

Without Home Affairs documents proving their citizenship, South Africans are trapped in poverty

By Adrian Roos MP - DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Home Affairs

Madam Speaker,

Minister, I was very appreciative to see Home Affairs Mobile units in my constituency last Friday, but this can't be a once in a lifetime event. What I saw showed that we have to take Home Affairs services to the people. The DA has been calling again and again for more Mobile Units to go out more often, including to schools. Many young people of school-going age were part of the crowds taking this rare opportunity to access Home Affairs services.

The excuses have now shifted from COVID to saying that you don't have any money. But that's not true, Minister, you have close to R9 billion in this budget. You have the money. It's the choice of what you do with that money that is the problem.

It's not only law-abiding, documented foreign nationals being punished by your inability to control immigration but South Africans as well.

In response to my parliamentary question in March 2022, you responded that less than 1 in 10 South African learners without ID numbers on the Department of Basic Education's database had been able to apply through mobile unit school visits last year. These are undocumented South African children. A Gogo pleaded with me last Friday to assist as her grandchild could not get an ID because the child's mother was unable to register her birth, being the child of a Swazi mother and a South African father. The mother and child face generational poverty for the sin that the father cannot afford the DNA test to prove he is the father. He should be able to access this through an indigent program.

The DA has highlighted the vulgar amounts spent on rentals of Home Affairs offices where the landlords don't even have to maintain these offices, and this is why you lack money for mobile units and to provide an indigent programme to such parents.

A similar get-rich-quick scheme is found at Lindela, where it costs thousands of Rands per month to house and feed each illegal immigrant living in prison-like conditions there. Home Affairs is spending so much on the contract that they can't afford the deportation costs, so they eventually release them onto the streets with an order to leave.

It was the DA who had to fight for the 68-year backlog of asylum seeker appeals to be addressed, and the UNHCR had to come to the rescue with R27.5m a year needed to address the backlog in just 4 years. Meanwhile, Government Printing Works spends R150m on professional services of consultants and lawyers, despite having in-house lawyers, so that employees with grievances against executives can be faced with a lawyer when trying to seek justice.

When the DA has called for the Minister to resolve the issue of opening on Saturdays, he claims to be powerless to come to a resolution with the unions. But deals decisively with unions when they touch Government Printing Works. Do you want to be a security department? Your choices have left Government Printing Works vulnerable and cost millions. The GPW lost financial data due to gross negligence by the CEO that is costing millions in an audit and reconstruction process, and only after the DA had exposed this was there an investigation.

The ineffective Border Management Authority, or BMA, drags on, with millionaire managers appointed while the defence budget is cut. Carte Blanche finds people irregularly crossing the border within a few days with a camera crew and yet the BMA can't. The Socio-economic Impact Assessment on the BMA Bill recommended the BMA should be a coordinating role, and now we have millionaire managers with land cruisers and uniforms, while the senior managers in immigration that were supposed to be doing that job are still employed. Stockpoort border remains closed. When I asked why I was informed that Port Health is not there and therefore they cannot implement COVID protocols-so who is in charge of the borders? Port Health? We have the border officials who work at Stockpoort sitting somewhere, while businesses in Stockpoort have closed their doors, the Bureau de change retrenched all their employees, and vegetable tunnels closed due to no sales across the border.

Home Affairs' delays and wrongful rejection of foreigners' applications are costing millions in litigation. Foreign investment goes elsewhere and jobs along with it. While you rack up legal bills opposing even blatantly valid claims, you refuse to take legal action on officials who leave on corruption charges and recover stolen money. Once they leave, they are home free.

This ANC Home Affairs Budget gives more money to landlords, Lindela looters, lawyers, and millionaire managers.

A DA Home Affairs Budget would cut the Lindela and BMA gravy trains and make sure that staff are held accountable to do their jobs so that more budget is available for deportation and SANDF border patrols.

A DA Home Affairs Budget would ensure more clinics have birth registration services and indigents have access to DNA testing so that undocumented South African children can access opportunities and dare to dream.

A DA Home Affairs Budget would sort out IT systems and provide more mobile units to take services to the people. To go to schools and communities and get the documents they need to access opportunities.

South Africans are stuck in poverty without Home Affairs documentation that proves they belong; that gives them access to opportunity. You have the money. Do something about it.