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Our Values and Principles

The DA advocates a vision of an 'open opportunity society for all'. To achieve this, DA members need to understand and promote the values and principles which underpin it.

Freedom.

- Freedom is the ability of individuals to speak, choose, act, think, and associate independently and without coercion.
- It is the collective exercise of these freedoms that drives human progress, and which enables individuals to live a self-determined life.
- Freedom of speech is the first of these values, without which it becomes impossible to defend the other freedoms.
- Importantly, freedom is a right and not a privilege granted by government.
- The DA will strive to champion freedom and oppose control.

Opportunity.

- Opportunity is what gives freedom practical meaning.
- Opportunity means that every individual is presented with choices, and the reasonable ability to act on them, in order to create a life of their choosing.
- Opportunities, or choices, must not be arbitrarily restricted. In a society based on the value of opportunity, governments focus their efforts on preserving and expanding the choices available for their citizens.
- Individuals also have a responsibility to recognise and to make use of opportunity.
- The DA will strive to enhance opportunities for all.

Fairness.

- Fairness demands us to be impartial and to consider all sides.
- It is a correcting principle which allows us to be guided by something other than our own individual interest, and to consider what our position might be on an issue if we were on the other, or different, side.
- Politically, it also implies contingent consent. This means that those who emerge victorious in an election will not use their temporary upper hand to alter the rules as to prevent the losers from taking office or exerting influence in the future.
- The DA will strive to advocate and augment fairness.

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Diversity.

- The value of diversity, in other words the existence of difference, lies in its potential to broaden learning, debate and healthy competition.
- Were it not for the difference of experiences, thoughts, talents and knowledge that people bring, our understanding of the world would be limited, compassionless and without empathy.
- Each individual is unique and not a racial or gender envoy; thus, diversity is not demographic representivity.
- Individuals, when free to make their own decisions, will not be represented in any and every organization, sector, company or level of management according to a pre-determined proportion.
- The DA therefore opposes race, gender or other quotas.
- When embraced, diversity acts as a potential bulwark against uniformity of thought and closed thinking.
- The DA will strive to maximise the potential value of diversity.

Openness.

An open society is underpinned by two foundational pillars:

Transparency

- Transparency exists when the exercise of power and authority is made open to interrogation and scrutiny.

Freedom of Information

- Freedom of information, i.e. the right of the public to access information that is held by the government, is integral to ensuring that citizens can hold their elected representatives accountable for the actions they take on their behalf.
- Information is an exceptionally important resource, allowing those who have access to it to wield power over those who do not.
- In a closed society, leaders govern with impunity. The inadequate disclosure of critical information hampers citizens from being able to make informed choices and cultivates an environment where mismanagement and corruption can thrive.
- The DA will strive to be open in its decisions and conduct, and to exercise transparency responsibly.

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Social Market Economy.

- A social market economy refers to an economy in which participants (firms and consumers) rather than the government decide on what to purchase, where to invest, and how much to produce.
- Ownership of risk by private participants in a market economy, means a right and a duty to own both the rewards and responsibilities of success or failure.
- A social market economy, however, is not one where there is no government intervention at all. Left entirely on their own, participants who enjoy market dominance can engage in behavior which keeps out smaller participants and competition. Alternatively, participants can collude and fix prices with one another to the detriment of the consumer.
- Governments have an important role to play in improving access to markets by championing open and competitive markets; because openness and competition is not inherently the natural state of affairs.
- There are some functions and services that governments can potentially perform better than markets, or to supplement markets. This is particularly the case in contexts where markets cannot function profitably, but for which there is a strong public interest.
- Governments in such an economy have a role to play in enhancing equality of opportunity and providing strong safety nets and trampolines for the most vulnerable.
- Markets only function optimally in a context where a capable and corruption-free state provides basic services and upholds independent institutions that defend the rule of law and a culture of accountability.
- The DA will defend and advocate for a market economy, as well as the principles that underpin it: competition, innovation and initiative.

Constitutionalism and the rule of law.

- Constitutionalism is an adherence to the powers, limits, rights, and responsibilities conferred by the Constitution. As well as to constitutional principles such as the rule of law, federalism, separation of powers, and the separation of party and state.
- Creating a society based on the Constitution is essential for South Africa's progress and economic growth, because a shared social contract provides the stability and solid ground needed for other areas to flourish.
- The Constitution allows for uncertainty in a democracy to be bounded. Meaning that adherence to a constitution ensures that even though electoral outcomes and shifts in party/candidate support are uncertain, there remains basic certainty in the basic rules of engagement, and it forms a consistent social contract from one election to the next.

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- After decades of confrontation between different groups of people, often not recognising each other as equal citizens, the South African Constitution ushered in a new vision. It not only sets out the boundaries of government power, but it gives government clear responsibilities towards all people, and recognises all as equal in front of the law.
- The DA will strive to uphold and defend a liberal constitutional democracy.

Separation of party and state.

