

BUDGET VOTES

Vote 35: Science and Innovation

Hon. SL Ngcobo, MP

24 July 2020

Honourable Chairperson, the Covid-19 pandemic has left South Africa struggling to find effective and sustainable ways to cope with its devastating effects.

Science and innovation are indisputably at the forefront of the solution to the pandemic, via critical research and the development of new technologies.

It is sorely disappointing that an essential element in the effort against the pandemic, and a vehicle taking us into the Fourth Industrial Revolution (**4IR**), has had its budget adjusted downwards, by just over **R1.4 billion**.

Despite the **R324 million** recapitalisation, the adjustment is a significant setback for important programmes funded by the Department of Science and Innovation.

We cannot make South Africa a competitive global player in science and technology without sufficient funding to harness technology to advance industrial activities in our economy and appropriately skill our nation for the **4IR** job market.

We believe that this Department significantly contributes to the necessary innovations that influence critical solutions in this area.

We, like many South Africans, grapple with the highly contradictory decisions government is making through the National Coronavirus Command Council (**NCCC**) to control the spread of Covid-19. This Department and its entities have contributed to initiatives that strengthen the public health system via the development of related technology, such as vaccine production and the manufacture of Personal Protective Equipment, among others. So why then does government decide to cut the budget of this Department? It simply does not make sense.

Instead, the government should be looking to the future development of this sector for long-term economic solutions should Covid-19 extend its stay. Even if we move beyond Covid-19, an investment in this sector will not be lost. For example, we could start to create additional jobs through the manufacturing of smart phones, laptops, internet modems etcetera, which are all in high demand.

The Department's current inclusive approach and technological innovation through the application of indigenous knowledge in the production of sanitisers and therapeutic remedies is welcomed by the IFP. We must continue to embed our traditional teachings within our aspirations to develop new technology.

The IFP echoes the Committee's sentiments that due to the critical research being supported by the Department, it could have been declared an essential entity and

believe that it should be positioned to work closely and guide the decisions of the NCCC.

The IFP accepts the Budget.

I thank you.

Contact:

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