**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**DEFENCE COMMITTEE CALLS FOR STRENGTHENING OF SYSTEMS AT DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY VETERANS**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 19 October 2022** – The Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans has welcomed a briefing from the Department of Military Veterans on its annual report for the 2021/22 financial year. However, the committee noted that the department has not received a clean audit in many years, but still expects a clean audit going forward.

The committee remains seriously concerned with continued poor communication between the department and its military veteran stakeholders. The DMV reported to the committee that in 2021/22 it had targeted six performance indicators, mainly aimed at socio-economic benefits to military veterans and their dependents.

The committee reminded the department that its underperformance and failure to deliver on one of its critical programmes – socio economic support, which includes education, healthcare, pension and housing benefits – is extremely concerning.

On the issue of housing, the department said that in the period under review, it handed 71 newly built houses to military veterans, due to a rollover of some projects from previous financial year by the Department of Human Settlements. The committee further registered its concerns about continued underperformance on the delivery of houses to military veterans, where some of them are forced to face the frailties of old age without receiving their benefits.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans, Mr Cyril Xaba, said, “Despite budget cuts, the department has continuously failed to spend allocated budgets and it’s a serious concerns that needs the attention of the Minister.”

The committee noted that some officials have been on suspension for long periods of time without being formally charged with misconduct or their suspensions finalised.

The committee reiterated its call for the department to address its challenges with speed, so it can assist military veterans.

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

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