**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COGTA COMMITTEE CONCERNED BY EASTERN CAPE COVID-19 PROGRESS REPORT**

**Parliament, Friday, 17 July 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta) raised concerns about what seems to be an incompatibility between the Eastern Cape provincial government’s report and the experiences of people living in the province.

The committee received a report from the provincial government which seemed to suggest that while there are a few challenges, the fight against Covid-19 is progressing well. The committee highlighted that a collective effort is necessary to win the war against Covid-19, and this effort should be based on openness on the part of all stakeholders.

The committee was also concerned by the lack of progress on the employment of the 7 642 additional skilled healthcare personnel. The committee is concerned that only 3 459 of these workers have been appointed to date. The committee emphasised the need to fast-track the employment of skilled health personnel in the province.

While the committee welcomes the strengthening of primary healthcare in the province, it is concerned that only 370 of 768 health clinics meet “ideal clinic” status, as per National Health Insurance guidelines. While this is an improvement on the 66 clinics with this status before the 2019/2020 financial year, more must be done to ensure that clinics offer ideal primary healthcare support. Furthermore, this is an opportunity to ensure that clinics are fit for purpose post-Covid-19.

The committee criticised the decision to purchase motorcycles to function as ambulances, as these vehicles do not meet the required standard. The department should have realised that using such transportation raises the risk of undermining the dignity of patients and also puts their lives at additional risk. The committee welcomes the termination of the idea and is hopeful that it does not incur cost penalties.

The committee welcomed the assurance that the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) has significantly improved and that the province has a one-to-two-week surplus. The committee advised that this availability level should be maintained to ensure the safety of frontline healthcare workers.

Within the education sector, anomalies in the statistics presented concerned the committee, as these raise questions about the reliability of tracking and tracing capabilities in the province.

With regards to the provision of water, the committee is concerned that 284 water tanks have still not been installed. This directly impacts on the ability of communities to follow World Health Organisations protocols to combat the spread of Covid-19. The committee instructed the provincial executive to move with speed to ensure these tanks are installed.

In the fight against corruption, the committee called on the provincial government to urgently complete its investigations into allegations of corruption relating to relief funding. This should include the case of Mioca Lodge, OR Tambo advanced payment to Amatola Water and the disappearance of R25 million in relief funding from Beyers Naude Local Municipality. Consequences must apply in all cases of wrong-doing and investigation reports must be tabled before the committee as soon as they are completed.

The committee also noted the financial mismanagement in the province, which has been evident in drought-relief projects. The National Disaster Management Centre allocated disaster grants to provincial health departments for ventilators and PPE, and the Eastern Cape is the lowest spender to date at 7%. R 44 551 000 was allocated, but only R3 120 000 has been spent since March 2020. The committee has requested the province to indicate what is being done to address this underspending.

The committee has committed to visiting the province to conduct oversight on the provincial government reports.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, MS FAITH MUTHAMBI.**