Speech on Budget Vote 3: COGTA
By Wayne Thring MP, ACDP Deputy President

ACDP withholds support for COGTA budget, says municipalities cannot be trusted with budget re-allocations

“Honourable House Chairperson,

The ACDP notes this adjusted budget of R107.1 billion, having increased from R96.2 billion, and the additional R544 million, appropriated for labour intensive infrastructure programmes.

The ACDP is on record for expressing its concern on the R20 billion allocated to dysfunctional municipalities to provide emergency water supply, increased sanitation of public transport and facilities, and to provide food and shelter to the homeless. If these billions of rands were to be properly utilized, ensuring that service delivery takes place, it would be money well spent. Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the case.

According to community activist, Mary de Haas, government officials and Councillors, stand accused of stealing food parcels meant for the poor, with others distributing food parcels along party lines or giving these food parcels to their families, friends and allies. There has been little to no consequence management and reports suggest that endemic corruption continues to dominate in local government regardless of the consequences. In addition, just yesterday, the KZN Premier addressed the media over irregular procurement of PPE and blankets, worth millions of rands.

Honourable House Chairperson, this greedy, corrupt and fraudulent virus, at local, provincial and national level that continues to move with impunity, preying on the poor and vulnerable, must be dealt with speedily. If this is not done, it will leave more casualties than the Covid-19 virus itself.

Billions of rands are set to go to local governments, but what is the condition of these? The recent Municipal audit report by AG Kimi Makwetu revealed that:

Out of 257 municipalities, only 20 have clean audits

72 (about 31%) of municipalities are in a vulnerable financial position. The total deficit in local government is R6.29-billion. 23 municipalities didn’t submit their financial statements by the 31 August deadline as per the Municipal Finance Management Act

From the 229 completed audits, there was R2.07-billion in fruitless and wasteful expenditure, while close to R12-billion was unauthorised. Annual irregular expenditure increased from R25.2-billion to R32.06-billion. KwaZulu-Natal was the top contributor with R6.47-billion.

eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality was the main culprit, accounting for R2.34-billion of the province’s irregular expenditure. Can we trust these municipalities with the reallocated billions? I think not.

To those who have stolen from the poor; Shame on you, but let this be known, you will be judged! The ACDP stands ready to replace these corrupt individuals with credible, competent, trustworthy and God-fearing servant leaders. The ACDP does not support this adjustment budget.”