**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE WELCOMES BANNING USE OF CELL PHONES BY FRONTLINE OFFICIALS AT HOME AFFAIRS**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 12 February 2019 –** The Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs welcomes the report that the usage of cell phones by frontline employee is banned as per Circular 11 of 2003 and Circular 24 of 2012, which was agreed to by all relevant stakeholders, including labour unions. The assurance follows the call made by the committee early this year calling for the complete banning of cell phones as it impacts on the quality of services rendered to clients.

“It is now clear that the usage of cell phones is banned and clients must not be faced with this challenge when they seek services at the Department of Home Affairs,” said Mr Hlomani Chauke, the Chairperson of the Committee.

The committee has encouraged citizens to continue monitoring and reporting bad service by Department of Home Affairs’ officials, to enable the department to identify employees who are undermining the delivery of the department’s mandate.

The department has assured the committee that it has undertaken a review of departmental policy on frontline employees’ cell phone use with relevant stakeholders to strengthen it. “This is a constructive step aimed at reinforcing the endeavour to deliver quality services,” Mr Chauke emphasised.

The committee is satisfied by remedial action taken by the department, which include written warnings to the officials at the Tongaat office. “The committee remains of the view that service excellence should be the bedrock of the public sector and every effort must be made to adhere to principles of Batho Pele.

Meanwhile, it is concerning that there is no adherence to policy, which points to lax management. The committee has called for the strengthening of management, especially at office level, as it is there that clients receive service.

Meanwhile, the committee is encouraged by the service rendered by Ms Nosipho Mkhupheka at the Scottburgh home affairs office in KwaZulu-Natal. Ms Mkhupheka has gone beyond the call of duty to assist clients, even after official working hours. “This is the quality of service we want to experience on a daily basis across the country,” Mr Chauke said.

The committee has also welcomed the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa’s (IEC) progress report on preparedness for the upcoming elections. The committee is encouraged by the high turn-out during the voter registration weekend. The committee remains convinced that the IEC is ready to deliver credible elections that are essential for South Africa’s constitutional democracy. The committee will visit the IEC election centre to assess election readiness first-hand.

Furthermore, the committee calls for more people to visit municipal offices to register and update their addresses before the proclamation of the elections, which is expected to occur on 26 February 2019.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HOME AFFAIRS, MR HLOMANI CHAUKE**