**African Christian Democratic Party**

**30 May 2023**

 **ACDP Parliament
Debate on Vote 19: Social Development
Speech by Marie Sukers MP**

 **ACDP MP says the war on children is in the numbers**

“Honourable Chairperson,

As we consider this budget, the ACDP wishes to focus its attention on the growing crisis in the children's sector.

There is a critical need for a round-table on the plight of vulnerable children, and the urgency for this Committee to increase oversight on the work of the Department in this sector. We have requested a round-table Minister, in Committee, and want to reiterate that call here today.

Child activist and journalist Robyn Wolfson-Vorster rightly commented that children are the constituency-based politicians, and the State ignore them because they do not protest or burn tyres. This is at the very heart of the issues affecting children, their voices remain silent even in the law-making and policy process. The State seeks to close their schools without hearing their voices, and effectively ignore their plight of homelessness and hunger, by defunding NGO’s in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal.

In the Karoo there is only one YCC, Huis Triomf, serving the vast area of Oudtshoorn, Leeu Gamka, De Rust and Prince Albert all the way to Beaufort West. The ACDP sought a social partner for its doors to remain open, and the Barn Christian Church, under the leadership of Roelof Kwant, heeded that call. Congregants who contribute to the billions available to this department committed another R1.5 million to restore dignity to 30 boys.

Our call to the MEC of Social Development here in the Western Cape remain unanswered. We are calling for the capacity of Huis Triomf to be expanded, and for protection services in the Karoo to be upscaled urgently.

The war on children is in the numbers: Violence against children is widespread with 1 in 3 children reporting some form of maltreatment. A 2013 study in the Western Cape found that 98.9% of adolescents had witnessed community violence, 40.1% had been a direct victim of community violence, 76.9% had witnessed home violence, 58.6% had been a victim of home violence, and 75.8% had either had direct or indirect exposure to school violence. 26% of adolescents have also experienced some form of sexual assault.

The impact of this on our nation will be seen in the decade to come.

In closing, Minister, I want to acknowledge your commitment by the continuation of the programme with the community of Lavender Hill, in Southern Peninsula, initiated by the ACDP, and now driven by the Western Cape Province and the National Department. This was a response by you to a budget vote speech of mine two years ago.

Thank you.”