**Report of the Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration on Oversight to the Northern Cape and Free State Provinces from 27-31 March 2023; Dated 07 June 2023**

The Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration (hereinafter referred as the Committee) undertook oversight visits to the Northern Cape and the Free State provinces. The Committee met with the Offices of the Premier in both provinces to discuss the state of the provinces relating to administration and governance matters, with the focus on: Service Delivery Improvement Plans (SDIPs); Thusong Service Centres (TSCs); filling of vacancies for Heads of Department; payment of service providers within 30 days and Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring facilities (unannounced visits to Hospitals, Traffic Department and Home Affairs). The Public Service Commission enlightened the Committee with the state of the public service in both provinces. The Committee reports as follows in terms of what has been discovered through the oversight visits:

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Parliament derives its powers from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. In terms of the Constitution, Parliament is charged with constitutional responsibility to exercise oversight over the Executive Authority. Section 42(3) gives oversight powers over executive function to the National Assembly. One of the functions of oversight listed in the Oversight and Accountability model is to ensure that policies developed by government and authorised by Parliament are implemented and translated into service delivery. This function includes monitoring the achievement of goals set out in legislation and government’s own programmes.

The Department of Public Service and Administration is at the core of government in setting sound governance and administration through developing norms and standards applicable across the public service. This affords the Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration with a transversal mandate to oversee the entire public administration and monitor the implementation of the norms and standards as outlined by the Department for the public service. The Committee oversight was informed by the norms and standards developed by the Department of Public Service and Administration for all government departments in terms of ensuring sound administration and governance across the public service.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) accounts to the National Assembly. The Commission assists the National Assembly with an oversight role over the executive function by ensuring that there is accountability on the implementation of activities related to basic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution. The PSC was very instrumental in empowering the oversight visit by providing the Committee with provincial snapshots on the implementation of basic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution.

The theme for the oversight visit was about *“Inculcating a culture of capable, ethical and professional public service”.*

1. **OBJECTIVES OF THE OVERSIGHT**

The objectives of the oversight visit were as follows:

* To assess adherence and implementation of the Service Delivery Improvement Plans;
* To assess the state of the Thusong Service Centres;
* To assess the backlog or progress in disciplinary cases;
* To assess state of filling Heads of Department vacancies;
* To assess the state of both provinces towards payment of service providers;
* To assess working conditions at the frontline services and oversee compliance with regard to the implementation of the Batho Pele principles;
* To assess implementation of and adherence to the constitutional values and principles;
* To receive a report on the state of service delivery in both provinces from the Public Service Commission.
1. **COMPOSITION OF THE DELEGATION**

**The composition of the delegation was as follows:**

**3.1 Members of Parliament (National Assembly)**

Ms MT Kibi (Acting Chairperson) MP ANC

Ms T Mgweba MP ANC

Ms TS Maneli MP ANC

Ms MM Ntuli MP ANC

Dr J Nothnagel MP ANC

Dr M Gondwe MP DA

Mr J Mc Gluwa MP DA

Ms RN Komane MP EFF

Mr CHM Sibisi MP NFP

**3.2 Parliamentary Support Staff represented by:**

Mr M Zibeko Committee Secretary

Ms N Diya Committee Assistant

Mr J Ngoepe Content Advisor

**3.3 Department of Public Service and Administration and National School of Government**

***DPSA Team***: Ms V Mafana; Parliamentary Liaison Officer, Mr E Kgomo: Chief Director; Sivuyile Mkebe, Parliamentary Liaison Officer; Lydia Sebokedi, Acting Executive Director Centre for Public Service Innovation; Dr S Mohlokoane, Chief Director National School of Government; Juanita Penrell, Director National School of Government.

**3.4 Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation**

***DPME team*:** Mr Lungisani Muthungwa, Deputy Director; Mantsie Motsepe, Deputy Director; Melny Kekana, Deputy Director; Asibabale Dlakuse, Assistant Director; Massy Ntseiseni, Provincial Coordinator.

**3.5 Norther Cape and Free State Provinces: Public Service Commission**

***PSC Team*:** Commissioner Gxoyiya, CommissionerMrBoshoff, Oduetse Makgari, Deputy Director; T Singo, Deputy Director; Elrico Solomons, State Admin Officer; Director Sisa Mlisana.

**3.6 Northern Cape Province representation:** Office of the Premier:Dr Z Saul, Premier of the Northern Cape Province; Mr Justice Bekebeke, Director-General; Tshandi Wanyane, Assistant; Ryan van Schalkwyk, Office of the Premier: Thusong Centres; Elso Shelton, Admin Clerk Thusong Service Centre; Venus Blennies, MEC; Norman Shushu, SEA; Nape Mothiba, Manager; Jackson Mashabela, Systems Development; Nontsikelelo Qebengu, Deputy Director Office of the Premier; Keabetwe Mokuchwane, Deputy Director Office of the Premier; S Vallabl, Chief Director; Gugulethu Matlaopane, Deputy Director General; Maletsha Tlaletsi, Chief Director; Maria Serrys, Acting Chief Director: IT; Samantha Garrel, Director EXCO.

***Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe Hospital:*** J.K Pasha, Joseph Sandt, Thembi Magobane, Dr H Saeed, Dr E Olivier, Dr KA Kantan, Ms SH Alexander, Nursing Service Manager; Ms J Pasha, Quality Assurance; Ms ME Magabane, Health Informatics.

***Home Affairs Team:*** Mr Caiphus Shabangu, Regional Manager; Dorcus Mashiane, Office Manager Kimberly; Ms Charleen Malambo, Secretary.

**3.7 Free State Province representation:** Office of the Premier: MEC of Education**:** Mr Mohale, Mr Pulane Pitso, Director Office of the Premier; Ms Nodumo Tyali, Acting Deputy Director General Office of the Premier; Ms Irene Griffiths, Chief Director Office of the Premier; EC Rockman, Advisor Office of the Premier; Tshidi Koloi, MEC Social Development; Thabo Meko, MEC DESTEA; Limakatso Mahasa, MEC SACR; M Mohale, Education; T Meeko, Economy; N Ntombela, Social Development; AJ Venter, Deputy Director Office of the Premier; IA Mabona, CoGTA, D Hagen, DESTEA; Masechaba Sesing, Treasury; Sizwe Mablo, Office of the Premier; Baesi Ramudule, Free State Health; Mr Fanie Mukungwa, Manager Home Affairs Mangaung. Dr Torres, Chief Executive Officer Botshabelo Tertiary Hospital.

***Pelonomi Tertiary Hospital Team:*** Mr. TE Makume, Acting Chief Executive Officer; Dr MJ Maseloa, Acting Head of Clinical Services; Ms MC Molefe, Head of Nursing Service; Dr GP Matshediso, Chief Medical Officer; Mr. M Parkies, Head of Finance and SCM; Mr. GJ Kgasane, Head of Pharmacy; Mr. LA Khiba, Acting Head of Technical Services; Ms FM Letlhoo, Acting Head of Admin.

***Botshabelo Traffic Test Station Team:*** Mr EL Khatkare, Security Officer; Ms Dorcas Seate, Chief Admin Clerk; Mr TE Latuma, Police, Road & Transport; Tlhakudi Tlhakudi, Principal Provincial Inspector.

1. **OVERVIEW AND INTERACTIONS OF THE OVERSIGHT VISIT**

**4.1 Northern Cape Province**

**4.1.1 Interaction with Northern Cape Office of the Premier**

The main purpose of the oversight visit was to oversee the Northern Cape Province on a myriad of issues such as Service Delivery Improvement Plans, Thusong Service Centres, filling of HODs vacancies, caseload on disciplinary cases, and 30 days’ payment to service providers. Service delivery is at the centre of all identified issues. The Department of Public Service and Administration together with the Public Service Commission have published and tabled in Parliament numerous reports related to above-mentioned oversight visit focus areas. The focus areas have culminated into the Committee deciding to conduct an oversight in the Northern Cape province.

The Committee held its first meeting with the representatives from the following: Office of the Premier, Public Service Commission, the Department of Public Service and Administration, the National School of Government and the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation.

