and Leave.

It should however be openly stated that there are many cases where the department had committed itself to perform on issues that are not entirely under its control. These include, amongst others, the reduction of children in correctional centres, the security vetting of officials in correctional centres which is actually the domain of NIA and construction of new centres whose main responsibility lies with DPW in terms of construction and maintenance and Treasury for financing.

It is our view that the construction of new centres through the Public Private Partnership – APOPS - needs to add value and benefit to the department and not the other way round where it solely benefits Private Partners. It is for this reason that we will be engaging the services of a Project Manager in this regard to best

advise and manage on the best system that will ensure that there is value for money in the construction of new centres.

I will be introducing a short – term intervention in terms of dealing with the issues emanating from unsatisfactory performance of our fleet management. I am sure Members are quite aware that this is generally a situation that is prevalent throughout the public service. I will be having a bilateral engagement with the Minister of Finance, to resolve this area of performance.

I am also certain that Members will appreciate the fact that disciplinary hearings on their own are a lengthy process that cannot be circumvented or short – circuited, particularly where serious deviation from as well as violations and transgressions of policy have been committed. It is for this reason that we are currently finalizing all the disciplinary cases which had necessitated the suspension of staff on full pay.

I however need to acknowledge that some of the delays in disciplinary matters can be attributed to a weak labour relations management process. It is against this backdrop that we have introduced major interventions to capacitate middle and senior managers through training initiatives.

These interventions include training initiatives and interventions we have introduced in partnership with the Department of Public Service and Administration as well as the South African Management Development Institute, UNISA and the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), to improve on our management systems and processes.

Yesterday, I launched a Management Development Programme for correctional services managers, a training programme that has been developed in partnership with TUT to address some of these intricate management challenges and problems.

Shortcomings identified in the management of medical expenditure of MEDCOR is an area that is also being attended to promptly. Treasury is currently jointly working with the department to resolve the shortcomings which have been identified. We are also in the process of appointing a project manager in this regard whilst the migration from MEDCOR to GEMS is expected to alleviate some of the burden identified in the management of medical expenditure. I however need to mention the accolade that has been received from Treasury with regard to the department's management of MEDCOR, in terms of savings that have been accrued.

An overhaul of our Human Resources System is currently underway with the implementation of a new efficient and effective system – known as MY HR – which will, amongst other issues, resolve the management of staff leave.

The department however would like to concede that officials need extensive training of formulation of performance indicators as well as reporting of impact of our interventions. It is for this reason that we are currently in consultation with the National Treasury regarding the formulation of an effective Monitoring and Evaluation System. We are also exploring the possibility of adopting relevant aspects of the Organisational Performance Model of the SAPS.

I have initiated a number of interventions in the meantime which include, amongst others, setting – up clear time – frames for our turn – around in terms of service delivery, engaging the Auditor – General more frequently to find solutions to some of these challenges and improving planning and reporting systems.

In terms of management principles, I have instructed senior management to improve on the ability to monitor performance and effect the necessary corrections, to ensure effective mechanism are introduced to account for non –

Chairperson and Members, the challenges we face as DCS are very unique and therefore demand interventions that are uniquely tailor – made and modeled for a unique environment such as ours. Therefore there are no quick - fix solutions to the unique challenges faced by DCS. Interventions to address the department's historical legacy, have to be properly packaged and tailor – made to suit

I am quite optimistic that as we attend to the historical challenges of the department as manifested by many issues reflected in the Annual Report and the previously associated with this institution. I am also confident that we are on the

I also wish to assure you that we will not be distracted from fulfilling our institutional mandate by the prophets of doom who will continue to lambast us even when we do the right things. Positive mood currently prevails in this department as manifested by the general public and staff response to the

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successes that we have achieved on various fronts lately. We shall continue to sustain this so that even those that view us through the lenses of the past legacy of negativity and associate everything that we strive to do, with this bleak and dark historic anomaly, are able to be converted so that they can see a completely different and transformed department.

We shall continue to do the right things and we will not be apologetic for the challenges that we are dealing with, which are clearly and simply a manifestation of the historical legacy of the Apartheid System. We shall continue to rise to these challenges until we have ensured a complete turn – around and fundamental transformation of this department.

I thank you