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## CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE THE BACKLOG OF THE DRIVERS LICENCE RENEWAL

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### 1. Introduction

Given the huge backlog caused by the closure of licensing centres due to varied reasons namely; COVID-19, corruption by some transport department officials, who booked and sold licence renewal slots, faulty equipment and downtime-systems at licensing centres in many provinces but largely in Gauteng. In recognising these challenges and the impact on motorists, the Department of Transport (henceforth, the Department) issued a grace period for the renewal of licences from 31 March 2020 to 31 of March 2022. This applies to the temporary licences, professional driving permits and licences for those with learner licences. The total backlog of driving licences that expires by 31 March 2022, stands at 2.1 million nationwide, of this number, a considerable proportion fall within the COVID-19 extension, which accounts for 70% at 1.5 million.<sup>1</sup> As a result, this brief discusses current challenges and interventions by the Department towards reducing the backlog of the renewal of drivers licence.

Due to the aforementioned challenges, motorists could not secure bookings in time to renew their driver licences before the 31 August deadline, hence the second grace period, which expires on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2022.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Timelive (2022)

<sup>2</sup> Businesstech (2022)



## 2. Drivers licence backlog

Nationally more than 1.2 million licences, out of a total of 2.8 million expired licences, were yet to be renewed. This represents 42.4% non-renewal, with only 57.6% of all expired licences renewed. This is also compounded by a backlog of 500,000 licences waiting in the system<sup>3</sup>.

The breakdown per province of the total number of licenses not yet renewed, is as follows<sup>4</sup>:

Province	Licenses not yet renewed	Percentage
Gauteng	744,710	35 %
KwaZulu Natal	345,433	16.2 %
Western Cape	279,175	13,1 %
Limpopo	197,166	9,3 %
Mpumalanga	175,142	8,2 %
Eastern Cape	155,598	7,3 %
Free State	101,355	4,8 %
North West	94,621	4.4 %
North Cape	37,710	1,8 %

As stated earlier, the Gauteng Province accounts for the largest backlog of the number of licenses not yet renewed at 35%, followed by KwaZulu Natal at 16.2 %. The Northern Cape is the lowest at 1,8%.

### 2.1. The Democratic Alliance's (DA) proposal to address the stated challenges

The gravity of the challenge and the financial implications faced by the motorists have made the Democratic Alliance (DA) to put forward the following suggestions for the Department to consider.<sup>5</sup> Given the centrality of Parliament's oversight role, these suggestions are listed as follows.

- Allow special after-hours and weekend services for Professional Driving Permit (PrDP) applicants;
- Allow Gauteng drivers to renew their driver's licences anywhere in the country;

Immediately allow Gauteng motorists to renew licences at the following surrounding towns: Emalahleni, Delmas, Leandra, Evander, Secunda, Balfour, Sasolburg, Parys, Ventersdorp, Hartbeespoort, Brits, Bela-Bela, Rustenburg, Potchefstroom and Standerton;

<sup>3</sup> Businesstech (2022)

<sup>4</sup> IOL (2022)

<sup>5</sup> Businesstech(2022)



- Provide online applications, where drivers can pay their application fees and fill out all forms electronically before visiting a DLTC;
- Allow applicants to submit eye tests for the tests to be evaluated in their absence (e.g. after-hours). They must only be called for another visit (eye test) if the eye test submitted is unsatisfactory;
- Increase the number of eye testers at DTLCs to provide faster service and to accommodate more slots daily;
- Reduce the response time to repair eye testing machines;
- Allow reputable chains and practices (such as optometrists, banks, supermarkets, etc.) to provide the renewal of driver's licences on an urgent basis;
- Conduct an audit into whether all available slots are being communicated to the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) by licence testing centres and whether all slots provided to the RTMC are indeed logged onto the eNatis system;
- Allow for the booking system to prioritise licences that are overdue for renewal; and
- Extend the term for driver's licence renewals to a longer-term (e.g.7 or 10 years).

## **2.2. Issues for Consideration**

- Are there any plans to introduce an application of IT system in the licensing of cars and the drivers licence by the Department nationally?
- Can the Department explain the partnership it has with the South African Postal Services for the renewal of motor licences? Can such partnership be explored to expand the capacity for motorist, while also strengthening that entity?
- The Department should provide the Committee with details of the measures taken to curb corruption in the provision of licenses.
- Is there a turnaround strategy to deal with licensing backlog post the expiry date (of the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2022)? Are the DLTC's ready, in terms of the human resource capital and the resources, to deal with the challenges, post the expiry date?
- Please explain the budget set aside for clearing this backlog.
- Has the Department engaged the Organised Labour for its buy-in? If not, why and if yes – please apprise the Committee of the deliberations' outcome



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are there any plans by the Department to extend the term for driver's licence renewals to a longer-term (e.g.7 or 10 years)</li></ul> |
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### 3. Conclusion

This extent of the backlog indicates that it will not be resolved by the expiry date of 31<sup>t</sup> of March 2022. The Department should also consider alternative ways to deal with the driver's license backlog, for as long as it lasts.

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## REFERENCES

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