

**POPCRU INPUT TO THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON
BUDGET VOTE FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF
CORRECTIONAL SERVICES [DCS]**

[17. 06. 2009]

Chairperson, Honourable members, Management of the DCS, Leadership of Organised Labour, Ladies and gentlemen.

I bring along warm revolutionary greetings from the leadership of POPCRU. We understand the purpose of this occasion to be providing a platform for engaging on the budgetary processes for the Department of Correctional Services and ways of advancing the cause of corrections for a safer and secure South Africa. This is an objective of critical importance in our considered view and we are indeed delighted to be invited. Therefore, this should not end up been a talk show but a realisation of this majestic objective.

We are grateful to this esteemed Institution for having invited here to come and give our contribution and participation. In our analysis, any talk of participatory democracy and social equality would not be a fluke if it shall keep relevant and significant stakeholders out of these important deliberations. In the same breath, our attendance to this very important legislative body is not just for the sake of it but because we are convinced that we have a moral obligation, social responsibility and revolutionary commitment to contribute to the shaping of the budget for the Department of Correctional Services. To these closing stages we are determined to make our involvement and positive contribution.

Honourable Chairperson, it further needs to be noted that this invitation comes at a time when our relationship with the Department of Correctional Services is getting strained due to suspensions of our members by the management in Gauteng Region. These suspensions come in the wake of fierce battle that is antagonising the public service around the non-implementation of the Occupation Specific Dispensation [OSD] by various departments including the department of Correctional Services. During our presentation to this committee in 2008, we said the following with regard to Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council Resolution 1/2007 – the one that regulated the issue of the OSDs.

“We have recognised that in your budget there is an additional allocation for the implementation of the PSCBC Resolution 1/2007. We need to highlight that serious efforts should be undertaken to implement this resolution and such funds should not be channelled to oppose views of labour on this resolution. It has been evident that the department is willing to pay for legal processes contesting the interpretation of agreements than implementing the gains of labour achieved through such resolutions. Occupational Specific Dispensation is the brainchild of this resolution and we therefore, expect the department to implement it as agreed on the timelines specified”.

Honourable Members, on the 4th of June 2009 POPCRU was served with an interdict prohibiting our members from peacefully demonstrating and showing their dissatisfaction around the failure by the department to implement what the resolution prescribed to the department to do. This interdict was served to us exactly one year, three months and a day

after we made presentation bringing awareness in this committee around the behaviour of the department in implementing resolutions that have been agreed upon.

We wish to submit to you, Honourable members, that what matters to us is not necessarily about the total budget figure. Instead the way in which the rands and cents are appropriately broken down is the determinant factor that shall determine the department's levels of success and the required accomplishment. For this reason, our submission seeks to deal with issues on the basis of principle such that discussions would not be about how much we have but on how the department have allocated funds to various components with the view of ensuring effective and efficient service delivery within its mandate.

We have consistently made input to this body on the factual point that DCS have a top-heavy structure. We can, without fear of any contradiction, correctly refer to this type of a configuration as a bloated and distended bureaucracy. Such an arrangement makes an administrative nightmare and unnecessary delay in decision-making processes. This structure, which is crowded at the pinnacle, has only managed to serve and create a long red tape that does not translate to meaningful programs that the department is supposed to implement. This bloated structure squeezes the department's prospects of sufficient staffing at the correctional centres. The consequence of this problem [insufficient staffing] is the department's inability to positively respond to the challenge of overcrowding that has a direct consequence of making rehabilitation almost impossible. Conversely, we submit that the department would and should do much better with a lean and mean top structure with bigger personnel where the actual work takes place for proper delivery of the required services.

Linked to this aspect of a staff compliment that is commensurate with the number of inmates is the question of training. The DCS cannot continue to have correctional officers, particularly in management echelon who would act in a manner that is incompatible with the ethos of the department due to their inability to administer and manage accurately. This is in contrast with the promotion of a professional service ethos as outlined in the Government's approach to transforming the public service.

We need to have sufficiently skilled and properly trained managers to be entrusted with the responsibility of making sure that the labour relations unit, which is part of the Human Resource component functions as, expected. This measure can spare all of us the trouble of having to act as fire extinguishers that shall have to be called in from time to time because of the periodic industrial tension that raises its head from time to time. We hope that the proposed budget shall address this aspect so that we can focus on more productive activities that exclude having to attend endless meetings aimed at quelling revolt at our institutions.

Honourable members, one other matter that cannot escape mention here is the issue of the construction of more correctional facilities. In the previous administration we heard of stories regarding funds allocated to construction of facilities getting channelled to some other things better known or understood by individual within the management of the department. We also wish to emphasise the need for the department not only to budget sufficiently for this project but to also make sure that there are no insidious deviations from it as it has been the case before. Equally important is the need to stress the point that the department must not