

Speech by Adv. Deidre Baartman MPP  
DA Western Cape Spokesperson on Budget

***“WC local governments will continue to strive for excellence”***

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Honourable Speaker

Earlier this year this House adopted a Local Government departmental budget of R309 million. In the bigger scheme of things, this is a drop in the ocean in relation to the total Western Cape budget.

The budget of this department and every department is directly related to the Provincial Equitable Share Formula as it is simply not enough to erase years of budget cuts and future pressures. Whichever way you look at it, the Western Cape, and similarly Gauteng, gets short-changed by National Government.

The Western Cape Department of Local Government doesn't however wait around for national government to save us. We believe that as residents of the Western Cape, we must save ourselves.

This is why the Department has –

- allocated more than R20 million over the MTEF period to strengthen municipal support interventions in municipalities in line with relevant legislation;
- allocated over R5 million in 2022/23 for upgrading and replacing of the audio-visual infrastructure at the Western Cape Disaster Management Centre;
- additional allocation of R15 million over the MTEF to provide capacity building and support to municipalities in the execution of their roles and responsibilities during the 2021 post-election transition period;
- and allocated additional R3 million for 2022/23 and 2023/24 to fund dedicated project management support for successful rollout of the Sustainable Infrastructure Development and Finance Facility Programme.

This Department further provides legal support, assistance and advice and forensics to municipalities without capacity.

And while we are seeing great innovation and responsible fiscal management by the provincial government, in real terms provincial budgets will not be increasing and every cent will need to be stretched to continue to deliver the best possible services to residents.

Of the whole national government budget, only 9.1% was allocated to municipalities across South Africa. In finance, many would consider 10% as a significant statistic and when viewed in this light, one must then ask whether the ANC considers municipalities as significant drivers within the South African economy.

In the 2022/23 year, the national government allocated R1.6 million for the Local Government Financial Management Grant to the Prince Albert municipality. It did not increase, it did not decrease – despite inflation, and cost-of-living increases. So Prince Albert received less in real terms. Prince Albert received a 2.99% increase on their Municipal Infrastructure Grant. Inflation is estimated at 8%.

There are too many examples found in the 2022 Division of Revenue Bill to mention.

The Provincial Equitable Share formula, and similarly, the local version does not account sufficiently for population increases or the cumulative cost-of-living increases.

The reason these arguments fall on deaf ears is because the ANC spends the country's money because they believe it is theirs. But it is not the ANC's money, it is not the President's money, it is not National Treasury's money and it is not even the province or local municipality's money. It is the people's money and in spending it, we need to ensure that we deliver services and clean government at the lowest cost, closest to the people.

And the DA-governed Western Cape will continue to strive to achieve exactly that.

Speaker, I thank you.