- Political parties by nature represent a section of the population and are voted into government by a proportion of voters. As a result, political parties are primarily accountable to their members and supporters.
- In contrast, the state and its representatives are accountable to all, and must operate in the interests of all in society.
- Separation of party and state demands public representatives expand their interests and care to all members of society. Simultaneously, to ensure that the resources and authority of the state are employed to serve the nation and not the party.
- The DA will strive never to let its political objects obscure or interfere with its public duty to all South Africans.

Separation of powers

- Government consists of three separate branches (the legislative, executive, and judicial).
- The abuse and concentration of power is best curtailed where the branches are kept institutionally separate from each other.
- Due to the nature and complexity of government the different branches, in reality, often work closely with one another, but always should do so in a manner which does not compromise the integrity and independence of any one branch.
- The DA will strive to ensure that the independence and integrity of the separate branches of state are respected.

Federalism.

- Federalism is the devolution of power between different geographic units of the government (i.e. national, provincial, and local) to the lowest effective level.
- Federalism is a salient principle of governance because it ensures that decisions are made closer to the local people, communities and businesses they affect.
- This value demands a commitment to bring government closer to the people.

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- Devolution of both authority and funding is important because there can be no effective authority if it is not accompanied with the resources to exercise it.
- The DA will strive to enhance the federal character of our constitutional democracy.

Nonracialism.

- Nonracialism is the rejection of race as a way to categorise and treat people, particularly in legislation.
- The assumption that one's "race" represents people who think, feel, or have the same experience of shared events, based on their physical appearance, is false.
- However, while there is a scientific consensus that "race" itself does not exist - racialism and racism do exist and have a profound and damaging impact on the lives of individuals and society. They are abhorrent and detestable.
- A great deal of harm was caused, and continues to be caused, on the basis of false beliefs in racial difference.
- Social groups based on cultural, religious, political and linguistic factors do exist. However, people who identify with each other on this basis should not be squeezed into narrow racial boxes inherited from our segregated past.
- Nonracialism is therefore a commitment, not just to reject racialism and racism, but to fight for the deconstruction of race, and the reconstruction of a non-racial future.
- The DA unequivocally stands for non-racialism not multiracialism.

Redress.

- Redress refers to the need to remedy or correct an unfair or unjust situation.
- Our past is littered with myriad injustices including forced removals, job reservation, detention without trial, disparities in education, racial segregation, and concentration camps. The consequences of these injustices remain, compounded by poor governance, and are reflected in high rates of poverty, unemployment, and general inequality of opportunity.
- Redress is a commitment to reconciliation and to ensuring that inequality of opportunity, which has been the hallmark of our past, is not a feature of the present or the future.
- Policies which tackle inequality of opportunity - including interventions in education, healthcare, the economy, and safety and security will always be central pillars of our programme of action.
- So profound is this commitment to equality of opportunity that it is reflected in our vision of an 'open, opportunity society for all'.

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- The DA will strive to overcome our past and create a just and equitable future.

Accountability.

- The social contract is built upon trust. At its essence accountability emphasises that there is a two-way relationship: Those who govern, or have been entrusted with a task, have a responsibility to discharge their responsibilities and fulfil the objectives which they undertook to achieve; and those who are governed, or have delegated the task, have a responsibility to reward or sanction on the basis of how duties were discharged.
- When there is a breakdown of accountability; which is a breakdown in the relationship between performance and reward/sanction, standards tend to drop as leaders and functionaries become accustomed to operating with impunity.
- The DA will strive to ensure that the contract between citizens and their representatives is strengthened through accountability, both inside the party and in society as a whole.

Evidence-based decision making.

- Ideas and positions must be able to withstand scrutiny and be open to modification in the face of facts.
- Principle and evidence in decision-making complement one another.
- Principle without evidence leads to dogmatism and evidence without principle leads to the worst kind of pragmatism, where the ends are used to justify any means.
- The DA will respect the value of evidence in decision making and policymaking.

Excellence.

- Excellence first and foremost is about action- it is the continuous pursuit to do and be better even when you are the best.
- This pursuit to shun not only the mediocre, but also what is average and 'good enough' in favour of the extraordinary differentiates excellence from mere competence.
- A commitment to excellence necessitates the valuing of expertise, and those with a record of delivering superior outcomes.
- The DA will strive to pursue excellence in its practices and appointments.

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Resilience.

- Resilience is the ability to recover from adversity or failure.
- Without personal and institutional resilience, temporary setbacks become permanent, and the likelihood of success is diminished.
- The need for resilience is undeniable because the presence of obstacles on the path to success is certain.
- A commitment to resilience is ultimately a commitment to the long haul.
- The DA will strive to nurture a culture of resilience among all those who work to promote its values.

Compassion.

- To best represent people, one must be sensitive to their circumstance and experience.
- South Africa's history has inflicted on all its citizens much trauma both psychological and physical. Understanding that requires compassion.
- Compassion cannot be enforced; it must be authentic.
- The DA will strive to be compassionate and will seek out representatives who embody this value.

Integrity.

- By integrity we refer to the integration of a person's behaviour and action.
- If people profess a set of beliefs, they must be translated into action. We must do as we say and say what we do.
- The DA will strive to actively live the values we profess in this document and to hold each other to account.

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