The Office of the Premier together with the Provincial Public Service Commission made presentations on the above-mentioned oversight visits focus areas. The Northern Cape Premier, Honourable Dr Zamani Saul, warmly welcomed the delegation from the National Assembly. The Acting Chairperson officially opened the oversight visit meeting and mentioned that the visit was divided into two days; first day to receive presentations on the state of the province and second day to conduct inspection in loco to selected service delivery centres to assess numerous areas concerning frontline services with the aim of determining the impact on the citizens. The following were focus areas for the oversight visit:

* + - 1. **Vacancies for Heads of Department**

The Northern Cape Administration has 11 departments, which includes the Office of the Premier. The Office of the Premier has a Director-General and a total of seven (7) departments have Heads of Department. There were three departments with acting HODs, which were the Provincial Departments of Health, Social Development and Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform. The province assured the Committee that recruitment and selection process to fill HoD positions in the above-mentioned departments were at an advanced stage and would be concluded in mid-April 2023.

* + - 1. **Payment of invoices within 30 days**

The Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), section 38(1)(f) states that the accounting officer for a department must settle all contractual obligations and pay all money owing, including intergovernmental claims, within the prescribed or agreed period. According to PFMA Section 40, Accounting Officers are required to keep full and proper records of the financial affairs of the departments.

Treasury Regulation 8.2.3 states that, “Unless determined otherwise in a contract or other agreement, all payments due to creditors must be settled within 30 days from receipt of an invoice or, in the case of civil claims, the date of settlement or court judgement”.

The devastating impact of the non-payment of suppliers within 30-days largely affect Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises, which indirectly impacts on service delivery. Non-payment of suppliers within 30-days has dire effect on many service providers. Payment of service providers within 30-days remain a key priority and has to be constantly monitored by government. The departments have set all systems in place; however, some departments are still unable to fulfil statutory requirements of payment of suppliers within prescribed period. Most of the departments were managing payments to creditors with the exception of the provincial Department of Health. Approximately 90% of the invoices older than 30 days not paid were from the provincial Department of Health.

The provincial report indicated a general month to month improvement in the number of invoices paid after 30 days. The report further illustrated a general decline in the rand value compared to the previous financial years. The Department of Health’s monthly reporting on unpaid invoices was inaccurate, the Office of the Premier and provincial Treasury intervened resulting into an improvement, decreasing both the number and rand value of invoices that remained unpaid for more than 30 days. The number of invoices that remained unpaid were 2 562 compared to 9 583 in the previous financial year. It was established that only six provincial departments did pay invoices within 30 days.

The province cited a myriad of reasons and challenges relating to non-compliance with Section 38 of the PFMA, such as the issues with State Information Technology system (SITA related challenges), inadequate budget or cash flow challenges (especially at Health), poor alignment of budget and procurement plans, inadequate internal capacity, unresolved invoices discrepancies, delays in the processing of invoices for processing (internal controls), Central Suppliers Database related challenges, human error and intervention, and manual system used to track invoices.

In order to overcome all abovementioned challenges related to payment of suppliers, the province has committed to providing support intervention to the Provincial Department of Health to ensure alignment of plans, budget and cash flow; and the BAS and LOGIS System clean up (removal of long outstanding orders and commitments). Electronic Invoice tracking system will be implemented to provide credible information for reporting purposes. The Provincial Treasury committed to leading the process of sourcing the system to ensure complete and accurate reporting. The Office of the Premier would ensure that provincial departments account regularly to the Director-General and EXCO in honouring payment of service providers within 30 days.

* + - 1. **Service Delivery Improvement Plans**

The Public Service Regulations 2016, Chapter 3, Part 3: Paragraph 38 states that an Executive Authority (EA) shall establish and maintain a service delivery improvement plan aligned to the strategic plan contemplated in regulation 25 for his or her department to:

* Specify the main services to be improved to the different types of actual and potential service recipients as identified by the department.
* Maintain consultation arrangements with the department’s actual and potential service recipients.
* With due regard to the service recipient’s means of access to the services and the barriers to increased access thereof, specify the mechanisms or strategies to be utilised progressively to remove the barriers so that access to services is increased.
* Indicate standards for the main services identified for improvement.
* Contain arrangements as to how information about the department’s services are to be provided; and
* Stipulate a system or mechanisms for complaints.

The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) requires departments to submit Service Delivery Improvement Plans (SDIPs) by 31 March every three years. The SDIP aims to outline the key service(s) that the respective departments provide; provide the current standards for the identified service(s); identify the service beneficiaries along with the key service(s); and identify two or three priority services for continuous improvement.

The SDIPs have to be signed off by the Heads of Department (HoDs) and the Executing Authority (EA) and should be submitted to the Department of Public Service and Administration electronically and in hard copy in the prescribed SDIP format. The Department assesses its performance annually and the annual reporting has to be aligned to the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). The SDIPs’ annual progress and monitoring reports have to be sent to the DPSA by 30 June. The SDIPs are updated annually if necessary to improve the quality and submitted to the DPSA by 31 March as per DPSA timelines.

The main focus for the Committee in this regard was to assess the following: overall submission rate of provincial SDIPs, SDIP comparative analysis on overall submission rate, comparative analysis for Northern Cape province in relation to above-mentioned focus areas and the impact of the SDIPs in ameliorating quality of services across all provincial government departments.

The provincial Departments in the province were struggling with the compilation of the SDIPs. The province had approached the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) to provide support through workshop sessions, which was convened in December 2022. The provincial departments had developed draft SDIPs to be submitted to the Office of the Premier and to the DPSA. However, the Premier’s Office had human resource capacity challenge to analyse the SDIPs prior to submission to DPSA. Only one Assistant Director monitors the SDIPs for the entire province. The province approached the DPSA to assist with analysis of the provincial SDIP’s.

* + - 1. **Thusong Service Centres**

The Province has five existing Thusong Service Centres which are; Manne Dipico; Guinness (Colesburg); Thlokomelo; Augrabies and Kgomotsego. Like many other visited provinces, the province has mentioned budgetary challenges impacting negatively on the effective running of the centres in terms of delivering services closer to the communities. The Office of the Premier is partially funding provincial centres with minimal operational costs to ensure continuation of business operations. Municipalities are not showing any sign of taking responsibilities of the centres even as most of these centres are located in their jurisdiction.

As a result of budgetary constraints to fund the Thusong Service Centres, the province has collaborated with Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI) to design and develop the Thusong Service Centre Mobile Application that would take services to the citizens. The province successfully lobbied free Wi-Fi from the private sector for Augrabies, Manne Dipico and Thlokomela Thusong Centres. Two Tele-centres were resuscitated at Augrabies and Manne Dipico Thusong Centre from 2021 to 2023. These centres are used to access online opportunities.

* + - 1. **Status of disciplinary cases**

According to Section 7(3)(b) of thePublic Service Act of 1994, Heads of Department are mandated with a responsibility to ensure the efficient management and administration of their departments and the maintenance of discipline. The Department of Public Service and Administration’s circular of 16 January 2012 mandated all departments to report quarterly on disciplinary matters, on the prescribed templates. The Department receives reports on a quarterly basis from National and Provincial Departments. Information from these reports gets consolidated manually.

In case of the Northern Cape Province, the Department of Health, Department of Education and Department of Social Development reported the highest number of cases. Approximately 12 of 25 cases were finalised within the prescribed timeframe of 90 days, whereas 13 cases were finalised outside the prescribed period. A total of 34 cases resulted in precautionary suspensions where five matters were finalised and 29 remained pending as at December 2022, with the provincial Department of Health and Department of Education having the highest number of precautionary suspensions. The provincial Department of Health recorded the highest cost of R29.5 million whilst the Department of Education recorded R15.4 million of the officials in precautionary suspensions.

* 1. **Provincial Public Service Commission: State of the Provincial Report**
		1. **Background**

The Public Service Commission (PSC) was established in terms of Section 196 (1) of the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996). The PSC is independent, impartial, and exercises its powers and performs its functions without fear, favour or prejudice in the interest of the maintenance of effective and efficient public administration and a high standard of professional ethics in the public service.

Section 196(4)(e) of the Constitution requires that the PSC report to the National Assembly (and in the case of provinces, to the legislature of that province) in respect of its activities and the performance of its functions, including any finding it may make and directions and advice it may give; and to provide an evaluation of the extent to which the values and principles set out in section 195 are complied with.

* + 1. **Section 196 (4) (e) Report**

Section 196(4)(f)(ii) of the Constitution, 1996, read with section 35(1) of the Public Service Act, 1994, mandates the PSC to investigate grievances of employees in the public service concerning official acts or omissions. Furthermore, HoDs are required to report to the PSC on a six-monthly basis on the resolution of grievances. Over the past three financial years, the Northern Cape Provincial Office of the Public Service Commission handled 37 grievances. A high number of grievances (27) were reported in the 2020/21 financial year. Over the past three years, the most commonly reported grievances had been related to probation, salary-related matters and unfair treatment.

