**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES COMMITTEE GIVES SUPPORT TO ACTING SOLICITOR-GENERAL**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 16 February 2021 –** The Portfolio Committee on Justice and Correctional Services today received a briefing from the Office of the State Attorney (OSA) on its turn-around strategy.

The committee heard concerns regarding private counsel’s setting of fees for state litigation, which at times are higher than in the private sector. “Counsel are able to negotiate fees in the private sector and when they come on board in state litigation, they charge whatever – exorbitant fees,” said Acting Solicitor-General, Mr Fhedzisani Pandelani.

Mr Pandelani was appointed a year ago when the office was established. He told the committee a fee parameter is needed “as opposed to them just charging fees that are exorbitant. There seems to be no bargaining or negotiating on fees, but merely accepting whatever amount outside council wants.”

The committee further heard that it would be ideal if in future all state-owned enterprises account for the legal counsel they decide to brief. The OSA intends to advertise to the legal fraternity who can then indicate their interest in rendering state legal services, with the goal of creating a database of such service providers.

Mr Pandelani also noted that some regional OSA offices lack basic technological tools. “Some are still paper-based and do not even have a desktop computer,” he said. His office has uncovered medico-legal claims that have been instituted against the state in more than one province.

Mr Magwanishe and several committee members were concerned about Mr Pandelani’s short, two-year term of office, as the OSA is only now beginning to uncover ways in which the state can save on litigation fees. Mr Magwanishe assured the OSA that the committee “will walk this journey with you. You cannot fight corruption if you have a corrupt legal system. The committee undertook to regularly engage with the OSA in order to monitor progress.”

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, MR** **BULELANI MAGWANISHE.**