**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE CONCERNED BY INTENTION TO DELAY HEALTHCARE TO DEPENDENTS OF MILITARY VETERANS UNTIL AMENDMENT OF LEGISLATION**

**Parliament, Thursday, 2 September 2021 –**The Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans has raised concerns with some of the delays in the provision of essential support to military veterans especially in the context of the history of challenges facing the Department of Military Veterans (DMV). The committee received an update on the work of the Presidential Task Team on Military Veterans.

“While we welcome some green shoots regarding the work of the different workstreams, we remain, however, concerned that benefits such as healthcare are still affected by various factors. The committee is concerned that provision of healthcare to the dependents of military veterans is delayed by policy uncertainty” said Mr Cyril Xaba, the Chairperson of the committee.

The provision of healthcare is a primary and constitutional imperative. Waiting for this long for policy review and a possible amendment to the legislation is unacceptable. Despite this, the committee welcomes the appointment of a permanent Director-General at the department which will hopefully add an impetus to realise the strategic objectives of the department.

Also, the committee welcomes the efforts of institutionalising the relationship between the DMV, other government departments and agencies. To this end, the committee welcomes the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Provincial Governments of Gauteng, Eastern Cape as well as a number of State-Owned entities. “The committee calls on other provincial governments and state-owned entities to move with speed to sign these MoU in order to codify their contributions to ensure a better life for military veterans,” Mr Xaba said.

The military veterans’ database remains an area of concern and urgency is needed to ensure its finalisation. The finalisation of the database is critical in enabling effective planning and budgeting. The committee will continuously engage the department to receive progress on the work of the Presidential Task Team on Military Veterans with the aim of improving services to the military veterans.

Meanwhile, the committee has welcomed the assurance that the Director-General will ensure consequence management against officials responsible for negative audit findings and that the process must be concluded by 31 December 2021. The committee welcomes the suspension of four senior managers within the department and has called for speedy conclusion of investigations and disciplinary processes.

The committee remains concerned that for the 2020/21 financial year, 73 audit findings were identified by the Auditor-General, with 25 of those findings recurring. The committee is hopeful that the appointment of the Director-General and the intended recruitment drive will ensure effective management of the department and drive it towards the achievement of its mandate.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS MR CYRIL XABA**