Section 196(4)(f)(i) and (iv) of the Constitution mandates the PSC either of its own accord or on receipt of any complaint (i) to investigate and evaluate the application of personnel and public administration practices, and to report to the relevant executive authority and legislature; and (ii) to advise national and provincial organs of state regarding personnel practices in the public service, including those relating to the recruitment, appointment, transfer, discharge and other aspects of the careers of employees in the public service. This gives the PSC the opportunity to understand how various public administration practices affect individual public servants and any impact on service delivery.

**Grievance management**

Before lodging a complaint with the Commission, the complainant should first endeavor to resolve the complaint with the relevant institution. If the complainant is still not satisfied, or when it is not desirable for a person to endeavor to resolve a complaint with the relevant institution, he or she may then lodge that complaint with the Commission *via* the national office or provincial office.

A total of eleven (11) complaints were lodged with the Northern Cape Provincial Office of the PSC in the 2021/22 financial year. One (1) complaint was carried over from the 2020/21 financial year, bringing the total number of cases for the 2021/22 financial year to twelve (12). Seven (7) of these cases were finalised. Out of the seven (7) finalised cases, four (4) were resolved by means of early resolution management. Such complaints were finalised within thirty (30) days from receipt thereof by the investigating officer. Out of the seven (7) cases that were finalised, four (4) were outside the mandate of the PSC. The remaining three (3) cases were found to be substantiated. The types of cases reported during the 2021/22 financial year were as follows: appointment irregularities (7); maladministration (2); HR-related (1) and unfair labour practice (2). Key recommendations were made such as disciplinary actions be taken. Irregular appointments were to be corrected by approaching the courts and vacant posts to be re-advertised.

**Financial Disclosure Framework**

The provincial PSC monitors the state of compliance with the Financial Disclosure Framework (the Framework) by government departments and Executive Authorities (EAs). The Framework was introduced to the South African Public Service in 1999 as a necessary step to safeguard the confidence that the public bestows on the Public Service. This Framework was incorporated into the Public Service Regulations, 2016 (PSR, 2016). In terms of Regulation 18 of the PSR, 2016 all members of the Senior Management Service (SMS) in the Public Service are required to disclose all particulars of their registrable interests annually to their Heads of Department (HoDs) by no later than 30 April each year. Heads of Department are also required to disclose same to their EAs.

Upon receipt of the disclosures, HoDs and EAs must submit copies of the disclosure forms to the PSC by no later than 31 May of that particular year. Any person who assumes duty as an SMS member on or after 1 April in a year shall make such disclosure within 30 days after assumption of duty in respect of the period from 1 April to the date of disclosure. The PSC has reported that the province had over the past five years submitted 100% disclosure forms within stipulated timelines.

It was reported that the number of SMS members with directorships in companies has marginally decreased in the past three years from 103 in 2018/19 to 76 in 2020/21. This is indicative that the PSC’s recommendations on scrutiny reports were being implemented. In most instances, the PSC would recommend to the affected senior manager to resign from companies trading with the state since public servants are precluded from conducting business with the state. The PSC noted the decrease in the non-disclosure of directorships in companies by SMS members from 24 in 2018/19 to zero in 2020/21.

During the 2019/20 financial year, 20 SMS members in the Northern Cape provincial departments were involved in activities that could be construed as posing potential conflicts of interest, down from 44 SMS members in the 2018/19 financial year. The Department of Co-operative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs had the highest number of cases of potential conflict of interest for each of the three financial years in question, although there was a decline in the number of potential conflicts of interest cases in 2020/21. The PSC advised the EAs to ensure that the involvement of these SMS members in companies be closely monitored to avoid such involvement leading to actual conflicts of interest.

**Remunerative work outside the public service**

Section 30 of the Public Service Act, read with the Directive on other Remunerative Work outside the Public Service (RWOPS) prohibits public servants to perform or engage themselves to perform other remunerative work outside their normal employment in the relevant Department, except with the written permission of the relevant EA. The PSC established during the scrutiny process that there were SMS members who engaged in RWOPS, some of whom did not have the necessary written approval of the relevant EA.

A total of 12 SMS members in the Northern Cape provincial departments were engaged in other remunerative work (ORW) in 2019/20. This is slightly more than the ten (10) SMS members engaged in ORW in 2018/19. In 2020/21, the number decreased to seven (7) SMS members engaged in ORW. The amounts generated by SMS members through ORW have been steadily decreasing over the past three financial years. In 2019/20 financial year, R294 000.00 (12 SMS members) was the highest recorded and R140 500.00 in 2018/19 (10 SMS members) respectively. However, in the 2020/21 financial year, it decreased to R99 000.00 (7 SMS members).

The Department of Co-operative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs had the most SMS members engaged in ORW in the 2019/20 financial year (three SMS members), followed by Roads and Public Works as well as Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform, Sport, Arts and Culture (two SMS members each). In the 2020/21 financial year, the Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform had two SMS members and the Office of the Premier, Provincial Treasury and Department of Roads and Public Works each had one SMS member performing other remunerative work outside the Public Service.

**Financial misconduct**

Section (85) (1)(a) and (e) of the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (PFMA), requires an Accounting Officer of a department to report cases of financial misconduct, in a manner prescribed by section 4.3.1 of the Treasury Regulations 2002, to the Executive Authority, the Department of Public Service and Administration and the PSC.The importance of monitoring the management of financial misconduct gives effect to the PSC’s mandate as contained in paragraph 196 (4)(f)(iii), which requires the PSC to monitor compliance of applicable procedures in the Public Service.

Over the past four financial years, a total number of 90 financial misconduct cases were reported as finalised by the Northern Cape provincial departments. The majority of cases (36) were finalised during the 2020/21 financial year. This was followed by 35 cases finalised in the 2018/2019 financial year. A total of 14 cases were finalised in the 2019/20 financial year, while the number of finalised cases decreased to only 5 cases in the 2021/22 financial year.

Over the past four financial years, financial misconduct had been most prevalent at salary levels 1-8. For the 2021/22 financial year 100% of financial misconduct cases were reported at salary levels 1-8. In 2020/21 only 11% of employees charged with financial misconduct were employed at Middle Management Service (salary levels 9-12). Over the past four financial years, no cases involving SMS members were reported as finalised.

Whilst there has been an overall decline in the number of financial misconduct cases reported as finalised from the 2018/19 financial year to the 2021/22 financial year, the amount involved increased from 2018/19 to 2020/21. The lowest amount involved was reported for the 2021/22 financial year at R100 741.54. This implies a decrease of 92% from the previous (2020/21) financial year. The actual amounts involved may be much higher taking into cognizance that irregular, fruitless and wasteful and unauthorized expenditure is often stipulated as having been incurred in the Annual Reports of departments, but no consequence management (charging officials with financial misconduct) was seemingly implemented with reference to the expenditure incurred.

Criminal proceedings were instituted in 14% of cases in 2018/19; 50% of cases in 2019/20; 6% of cases in the 2020/21 financial year; while no criminal proceedings were instituted in the 2021/22 financial year. Departments indicated that criminal action was not applicable in 12% of cases in 2018/2019, 30% in 2020/2021 and 20% in 2021/2022. A total of 12 financial misconduct disciplinary cases were reported as not finalised as at 31 March 2022. The Department of Social Development had the highest number of pending cases with 4 (33%), followed by Economic Development and Tourism with 3 (25%) cases; Sport, Arts and Culture, Transport, Safety and Liaison and Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs each had 1 (8%) pending case.

**Payment of Invoices**

On a monthly basis, Provincial Treasuries provide National Treasury (and the PSC) with information related to provincial departments’ payment of invoices. Particular focus is placed on invoices paid after 30 days and those older than 30 days not paid. The PSC then monitors the provincial departments’ compliance with the payment of suppliers’ invoices on a quarterly basis. Defaulting departments are subsequently engaged and requested to inform the PSC of what measures will be put in place to adequately address the late or non-payment of invoices.

This is particularly critical for small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs), who depend largely on the available cash flow and can ill-afford any delays in receiving payment for services rendered as this poses a risk to their operations. During the whole of the 2021/22 financial year (April 2021 to March 2022), a total of 7 015 invoices were paid after 30 days by departments in the Northern Cape Province. The cumulative value of the said invoices was R727 227 453.63.

The Department of Health had the highest number of invoices paid after 30 days (6 358 invoices totaling R594.2 million), followed by Education (303 invoices totaling R27.2 million) and Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform (131 invoices totaling R29.3 million). Although the Department of Roads and Public Works only had a total of 79 invoices paid after 30 days, the value of the said invoices was R60.7 million. The only department which did not have any invoices paid after 30 days in the 2021/22 financial year was Economic Development and Tourism.

