TRANSPORT COMMITTEE BRIEFED ON MOVES TO STAMP OUT CORRUPTION AT LICENCE TESTING CENTRES

The Department of Transport and one of its entities, the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) today briefed the Portfolio Committee on Transport about plans to implement improvements to the online licence booking system in order to address challenges, including the licence issuing backlog and corruption in licence station centres.

Deputy Minister of Transport Ms Sindisiwe Chikunga said this move was among a number of initiatives and interventions that the department was undertaking to improve the delivery of services and enhance efficiency, especially in the renewal of licences. “Our interventions and the action plan on the renewal of licenses seek to overhaul the current system, which is plagued with inefficiencies and corruption,” the Deputy Minister said.

She told the committee that through the planned digitalisation and integrating of driving licence testing centres (DLTCs) with the Department of Home Affairs, cases of fraudulent drivers licences would be addressed. She added that currently corrupt elements were abusing the system and applying using fake identity documents. She said the ultimate goal was the elimination of queues at DLTCs and addressing corruption.

The portfolio committee also heard that corruption was the main driver for the lack of booking slots in many DLTCs in Gauteng, often as a result of collusion between corrupt officials and driving school operators. “If corruption was not as endemic, entrenched and systemic most of the challenges would not be here. The issue is mainly about corruption. We have syndicates operating in our centres, from the security at the gate to the most senior official of the licencing station, and we are trying by all means to fight this corruption,” Deputy Minister Chikunga said.

The Chief Executive Officer of RTMC, Advocate Makhosini Msibi, told the Portfolio Committee on Transport that the interventions will include upgrading the NaTIS system, digitalising some mobile centres, introducing online eye testing with the Health Professions Council of South African and the expansion of the online booking system to other provinces.

“With the online booking system, a driver will do bookings online and only go for eye tests at the station, and also have the option of having their licence delivered at home, to avoid queuing,” said Adv Msibi.

In another development that seeks to address corruption, only the computer will know the outcome of the eye test, not the official operating the computer. “In Mpumalanga alone we are losing about R2 billion to fraudulent activities by officials. It is a very lucrative deal to work at a DTLC, most make, on average, no less than R22 000 per day. We arrested officials who were making about R140 000 in two days.

“The new system of smart services speaks to all the elements of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) and the harmonisation with Home Affairs to establish validity of identity documents will all deal with the problem of fake driving licences,” said the RTMC chief executive.

The committee welcomed the department and RTMC’s initiative to improve efficiency in the renewal of driving licences and also address corruption. “We are happy to hear that there are plans to improve the online booking system. Currently it’s a disaster and corruption at the DLTCs is collapsing the entire system,” commented committee member Mr Khethamabala Sithole.

**Sakhile Mokoena
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