

## **Budget on Debate Vote 23 and 26: Defence and Military Veterans**

### **Speech by Maliyakhe Shelembe MP**

#### **DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Defence and Military Veterans**

Chairperson, the dismal failure by the Department of the Military Veterans to submit its Annual Performance Plan to Parliament as required and within the required timeframes is proof evidence that the ANC government should not be trusted by voters and should be removed from power in 2024 General Elections.

The reduction in allocation to management, specifically financial management, from R18m to R14m, is of great concern given the findings by the Auditor General that during the previous year, audit material misstatements were identified due to inaccurate and incomplete supporting schedules and reporting. In the 2021/22 financial year the DMV made use of consultants to assist with preparation of the annual financial statement for a period of two years and despite the use of these consultants there were still material misstatements that needed to be adjusted hence we say this reduction is of great concern.

The DA welcomes the additional funding allocated for the rolling out of pension benefits to the military veterans but it's very worrying that the DMV will not be able to spend this budget in full in this financial year given that pension benefits regulations are yet to be finalised. The ANC government has since 2011 been failing to finalise the regulations and this is why military veterans and their dependents are starving. This constant delay with finalisation of regulations cannot be tolerated. Chairperson, if the DA was in government military veterans and their dependents would have had their benefits delivered on time and their dignity, after serving their country with dedication, would be preserved.

Chairperson, the Military Veterans Act no.18 of 2011 clearly defines the responsibility of the government in administering the affairs of military veterans and benefits available to them but military veterans are still not able to access health facilities due to failure by the DMV under the ANC government to finalise the transport strategy. It's more than 11 years since the Act was

enacted but military veterans are still suffering the consequences of a failing government under the ANC.

Chairperson, by the end of the 2022/23 financial year, the DMV Department had only spent about 10% of its allocated funding available for housing, resulting in only 68 houses being built against a target of 355. This is unacceptable. Military veterans are homeless because the DMV under the ANC government failed to spend the budget.

Minister, the further reduction in allocation for Provincial offices from R56.1m to R45.6m is another area of concern. On our oversight visit to East London in the Eastern Cape, we were disappointed that we were not able to get information due to understaffing. It became clear why military veterans, after traveling long distances to these offices, are failing to get the assistance and information that they need.

During our oversight visit to Free State and Eastern Cape provinces, we were shocked to find out that there are number of houses that were allocated to military veterans who were not vetted and not registered onto National Database of Military Veterans. No wonder why deserving military veterans are not getting the houses.

During our oversight visit to the Chatty 491 housing project in Port Elizabeth, Military Veterans complained that due to unemployment, it is difficult to get to offices in East London because the DMV is yet finalise the transport strategy. Minister this is treating military veterans with contempt. Military veterans and their dependents are suffering the consequences of failure by your department.

Hulumeni ka Khongolose ninesono animahloni okulambisa iminyaka engaphezulu kweshumi nambili bebe banilwela oyonivotela othanda indlala. Ningangizondi nginitshela iqiniso anginisukeli abafelikazi babhuqwabhuqwa indlala nina nibe niphila ntofontofo.

Minister let's treat military veterans with the dignity that they deserve.

I thank you