A total of 21 113 invoices older than 30 days had not been paid by the date the Provincial Treasury submitted the monthly reports to National Treasury. The cumulative value of the said invoices was a staggering R1 140 752 264.84. The Department of Health accounted for most of the above-mentioned invoices (20 861 invoices totaling R994.5 million), followed by Education (143 invoices totaling R122.9 million) and Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (91 invoices totaling R4.8 million). As with the invoices paid after 30 days, the Department of Roads and Public Works had a relatively low 15 invoices older than 30 days and not paid by the due date, however the total amount for the said invoices was R18.4 million.

Compared to Quarter 1 of the 2022/23 financial year, Northern Cape provincial departments recorded 219 more invoices paid after 30 days in Quarter 2 of the 2022/23 financial year, which represents a 20.1% increase in the said number of invoices (1 307 invoices in Q2 as opposed to 1 088 invoices in Q1). The departments that mainly contributed to this increase were Health; Education; Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform; and Roads and Public Works. The compliance rate of Northern Cape provincial departments with the timely payment of invoices regressed further in Quarter 3 of the 2022/23 financial year. Departments recorded 443 more invoices (33.9% increase) paid after 30 days in Q3 of the 2022/23 financial year (1 750 invoices in Q3 compared to 1 307 invoices in Q2). The Department of Health was the main contributor to this increase, recording 463 more invoices paid after 30 days in Q3 when compared to Q2.

* 1. **INSPECTION IN LOCO**
		1. **Kimberly Department of Home Affairs**

The purpose of the oversight was to inspect frontline services in terms of Home Affairs service standards and queue management in various units. The Committee was welcomed by Centre Manager (Ms DM Mashiane) and members of the management services. Kimberly Home Affairs Department has a staff complement of 34 serving in various four units. The main unit with 16 staff members is Civic Services. The office has a satellite office in Galeshewe township sharing same staff members.

The Committee discovered a manageable queue on its arrival. Recipients of home affairs services and expressed its satisfaction about service standards at the centre. Members engaged with numerous individuals who were on the queue and were impressed with the manner the centre was managing the queue and its efficient services. Shortage of staff in the Kimberly Home Affairs Department was a major factor contributing to slow pace of services. The Committee found two staff members at the frontline services assisting members of the community, with only two cubicle opened for services.

In total, the provincial Home Affairs Department had eleven mobile truck services providing home affairs services closer to the communities. However, the Kimberly Office had two mobile truck services assisting neighbourhood communities in bringing services closer to the surrounding areas, more particularly for the elderly and students. Mobile truck services timeslots/itinerary get communicated with community leaders on a monthly basis.

In terms of the infrastructure, there is a need to obtain suitable and accessible office space for the Kimberly Home Affairs. The office is located in town; however, it was not well located to host a Department such as Home Affairs due to the high number of people visiting the centre. There is a need for the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to identify a suitable building that would accommodate business priorities of the Department of Home Affairs. Another major challenge facing the Department is poor connectivity due to the State Information Technology Agency not playing its role efficiently. Unreliability of the system network also contributes to poor services and long queues. The Department of Home Affairs needs to resolve the unreliability of the network services, which results in constant system downtime.

Birth registrations were also impacted by poor connectivity at Home Affairs services. Many new-born babies are discharged from hospitals and clinics without birth certificates. Both departments of Health and Home Affairs need to collaborate to strive for improved connectivity to ensure that all new-born babies are given birth certificates on the day they are born. The centre has a complaints management system for citizens to raise their grievances and concerns.

* + 1. **Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe Tertiary Hospital**

Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe Hospital is formerly known as Kimberley Hospital Complex (KHC) situated in the east of the town of Kimberly. The iconic founder of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) reportedly died from lung cancer at the hospital on 27 February 1978 aged 53, having been banished to Kimberley after his release from Robben Island in 1969. The hospital is the only tertiary hospital in the province.

The main purpose of the oversight to the hospital was to monitor frontline services and queue management in various units such as pharmacy/dispensary and casualty area. Furthermore, it was to oversee how the hospital implemented SDIPs and the Service Charter. The visit was unannounced, however, on the arrival Committee Members requested to meet with the Hospital Management. The management provided a detailed report about the functioning and challenges encountered about the hospital, which among was the maintenance of the facility. Shortage of suppliers of the medication was no longer a major challenge as the national Department of Health was securing sufficient medicine.

Cleanliness of the hospital was questionable as there was a smell of medication and filthiness on the floor from reception area to management offices. Ablution system was identified as a major challenge which needed swift attention by the provincial Department of Health together with Department of Public Works. Generally, there was ageing and dilapidating infrastructure, which needed serious intervention to improve health care of the Northern Cape citizens. The level of hygiene was also questionable and needed to be improved in order to fully comply with the health standards set out by the National Department of Health.

There was a shortage of professional staff such as medical doctors, specialists and nurses. The Committee further discovered a high turnover rate of medical specialists due to the various reasons cited. The hospital management was unable to retain and attract skilled medical practitioners in the province. The hospital had a high vacancy rate whereas all posts were funded and were vacant for far too long without human resource recruitment strategy to fill positions. Nursing services was also under-staffed more particularly speciality nurses. Operating theatres were under tremendous pressure due to shortage of speciality nurses. The management assured the Committee that they would advertise all critical positions with the intention of filling them within a reasonable period.

There was instability in senior management positions of the hospital. Most of the managers were appointed in an acting capacity, including the Chief Executive Officer. The National Department together with the provincial Department of Health will have to ensure stability in management positions by filling all senior management posts.

In interacting with patients, the Committee noticed that there was a lack of systems to effectively manage the queues. Patients raised their dissatisfaction in the way the hospital staff managed the queue. Some patients’ sleepovers in the queue to get assisted by the following day. There were also no guarantees that they would be assisted on the following day. There was overcrowding at causalities, which according to the hospital management was caused by the fact that there was no district hospital in Kimberly to accommodate some of the patients. There was a need to have an electronic system to manage queue in the hospital.

The hospital continues to take laundry services to Upington, which is 409.6 kilometres away from Kimberley. The Committee was surprised about hospital taking laundry services to Upington leaving laundry companies in the city centre and the neighbourhood. The turnaround time of laundry was affected due to distance between the two towns. Some of the clothes were reported missing on return. Security and safety in the hospital required necessary intervention in order to ensure the safety of the patients and workers inside and outside the precinct.

* + 1. **Manne Dipico Thusong Service Centre**

Manne Dipico Thusong Service Centre is situated in Roodepan in Kimberley. The centre houses six government departments opened to the public to access government services, including applications for social grants, identity documents, free Wi-Fi and municipal and library services. The Centre is confronted with common challenges like any other Thusong Service centres in the country. Challenges include funding and infrastructure.

In the Northern Cape Province, the Office of the Premier had to intervene in the budget crisis by ring-fencing a certain budget to fund operational activities in the centres. The Centre has only four staff members, excluding departmental staff that comes to offer services on different days. Social Development services was permanently stationed in the centre providing social worker services and social assistance grants. Three social workers were available at the centre. The Centre assists over 100 clients daily. If funding issues would be resolved at the national level, more government departments were interested to provide services closer to the citizens.

* 1. **FREE STATE PROVINCE VISIT**
		1. **Interaction with the Office of the Premier**

The main purpose of the oversight visit was to conduct oversight in the Free State Province on a myriad of issues such as Service Delivery Improvement Plans, Thusong Service Centres, filling of HOD vacancies, disciplinary cases, and 30 days’ payment to service providers. Service delivery was at the centre of all identified issues. The Department of Public Service and Administration together with the Public Service Commission published and tabled in Parliament numerous reports related to above-mentioned oversight visits’ focus areas, which had culminated into the Committee deciding to conduct an oversight in the province.

The Committee held its first meeting with the representatives from the following: Office of the Premier, provincial government departments, Public Service Commission, the Department of Public Service and Administration, the National School of Government and the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation.

The Office of the Premier together with the Provincial Public Service Commission made presentations on the above-mentioned oversight visit focus areas. The Free State Provincial MEC of Education, Honourable Mr Makhalo Mohale warmly welcomed the delegation from the National Assembly. The meeting was attended by four MECs in the province. The Acting Chairperson officially opened the oversight visit meeting and mentioned that the visit was divided twofold; the first day to receive presentations on the state of the province and the second day conducting inspection in loco to selected service delivery centres to assess numerous areas concerning the frontline services with the aim of changing the lives of the citizens.

