**Budget Vote 4: Government Communications and Information Services**

**Honourable Majozi**

Honourable Chairperson,

Information and communication technology has changed rapidly over the past 20 years, with a critical development being the emergence of social media. The pace of change accelerates daily, and one of the best examples of this is the effect the development of mobile technology has had on shaping the impact of social media.

Across the globe, mobile devices dominate in terms of total minutes spent online, as they put the means to connect anywhere, at any time on any device in everyone’s hands. Therefore, the dissemination of crucial information issued by the government should be in alignment with digital developments.

Over 30 million South Africans are now active on social media, thanks mostly to falling data costs and an uptick in internet usage during the Covid-19 pandemic. That’s nearly half of the population, having increased to 48.8% from 41.9% which was 25 million users in 2020. According to international research agency, Statista, in South Africa social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram have proven to be the most popular in the third quarter of 2021. As of 2022, there were an estimated 41.19 million South Africans with internet access and the largest age demographic that is making use of social media is people between the ages of 25 and 34.

Arguably, there is an ever-increasing need for the government and in particular this department to diversify its digital footprint, especially to ensure that young people are aware of the various governmental programmes containing employment information and opportunities.

In the Products and Platforms sub-programme which forms part of the Content Processing and Dissemination Programme of this budget, the objective is to make the public aware of the opportunities created by the government through publishing 15.3 million copies of the Vuk’uzenzele newspaper per year over the medium term. Considering that this newspaper is only available at GCIS offices and Thusong centres, perhaps the viability of this medium of communication should be reconsidered, as the purpose of this budget is to provide a comprehensive communication service on behalf of the government. The mandate of this department stipulates that the public should be provided with information that is timely, accurate and accessible. Therefore, the IFP notes that the word comprehensive should not only be aimed at the content of the information shared but also at the mediums and platforms used to share information.

In consideration of the comments made, the IFP accepts the budget.

Thank you.