

Alan Grootboom: PanSALB's achievements are invisible

Honourable Chairperson,

I am acutely aware of the errors of the apartheid government, and it pains me to see our government repeating the very same errors of the previous government. There is a saying: *"From the errors of others, a wise person corrects their own."* I therefore have to question this government's wisdom.

Arts and Culture speaks to the soul of the nation and has the ability to build a socially cohesive society. The many failures of the Department of Arts and Culture unfortunately overshadow its successes.

Just as Iziko Museums are success stories, Robben Island Museum, the Performing Arts Centre of the Free State (PACOFs) and the National Language Services, the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) in particular, are failures.

PanSALB is a Chapter 1 institution. Based on the statutory guidelines, no organ of state may interfere. This entity has repeatedly simply ignored calls for timely submission of Annual Performance Plans and Annual Reports. PanSALB believes that the Portfolio Committee has no jurisdiction over it, only the Minister.

What is currently happening within this entity? Within three years, the staff complement grew by a massive 49%. In the previous financial year, they received a disclaimer opinion as administrative expenditure soared from R8 million to R11 million while expenditure on its mandates plummeted from R23 million to R17 million. Irregular expenditure grew to a massive R28 million, which is roughly 30% of the Board's total budget. In short, this entity misuses taxpayer money.

This entity has failed to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Official Languages Act 12 of 2012. Currently less than 20% of National Departments have a language policy.

The lack of proper oversight and assistance resulted in, as one example, the Ministry of Science and Technology adopting English, isiZulu and Sepedi as its official languages. Afrikaans was excluded in the policy of this Department.

Generally the people of the Northern Cape do not know isiZulu nor Sepedi and speak English only occasionally. They speak Afrikaans and Setswana and so it is clear that they will not benefit from language "developments" in their own province.

Although Minister Pandor acknowledges Afrikaans in her preamble and the scientific developments in the Northern Cape, the language which is widely spoken in this area of our country is ignored to the detriment of the people.

Where is the fairness when you limit the opportunities of people based purely on their language? Maybe the Minister is still in retributive mode, punishing Afrikaans speakers.

The core mandate “to promote multi-lingualism in SA” has been lost!

Sihlalo, Mphathiswa andi sokuze, ndithathe ujakalasho oluse igusha zam!

The PanSALB board saw it fit to appoint a man they had previously fired and who had brought law suits against them, as CEO. This has led to internal revolt and petitions. This entity is at war with itself! How do you build social cohesion if you are unable to build cohesion in your own organisation?

The DA acknowledges that we can never undo the injustice suffered by previous generations. But that is not to say that we can't do anything for future generations. It is our duty to the future generations of this country to promote the languages our country has to offer. Unfortunately PanSALB's achievements in this regard reads like a ghost story, no not a good story, a ghost story, their achievements are invisible!

Hon Speaker, Hon Minister, the DA urges you to implement the recommendations of the Public Affairs Research Institute tabled in March 2014. Specifically recommendations to close PanSALB completely and save the taxpayer approximately R35 million.

The functions of this entity can be taken over by the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities – which is a Chapter 9 institution. Parliament will then be able to do proper oversight and demand accountability.

Let us create a fair and just society by setting the conditions that incubate the honorable ideals of freedom, fairness and opportunity.

Winston Rabotapi: Department of Arts and Culture still not interested in performing

Honourable members,

The DA regards the preservation and maintenance of our rich and diverse culture as vital for the emergence of a united, tolerant and self-confident nation.

The Department of Arts and Culture plays a critical role in this regard, therefore South Africans cannot afford for such an important national department to be badly managed.

Art can help to build appreciation for different perspectives and deepen understanding for the different experiences of being South African. And this is why this department is vitally important.

According to the Department of Arts and Culture, its mission is to enhance job creation by preserving, protecting and developing arts, culture and heritage to sustain our democracy and build our nation.

But if you compare this mission with the performance of the Department, there is clearly no connection.

Currently, there is no strategy to promote artists and artistic expression. Outstanding policy on the monitoring of the implementation of the use of Official Languages Act 12 of 2012 is also an issue that requires the Minister's attention.

It is clear that Minister Mthethwa has done little to give clear direction to his department.

House Chair, this department is underperforming. There are many examples of this. Entities such as Robben Island and the Nelson Mandela Museum in Qunu are but two. The severe underperformance of this museum is tantamount to dragging the name of the icon utata u Mandela through the mud and is unacceptable.

Another example is the inability of the department to effectively implement the Use of Official Languages Act. The DA believes that priority must be given to implementing this Act within its entities, departments, ministries and especially in schools and tertiary institutions.

Yet another example of poor management, which I spoke of last year, is the Performing Arts Centre of the Free State (PACOFs) which is still plagued by mismanagement.

Poor financial planning is at the heart of this department's failures. The department's budget for 2015/16 financial year is almost R4 billion.

With this budget the Department could do much better.

The department and its entities have recorded an increase in irregular expenditures during the 2013/14 financial year. A comprehensive review of the mandates and efficacy of different entities reporting to the department, as well as the institutions created by the Constitution to protect and promote cultural, artistic and linguistic diversity, needs to be conducted.

The results of this review can be used to streamline institutions, to clarify their mandates and to make sure that funding allocations effectively support national priorities.

Fruitless and wasteful expenditure increased by 106%, between 2012 and 2014. In the financial year ending 28 February 2014, the irregular expenditure is disclosed at R171 million.

This is of great concern as it illustrates that the Department and its entities do not follow the correct internal control measures. Essentially they are wasting money that could be put to good use in creating jobs and promoting social cohesion.

This money could have been used to support budding artists who all too often never get the opportunity to study their craft and develop into renowned artists because of poverty and financial constraints.

The Department could have used this money to set up much needed arts centers in rural areas to give our children an opportunity to express their artistic talents.

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The results of this review can be used to streamline institutions, to clarify their mandates and to make sure that funding allocations effectively support national priorities.

The mandate of this department is going unfulfilled. How do we achieve togetherness, harness our collective energies, talents and creative geniuses to better South Africa when the Department given the responsibility to drive this is in a shambles?

I thank you.