* + - 1. **The Status of the SDIPs of the province**

The province was 100% compliant with the SDIPs during the SDIP cycle of 2018-2020. Circular 1 of 2021, section D indicates that the 2021/22 cycle was a gap year across public service to finalise the new directive and related toolkit. During that period, the Office of the Premier together with the DPSA held advocacy sessions and capacity workshops on the anticipated framework and its requirements. Circular 14 of 2022 part 4, stipulated a recommendation to grant extension and that support be provided to strengthen the critical SDIP building blocks to enable departments to produce realistic, effective, and credible SDIPs for the 2023-25 cycle.

The DPSA held cluster workshops for National and Provincial departments between May and October 2022, where Offices of the Premier (OTPs) were also in attendance to continue providing support to provincial departments with their drafts. Numerous meetings were held led by the OTP between July and November 2022, where departments were assisted with their drafts including content analysis of Batho Pele principles, cross cutting issues of performance and satisfaction surveys and operation management framework. Drafts were recommended for assessment by departments before the final approval by Executive Authorities. Free State was the only province that had volunteered to be tested first with the assessment of the drafts.

* + - 1. **State of Thusong Service Centres**

Currently in the Free State province, there are three functional Thusong Service Centres, they are Namahadi in QwaQwa; Thabo Mofutsanyane district, Mohokare in Zastron; Xhariep district and Kopanong also in Xhariep. Additionally, there is Thabong Hlasela Centre in Welkom; Lejweleputswa district which also offers services in an integrated manner. All these centres are hubs; accommodating different service departments under one roof for rendering services to the communities.

The Namahadi Thusong Service Centre in Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality in Thabo Mofutsanyane District was established in 2001 as a hub situated in Charles Mopeli Stadium. In terms of staffing, the Centre has a Centre Manager, two administration clerks and four cleaners. The ICT connectivity remains a major challenge hindering efficient services in the centre due to the outdated infrastructure and slow network. The centre provides the following government services, SASSA, Labour, Post Office and Councillor’s office.

The Kopanong Thusong Service Centre in Kopanong Local Municipality Xhariep District was established in 2006 as a hub situated at Trompsburg in the township. In terms of staffing, the centre has three officials which are admin, cleaner and clerk. The ICT connectivity remains the major challenge hindering efficient services in the centre due to the outdated infrastructure and slow network. The centre provides the following services from SASSA, Home Affairs, Labour, Correctional Services, and South African Football Association.

The Mohokare Thusong Service Centre in Mohokare Local Municipality Xhariep District established in 2006 situated in the township of Zastron. In terms of staffing, the centre has four staff members which are Centre Manager, Admin, Clerk and Cleaner. The ICT connectivity remains the major challenge hindering efficient services in the centre due to the outdated infrastructure and slow network. The centre provides the following services from Home Affairs, Agriculture, Correctional Services and Education.

The Thabong Hlasela Thusomg Service Centre in Matjhabeng Local Municipality in Lejweleputswa district is one-stop centre for integrated services situated in Thabong in Boitumelo Junction Mall which is located in Welkom. The centre was officially opened in 2017 to offer services to the community around Matjhabeng Local Municipality. In terms of staffing, the centre has five staff members, which are two Assistant Managers and three General Counter Assistants. The Centre is well-resourced and has a well-designed ICT connectivity to satisfy users’ business requirement. The centre has the latest and greatest technology infrastructure to render service to various customers. The services rendered at the centres include SASSA, GCIS, Agriculture, Police Roads & Transport, Health, Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA), Social Development and local councillor.

Like many other Thusong Service Centres in the country, the centres in the province have outdated ICT infrastructure, there are no clear roles and responsibilities, lack of general maintenance, lack of office space, ownership of the TSC and formalisation of the Thabong Hlasela TSC. The Government Communication Information Services delisted the following TSCs: Botshabelo, Thaba Nchu, Winburg, Tseki, Tokologo and Mafube.

* + - 1. **Status of HODs posts**

All the provincial departments have filled the Heads of Department position excluding the Department of Police, Roads and Transport and Department of Sports, Arts and Culture. The HODs have signed performance contracts with the MECs in the province.

* + - 1. **Status of Disciplinary Cases**

Regarding the status of the disciplinary cases in the province, the Department of Education recorded the highest number at 276 misconduct cases followed by the Department of Health with 90 cases. The rest of other departments recorded very low cases from 12 to 0 cases in the province. The Department of Human Settlements recorded the highest number of misconduct cases in relation to the number of employees per department. The most misconduct cases recorded in the Department of Education related to insubordination and amounted to 16.7% of all the misconduct cases raised in the said Department.

The most misconduct cases recorded in the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure relates to theft / bribes / fraud and amounted to 88.9% of all the misconduct cases raised in the said Department. Insubordination was the most prevalent misconduct recorded over this reporting period. Over ninety percent (97.8%) of all the assault cases recorded above emanated from the Department of Education.

Over eighty percent (84.8%) of improper conduct cases reported emanated from the Department of Education. Over seventy percent (73.7%) of all the cases pertaining to the influence of intoxicating drugs / alcohol / abuse / possession recorded above emanated from the Department of Health. Over ninety percent (92%) of all the insubordination cases recorded above emanated from the Department of Education. Over ninety percent (96.5%) of all the absence related cases recorded above emanated from the Department of Education.

Over seventy percent (72.2%) of all poor performance cases recorded above emanated from the Department of Health. Over ninety percent (93.7%) of all the negligence cases recorded above emanated from the Department of Education.

The longest running misconduct recorded is in the Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs has been pending for 102 months, which equates to 8 years and 9 months. The misconduct relates to “theft / bribes / fraud.” Just over eighty percent (82.1%) of misconduct cases were not finalised within the prescribed 90 days as opposed to 73.7% recorded in the previous reporting period. Only 1% of cases were finalised within the prescribed 90 days as opposed to 3.6% in the previous quarter whilst 16.9% had not yet reached the 90 days.

* + - 1. **Status of the 30-day payment of Invoices**

The province commenced with the presentation by acknowledging the PFMA Regulations relating to submission of monthly reports and submission rate of Instruction Note 34 by both departments. In terms of submission rate on Instruction Note, the province reported to be sitting at 100% for the period April 2022 to February 2023. The Free State Province was one of the provinces not doing well in terms of honouring payments to suppliers within the stipulated 30-day period. The province experienced delays of payment of invoices during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in high accruals impacting on the outer budget. The Province had to reprioritise budget to pay outstanding debt due to accruals.

The biggest contributor of non-payment of invoices in the province was the Department of Health. The province owed over R1 billion of invoices not paid to service providers. As highlighted, the main contributor to the non-payment of invoices was the Department of Health and MEDPLAS. The other major reason for not paying invoices was inaccurate reporting by the Chief Financial Officers to the provincial Treasury. Over 9 073 invoices remained unpaid over the years in the province. However, the province had experienced a steady decline from R873.8 million to R621.5 million and previously from R1 billion that used to be owed to service providers.

Another challenge was provincial departments owing the municipalities monies for services amounting to R261.0 million, with the provincial departments owing the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality R257.9 million. Lack of adequate budget was cited as a reason for non-payment to the municipalities. The provincial Treasury further cited that the procurement plans of the departments were not aligned with the budget allocation.

* + 1. **Provincial Public Service Commission: State of the Province Report**
			1. **Background**

The Provincial Commissioner, Dr WH Boshoff, made a presentation on the state of the province report for the Free State Province. The Public Service Commission (PSC) is an independent body established in terms of Chapter 10 of the Constitution, 1996. The PSC is impartial and exercises its powers and performs its functions without fear, favour or prejudice. The PSC is accountable to the National Assembly and regularly interacts with Provincial Legislatures, to report on its activities and the performance of its functions.

The PSC’s main objective is to provide effective technical oversight over the public service, nationally and provincially. The PSC conducts evidence-based research, investigations, inspections, monitoring and evaluationon public administration, for use by the Executive and Legislatures. The PSC has also embarked on an intensive drive to promote the CVPsin public administration. The objectives of promoting the CVPs are to –

* + inculcatevalues and principles in the daily activities of public servants with the intention of changing behaviours and attitudes.
	+ build a cohort of public servants that embrace the founding values and the public administration related values and principles.
	+ promote good governance in the Public Service.
		- 1. **The following focus areas were reported**
1. **Compliance with financial disclosures**

All 346 Senior Management Services submitted to the PSC their financial Disclosure forms for scrutiny as required in terms of Regulation 18(5) and (6) of the Public Service Regulation of 2016. Scrutiny of the financial disclosure forms revealed that eight (8) SMS members did not disclose their directorships in companies. Thirty-two (32) potential conflicts of interest were identified, while there were no actual conflicts of interests identified.

