

## **The Department has had enough time to do the talking, now is the time for decisive action**

By Solly Malatsi MP – DA Shadow Minister in the Presidency

The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation makes the right noises about what needs to be done for the civil service to function well.

However, such noises barely translates into meaningful action that improves the capacity of the state to deliver services' as it should.

Despite its well-meaning efforts to centralize government planning, monitor performances and evaluate progress, the implementation of its recommendations is largely at the mercy of other government departments, many of whom disregard its role.

Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the constant policy contradictions amongst Ministers, government departments and even between different spheres of government.

With so much coordinated government planning, why is it so rare to for co-operative governance to work in earnest?

With so much monitoring of the performance of government programmes why are there no consequences for non-performing officials?

With so much emphasis on evaluation of government interventions why does the state struggle to respond timeously to service delivery collapses?

Truth be told, if every government department did its work, acted within the legislative mandate and functioned, as it should, this department wouldn't exist.

Its inception was obviously part of large grand scheme to bloat the state to accommodate cadres with ministerial privileges.

According to Minister Mthembu's foreword in the Annual Performance Plan, this Department is tasked with "assisting the President with the establishment of Performance Agreements with Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Generals."

Minister, if you and the President are truly serious about leading a new dawn of Ministerial accountability and government transparency, then publish all performance agreements between the President and cabinet.

The best start would be for you to lead by example by publishing your own performance agreement with the President and your respective DGs.

If you don't, all this noise about holding ministers accountable for their performances will be seen for what it is: SPIN

It is quite frankly meaningless to hype the mere existence of performance agreements as a groundbreaking initiative of good governance when they are shrouded in secrecy, preventing the public from scrutinizing them to establish if ever they are enforced.

Any government that strives on pursuing excellence in the civil services must use these performance agreements as an effective tool to intervene in instances of under-performance, to track non-performance and ultimately prevent mediocrity.

When the outcomes of performance agreements are applied correctly, they will prevent the permanent recycling of failed politicians, from one Department to the other, during cabinet reshuffles.

With proper monitoring and evaluation of the performances of senior civil servants across different spheres of government, we should be able to prevent the resurgence of Director Generals who failed at their previous departments, from continuing with their legacy of failure at another department.

It is unacceptable that the same cabal of corrupt municipal officials who collapsed municipalities such as Tubatse, Vhembe and Madibeng are reappointment in local government.

If this government conducted proper monitoring, and evaluation across different spheres of government, it would prevent the recruitment of people with records of failure, dishonesty and stealing.

Government posts aren't rehabilitation centres to reform unrepentant corrupt officials. They are an opportunity to serve the country diligently and honestly.

Minister Mthembu, one of the bold targets in your Department's APP is to achieve "100% compliance with financial disclosures" in the government.

Yet there are still Ministers and government employees who continue to do business with the state with impunity.

This axis of conflict of interests between politicians and civil servants who abuse their powers robs honest entrepreneurs of a fair chance to compete for tenders.

Until such a time that this administration punishes those politicians and government employees who collude by doing business with the state, unethical practices will continue to compromise service delivery.

This Department boasts about progress made to ensure that all government departments pay suppliers within 30 days, as is required by the law.

Yet, on a daily basis, hundreds of local small businesses complain about unacceptable delays with regards to government payment of invoices. In some instances, contractors remain unpaid for as long as a year.

The damage that this does to economy is massive:

It pushes businesses into insolvency.

Breadwinners lose their jobs.

Homes are broken.

Lives are destroyed.

Many more South Africans are pushed further into poverty.

Honourable Minister, it is high time that this Department walks the talk. Otherwise it will be reduced to a vanity project that makes the right noises without any tangible results.

I thank you.