The PSC advised the affected EAs to take appropriate stepsin terms of the PSR, 2016. However, the Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) have, to date, not reported to the PSC on the steps taken to remedy the situation. In terms of the Remunerative Work Outside the Public Service, the PSC discovered that 19 SMS were engaged in RWOPS with 18 SMS having obtained prior permission. Only 1SMS member from the DARD did not provide proof of approval to perform RWOPS. The PSC advised the Executive Authority to take appropriate stepsin terms of section 31 of the PSA, against the SMS member. However, the Department has, to date, not reported to the PSC on the steps taken.

The number of SMS members not disclosing all aspects decreased over the past three fiscal years. The vast majority of SMS members were willing to comply with the Financial Disclosure Framework. The PSC also observed a significant declinein the prevalence of conflicts of interest. This could be attributed to the PSC’s awareness workshops and consultations with SMS members from various departments. However, the PSC was concerned about the non-provision of reportsby a few EAs on SMS members who were identified as not having fully disclosed their financial interests, or those who were found to have potential or actual conflicts of interest.

1. **Financial Misconduct**

In terms of the financial misconduct, the PSC has reported that five departments in the province had a total of 24 completed disciplinary cases relating to financial misconducts for 2021/22. Cases of fraud were in the majority (14) and constituted 58% of the overall number of cases reported. There were 36 cases of financial misconduct not finalised. Eight departments reported a total of 36 disciplinary cases that were not finalised relating to financial misconduct.

The trend showed 0% of employees found guilty on cases relating to financial misconduct over the past three financial years. There had been an increase of 25% in the percentage of employees found guilty in the 2021/2022 financial year (96%), compared to 2020/2021 (71%). misconduct. The lowest percentage of employees found guilty of financial misconduct was in 2019/20 at 61%. The report further showed the total amount of money that was still outstanding and yet to be recovered by departments at the end of 31 March 2022.

The total amount of money outstanding in respect of completed disciplinary proceedings increased to R5.2 million in 2021/22, from R4.4 million in 2020/21. It appears that commitment on the part of departments to recover monies was lacking, as observed from the reports over the past three financial years.

1. **Grievances**

According to the PSC, grievances lodged by employees with provincial departments during the 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 periods showed that 815 grievances were lodged. The majority (601)were lodged with the Free State Department of Health by its employees. During the 2021/22 period, 29 grievances were dealt with by the PSC. 15 recommendations were made, and 9 were implemented, while 6 had not yet been implemented, or the PSC had not yet received confirmation that they had been implemented.

The implementation of the PSC recommendations in some departments improved compliance with personnel and employment practices, and enhanced employment relationships and employee morale. Some departments were generally failing to conclude grievances within the stipulated timeframes. There were also delays by departments to provide the information requested by the PSC, in order to fast-track the investigation of grievances referred to the PSC.

1. **Public Administration Investigations**

The PSC received complaints lodged which warranted its investigation in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 periods. During 2021/22 financial year, 27public administration complaints were lodged and dealt with by the PSC. Sixteen (16) recommendations were issued, and only 2 were implemented, while 14had not been implemented. The investigations conducted by the PSC improved awareness on compliance with the recruitment and selection prescripts, and the requirement to appoint public servants on merit. However, irregular appointments of employees and unethical conduct by public servants persist in the FS provincial departments. Legislatures can assist the PSC by using information provided by the PSC to hold departments to account for non-compliance with prescripts, and the slow or non-implementation of the PSC’s recommendations.

1. **National Anti-Corruption Hotline (NACH)**

During 2021/22 financial year, the PSC received a total of 32NACHcases. Twenty-six (26) cases were referred to departments and other institutions for investigation. The majority of the cases related to alleged maladministration within the FS municipalities. Feedback was provided on 10 cases. Feedback was not provided on 16 cases. Six (6) cases were investigated by the PSC.

1. **Constitutional Values and Principles (CVPs)**

During 2018/19, 2020/21 and 2021/22, the PSC conducted a study on the extent of compliance with the CVPs and found as follows that (i) on the promotion and maintenance of a high standard of professional ethics; there were no Ethics Units in the FS departments; and to handle Ethics functions. Although, there were systems for routine observation of ethical issues and behaviour, there were no mechanisms in place to provide feedback to employees and the public on ethical issues and services. All departments were implementing the Code of Conduct, and Ethics Committees were in place. However, this structure was inadequate.

Gross delays in the finalisation of disciplinary processes and precautionary suspensions were not assisting in promoting a high standard of discipline and thus, professional ethics. Unconducive working conditions and a lack of exemplary leadership also did not assist in promoting ethical conduct.

During 2018/19, 2020/21 and 2021/22, the PSC conducted a study on the extent of compliance with the CVPs and found as follows under the efficient, economic and effective use of resources: The reoccurrence of unauthorised, irregular and fruitless and wasteful expenditure in FS departments was indicative of the failure by public officials to adhere to this principle. The unlawful use of government resources such as cars for purposes other than what they are meant for, was inconsistent with this constitutional requirement.

Concerning the CVP relating to Public Administration must be developmental, the FS departments spent almost 100% of their allocated budget every year but did not meet all of their targets in terms of their planned performance programmes. Therefore, the achievement of certain targets lacked the necessary adequacy and/ or impact to change many lives of people.

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 In terms CVP relating to “services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias”, the average performance of certain departments (which was found to be at 60% / 70%) undermined the delivery of services as required under this principle. Because of this performance, certain outputs were not achieved and the strategic objective of departments to provide among others quality healthcare, education and welfare services, was hampered.

In terms of the CVP relating to “people’s needs must be responded to, and public participation be encouraged”, generally, departments such as the DOH have formal policies on public participation. These policies encourage the involvement of all relevant stakeholders and the provision of feedback to communities through various mechanisms.

Concerning the CVP of promotion of accountability, departments in the FS did not have formal project management systems in place and did not undertake any programme evaluations. However, departments have in place Quarterly Reporting Systems, which reflect quarterly performances. Generally, departments have guidelines on how to deal with both informal and formal complaints lodged by the public on the quality of services.

In terms of Transparency, generally, departments provide critical information on key services provided to the public on their websites and Service Delivery Charters. This means that the public is enabled to use the information to scrutinise the performance of government and hold it to account for its performance. Whilst with sound human resource management promotion, some of the departments in the FS had a vacancy rate of up to 23%, against the acceptable vacancy rate of 10%. Grievances were generally not attended to on time, which affected the morale of the affected employees and those who work with them.

Regarding CVP on “public administration must be broadly representative”, 100% of departments in the FS have an adequate representivity of blacks in all categories of occupations. However, 80% of departments were still struggling to appoint 50% or more women into SMS positions and attract people with disabilities. Employees who are between 21 and 35 constitute 21 – 30 percent of the total workforce of departments, which augurs well for the future of the FS government.

* + 1. **INSPECTION IN LOCO**
			1. **Home Affairs Facility**

The delegation was welcomed by the Provincial Manager of the Bloemfontein Department of Home Affairs. The acting Chairperson outlined the purpose of the oversight to oversee frontline services, service standards and queue management in various units. The Department of Home Affairs is in Bloemfontein in the Rocklands area. The facility is in the township and 10 kilometres away from the city. The Committee was impressed by cleanliness of the building.

Queue management was not well managed during the visit. Service recipients were not satisfied with the way queue was managed at the centre. This dissatisfaction included the allocation of numbers in terms of who arrived first. It was discovered that people waited in the queue for more than eight hours. Cutting of the queues affects citizens who travel long distances from Thaba Nchu and Botshabelo to receive services. There was a need to have honest queue manager to ensure transparency and fairness to the recipients of services.

Bloemfontein Department of Home Affairs is a full branch providing a number of services including Smart ID card. It takes 13 days to receive the Smart ID Card. Marriage certificates are printed with immediate effect. Staff shortages and instability in management impacted negatively on the business operations of the facility.

Since the population is growing because of rapid urbanisation and density into the cities, Bloemfontein Department of Home Affairs is the only branch providing the entire city and its neighbouring township with home affairs services. The Department alluded that the province together with National Department of Home Affairs planned to open another office in the central business of Bloemfontein in the 2022/23 financial year. However, that did not materialise. The CBD office would relieve pressure from the centre as the entire Mangaung Metropolitan are served by the facility with staff shortages. In the absence of securing more office, the department is considering mobile services, which will serve better the communities. The Office has 10 mobile trucks, and two additional trucks will be given in the 2023/24 financial year. Bloemfontein, Welkom and Phuthaditjhaba are the biggest offices in the provinces providing most of the required home affairs services.

* + - 1. **Pelonomi Tertiary Hospital**

The Pelonomi Tertiary Hospital is situated in Heidedal Bloemfontein under the Mangaung Municipality. Pelonomi is a specialist hospital providing training of health professionals. Access to the hospital is mostly by referral from other institutions, although there is a casualty ward providing the need for acute emergencies. The hospital was opened in 1965. On arrival at the Pelonomi Hospital, the Committee met with the management of the hospital. The acting Chairperson alluded that the Committee visited the Pelonomi Hospital in 2017. Therefore, the purpose of the revisit was to assess whether the hospital had improved since the committee visited it in 2017.

The hospital’s acting Chief Executive Officer, Dr Tsitsie Makomi welcomed the delegation and provided a brief background report about the hospital. The hospital has a staff complement of 2103 and filled 1568 posts. Currently the hospital has 533 vacant posts which is equivalent to vacancy rate of 25% above acceptable rate as per the Public Service regulations. The hospital has serious shortage of nursing assistants (41), professional nurses general (28) and professional nursing specialists (74). There is also shortage of medical specialists (17) and medical interns.

The provincial Department of Health needed to attend to acting positions in management in order to stabilise the institution and ensure efficient use of budget. This should include non-clinical posts such as clerks. The management appealed that the hospital needed organisational structure that matched the standard of a tertiary hospital. Another major issue was that the provincial department does not advertise positions when professionals leave the hospital. This worsens the situation, especially with nursing departments.

Overcrowding in the hospital remained a major concern as patients preferred to come to the hospital without district hospital and clinics referrals. This results into long queues. In terms of the safety and security, the committee learned that the hospital operates with absorbed unqualified security officers without PSIRA certificates. The hospital CCTV cameras needed urgent maintenance to assist the security officers in ensuring the hospital is safe. Spike and boom gates were no longer functional.

Maintenance of the hospital had improved since 2017 oversight visit. However, the hospital needed to improve its air conditioning system and boilers. The cleanliness of the hospital had tremendously improved. The turnaround time of ambulances is supposed to be 15 minutes, however there is an influx of patients and ambulance service were unable to cope with the demands.

* + - 1. **Botshabelo Traffic Centre**

The Committee visited the Botshabelo Traffic Centre to assess the frontline management services. On arrival, the Committee was welcomed by the centre manager. The traffic centre has six officials and the manager indicated there was no challenge of staff shortage. The centre assists over 50 clients per day with targets of 15 learners to pass driver’s licence daily. In terms of the administration challenges hindering services, the provincial Department of Transport does not provide the centre with forms timeously, which hampers efficient traffic services in Botshabelo.

Another major concern was security of the building. Even though there were security officers stationed in the centre, there was burglary experienced wherein two computers were stolen. Burglary happened after the Department of Labour closed the centre due to non-compliance of the centre in terms of labour laws. Four security officers were employed on a permanent basis, however, they were not PSIRA qualified and did not have uniform to identify them as security. There was no single security permitted to carry a gun. Security officers employed at the centre did not have tools of trade to execute their jobs. Security officers were employed at salary level 3 in terms of the DPSA salary structure. There were issues of security salaries which needed the provincial Department to attend to boost the morale of security officers.

The testing machine used to test roadworthy of the cars was not functional for some years. The facility maintenance requires urgent intervention to avoid a situation whereby the Department of Labour would close the centre again. The Department of Transport should ensure that cleaning material is supplied to the centres across the province. The filing system of the traffic centre was a disaster and required the provincial Department of Transport to intervene. Traffic Centre supervisor and staff required some level of training on relevant courses. The PSC would investigate an incident of tense personal relations between the supervisor and staff members.

* + - 1. **Botshabelo District Hospital**

The Committee visited the Botshabelo District Hospital on an unannounced visit. The Committee was welcomed by the Chief Executive Officer of Botshabelo District Hospital, Dr Ariel Torres. The CEO provided a brief presentation prior the walk up in the hospital. Firstly, the CEO indicated that the hospital assisted over 210 000 people in the Botshabelo District. Botshabelo Hospital provides full services of a district hospital. There are 13 clinics in the sub-district providing 24 hours’ services and one mobile clinic. Botshabelo is density populated. The hospital is relatively accessible to all areas in the Botshabelo District.

The hospital has a staff complement of 450 employees. Vacancy rate sat at 21% in non-clinical. In clinical positions, the CEO indicated that the hospital was fairly well capacitated. However, the CEO further indicated that even though staffing in clinical posts was not a major issue, nursing department had a high vacancy rate. In non-clinical posts, officials such as at finance, maintenance, security and financial management were designated to act. The hospital management complained about red-tape in getting approval for non-clinical posts in the hospital. The hospital had dismissed seven officials due to poor performance. There was a high turnover rate of professional clinical staff. The management and centralisation of Emergency Services by hospital management remained a major challenge.

Cleanliness of the hospital was at an acceptable health standard. The only challenge was cutting of the grass within the precinct of the hospital. Community members would volunteer to assist to clean up the hospital, which minimised risk of snakes and other reptiles. In terms of hospital management, the management cited language barriers in the maternity wards as some patients do not speak local spoken languages. There was an influx of foreigners coming across Southern Africa requiring healthcare services. Waiting times and staff attitude at the hospital was commended by the patients queuing for service. The hospital appointed queue marshals to manage the queue. All maternity patients do not wait in queues, including patients collecting medication. This intervention reduced long queues.

In terms of load-shedding, the hospital is exempted. Despite exemption, the hospital has generators as back up in case of a worse scenario of energy supply. CCTV cameras around the hospital were no longer functional. The hospital functions without security manager, which poses a risk in terms of supervision of security officers. Biometric system would be introduced in the wards to mitigate security risk to staff and patients. According to the hospital, most of the litigation cases emanate from maternity ward due to various challenges encountered in the ward. The Hospital had only three litigation cases. Infrastructure in the theatre required maintenance. In terms of the laundry services, the hospital takes laundry to Bloemfontein, which has a negative impact on the turnaround times for laundry in the institution. Some clothes get lost and damaged along the process.

1. **OBSERVATIONS AND KEY FINDINGS**

Having conducted oversight, the Committee made the following observations and findings:

* 1. The Committee appreciated a warm welcome by the Offices of the Premier (Northern Cape and Free State) and the presence of the Premier of the Northern Cape, all MECs and Heads of Department in both two provinces. The Premier of the Northern Cape, MECs in Free State and their HODs participated during the first day meeting to discuss the 30-day payment of invoices, disciplinary cases, Service Delivery Improvement Plans (SDIPs), filling of HODs posts, Thusong Service Centres and service inspection reports by the Provincial Public Service Commissioners.
	2. The Committee emphasised the importance of the Offices of the Premier strengthening coherent planning, coordination and monitoring performance of the provincial departments in delivering services to citizens.
	3. The Northern Cape Province has 11 departments, and seven departments have Heads of Department including a Director-General in the Office of the Premier. It was disappointing to find that the provincial Departments of Health, Social Development and Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform were without permanent Heads of Department.
	4. The Free State Province almost filled all Heads of Department positions except the Department of Police, Roads and Transport and the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture. All HoDs had signed performance contracts with the MECs of the province.
	5. The provincial Department of Health was the main contributor to a highest number of invoices not paid within 30 days as per the Treasury Regulations 8.2.3. Approximately 90% of invoices older than 30 days not paid in the provinces came from the Department of Health.
	6. Challenges hindering the payment of service providers included the inefficiency of the State Information Technology Agency in terms of system downtime resulting into system not optimally functioning.
	7. Poor alignment of budget with procurement plans was another matter that needed to be attended through training and development to prevent recurrence occurring in the outer years.
	8. It was evident that provincial departments were submitting the Service Delivery Improvement Plans for compliance purposes without the intention of changing citizens’ lives. The Northern Cape Province had insufficient capacity to analyse submitted SDIPs.
	9. The Thusong Service Centres remain unfunded across the provinces and the Office of the Premier in the Northern Cape was partially funding the centres in the province. Funding and location of the Thusong Service Centres across the country have to be finalised.
	10. The Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI) and Northern Cape Office of the Premier designed and developed the online Thusong Service Centre Mobile Application that would assist citizens with government information and certain services.
	11. The Northern Province was unable to conclude disciplinary cases within 90 days, with the Department of Health, Department of Education and Department of Social Development having reported the highest number of cases.
	12. A huge number of cases reported through the Public Service Commission grievance management system revealed that human resource management remained the core issue of grievances, such as irregular appointments and unfair labour practice.
	13. Although the Public Service Regulations prohibit public servants from holding directorship position in companies, the results showed the prevalence of this practice. The DPSA needs to enforce the laws passed by Parliament by disciplining government officials serving as directors in various companies without the Accounting Officers’ approval.
	14. The Northern Cape Office of the Premier would not follow the DPSA’s approved Lifestyle Audit Framework as the framework mimicked the Financial Disclosure Framework, which promotes compliance without consequences in some instances. The Office of the Premier promised to design the provincial framework which will improve on the DPSA’s lifestyle audit framework to assist in uprooting any element of corruption from the provincial administration. Law enforcement agencies would be approached in the design of the Lifestyle Audit Framework for the Northern Cape province.
	15. Disciplinary cases were not loaded on the PERSAL system as a mandatory requirement of the Public Service Regulations, 2016.
	16. There was a need to reduce red tape in approving submissions related to the disciplinary cases.
	17. Officials under precautionary suspension might have to be seconded to other departments if the misconduct would not amount to dismissal.

**Hospitals**

* 1. Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe Hospital required national intervention to assist with the administration together with provision of healthcare services. The Hospital did not have management and majority of managers were on acting basis.
	2. Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe Hospital needs to develop standard operating schedule to manage queues across the centre.
	3. Pelonomi Tertiary Hospital has improved tremendously from what the Committee observed during the oversight visit of 2017. Both Pelonomi Tertiary Hospital and Botshabelo District Hospital were well maintained in terms of cleanliness and provision of healthcare services.
	4. During the interaction with patients who were queuing at the frontline service of the healthcare centre, people indicated that they were on queue for up to three to seven hours before receiving healthcare services at the hospital. The Committee condemned such inefficiency in a healthcare centre.
	5. Aging infrastructure, which was not well maintained, in the public healthcare centres needed urgent attention by the National and Provincial Health Departments across the country, particularly at Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe and Bongani Hospitals in order to avoid future disasters.
	6. Shortage of staff in the healthcare centres impacts the quality of healthcare services in the Northern Cape province due to limited budget and some hospitals operating at 50% capacity.
	7. Filling of vacancies in the Department of Health took longer than anticipated. Both provincial Departments of Health have to ensure that appointments of funded vacant posts were filled urgently within 6 months.
	8. Appointment of interns across all frontline service departments has to be prioritised in order to strengthen capacity in the public healthcare.
	9. Security personnel was insufficient at the hospital and putting health workers and patients at risk.

**Kimberly and Bloemfontein Department of Home Affairs centres**

* 1. Shortage of staff and inadequate budget were the major challenges impacting on the efficiency of the Department of Home Affairs. Shortage of staff results in long queues and employees’ fatigue.
	2. Connectivity and system unreliability contributed to inefficient services and have impact on queue management. The IT Systems in Home Affairs centres need to be improved. The network often goes offline, and this affects servicing clients at the frontline office.
	3. The undocumented foreign nationals are putting tremendous pressure on service delivery and Home Affairs operations to process immigration services.
1. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee made the following recommendations:

**Department of Public Service and Administration**

* 1. The DPSA should consistently monitor and assess effective implementation of approved SDIPs to be in line with departmental annual performance plans. The DPSA should intensify its efforts to address identified bottlenecks concerning the SDIPs and ensure resources are allocated to this activity.
	2. The DPSA, COGTA and Government Communication Information System should conclude a long-standing matter of repositioning the Thusong Service Centres in order to bring this issue to finality and ensure services come closer to the people. All three Departments must account to the Committee by February 2024.
	3. The Department of Public Service and Administration, National Treasury and Department of Communication and Digital Technology should engage State Information Technology Agency on the system downtime continuing to set departments into failure for not providing services to the clients.
	4. The Department of Public Service and Administration should reconsider reviewing precautionary suspension measures on non-criminal cases to second officials to another department instead of suspending officials with full pay for a prolonged period.
	5. The National Department of Public Service and Administration through the Technical Assistance Unit and the Public Service Commission should consider intervening in the Free State province regarding high misconduct cases experienced in the province. The Departments of Education and Health should be assisted regarding prolonged disciplinary cases.

**National Department of Health**

* 1. The National Department of Health and National Treasury in collaboration with all provincial departments of Health should organise a workshop to explore various mechanisms to be used to honour payments of creditors in the health sector. High percentage of invoices paid after 30 days emanated from Health and this needed urgent attention before service providers withdraw their service or subject the Department to litigation.
	2. The Department of Health should frequently monitor service delivery improvements and develop improvement plans.

**National School of Government**

* 1. The National School of Government should be approached by the affected departments to offer strategic planning and procurement courses to ensure that officials were well capacitated when drafting plans for the government departments.
	2. The National School of Government in collaboration with the Department of Public Service and Administration should design compulsory training and development courses for all human resource practitioners to improve human resource management practices in the public service.

**National Treasury**

* 1. The National Treasury should develop an electronic invoice tracking system to track all valid invoices to avoid departments defaulting on creditors and to provide credible information for reporting purposes.

**Department of Home Affairs**

* 1. The Department of Home Affairs should improve its connectivity and the reliability of the system to ensure efficient and effective services which will contribute towards minimising long queues. The IT Systems at Home Affairs centres needs to be adequately improved and maintained.

**Northern Cape Province**

* 1. The Northern Cape Office of the Premier should ensure stability for accounting officers’ positions by ensuring appointments of HoDs in the provincial Departments of Health, Social Development and Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform, since these departments were without permanent Heads of Department for a longer period.
	2. Regarding the approved Lifestyle Audits Guidelines, the Northern Cape Province should continue with its effort to develop provincial Lifestyle Audits Guidelines by involving relevant law enforcement stakeholders to assist in the process with the aim of uprooting corruption in the provincial administration. The Northern Cape province should develop provincial Lifestyle Audits Guidelines in collaboration with the Department of Public Service and Administration Lifestyle Audits Guidelines with the aim of improving already developed guidelines.

**Provincial Department of Home Affairs**

* 1. Kimberley Office of the Department of Home Affairs should be provided with additional human resource capacity in order to cope with a high number of volumes of citizens requiring various home affairs services. Office space should also be prioritised by the Provincial Department of Public Works.
	2. Home Affairs should continue with the mobile truck/office and visiting schools annually for registration of ID for learners, this would result in the reduction of long queues at the Home Affairs offices.

**Provincial Department of Health**

* 1. Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe tertiary hospital should urgently be given attention by the National Department of Health to improve quality healthcare for the Northern Cape citizens.
	2. Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe tertiary hospital infrastructure should be given urgent attention to improve its outlook and for safety of patients as well as staff members.
	3. Shortage of clinical professionals such as Speciality Nursing and Medical Doctors should be attended to by both the provincial Department of Health and National Department of Health across the public service.
	4. Laundry services of Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe Hospital should be provided locally instead of sourcing laundry services from Upington, which is 409.6 kilometres away from Kimberley. The Hospital should consider maintaining its laundry services or outsource it to local businesses who meet the requirements.

**Free State province**

* 1. The Free State provincial departments should speed up the recruitment processes at the Department of Police, Roads and Transport and the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture.

**Provincial Department of Health**

* 1. The Department of Health is urged to pay suppliers within 30 days to avoid high accruals impacting on the outer years’ budget.

**National and Provincial Department of Home Affairs**

* 1. The Free State province together with national and provincial Department of Home Affairs should consider building another service centre at the city centre to avoid overcrowding experienced in Home Affairs, Rocklands.
	2. Both Pelonomi Hospital and Botshabelo Hospital have a shortage of clinical and non-clinical staff members. The vacancy rate was high, requiring the attention of the provincial Department of Health and National Department of Health.
	3. Provincial Department of Health should fast track the filling of management positions in Pelonomi Tertiary Hospital to stabilise the hospital.
	4. Security should be given priority by ensuring that CCTV cameras are working and that security officers are offered relevant PSIRA training since they were insourced.
	5. Botshabelo Traffic Department centre’s appointed security officers should be given uniform to be visible in the precincts. Security Officers working in most government departments are without PSIRA certificates, therefore the province should arrange necessary training courses to ensure that they are well trained and given necessary tools of trade to protect government buildings.

Report to be considered.