

Press statement by **Zwakele Mncwango**
ActionSA KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Chairperson

ActionSA Requests Chairperson of the EDTEA Committee to Convene a Special Portfolio Committee Meeting Amid Commitment from the Department to Splurge R28 Million into SAMAs

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ActionSA has written to the Chairperson for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) Portfolio Committee at the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature, Mr Nhlakanipho Ntombela, requesting him to convene a special portfolio committee meeting amid commitment from the department to splurge a R28 million into SAMAs

We can confirm that the R28 million is not a politically manufactured fabrication as stated by the MEC for EDTEA in his Media Statement. We are in possession of documents which show a PowerPoint presentation submitted to Provincial Treasury by the department, detailing how the R28 million will be broken down into various descriptors. We cannot make this up.

Most concerning being that the department requested Provincial Treasury to redirect R18 million from its compensation of employee's budget, and R5 million from Ithala where they had double budgeted for chemicals and detergent, totalling at R23 million - which Treasury ultimately rejected to make the R5 million available to the department, as they do not have the power to do so without approval from the Legislature, as it was the Legislature that made the R5 million deposit into Ithala -.

The R5 million discrepancy from the initial R23 million that the department requested Treasury to redirect, and that of the R28 million reflecting on the PowerPoint presentation raises numerous questions of whether something more sinister could be at play.

The department continues to contradict themselves on the exact budget that it will use to fund the SAMAs. In their Media Statement, the MEC confirms that the department will spend R20 million towards the SAMAs, causing further confusion and belief that they have not conducted proper study, and have thumb sucked all figures.

The compensation budget is money used to create posts and fill available vacancies within the department, but it is worrisome that department seeks to use these funds to fund the SAMAs, leaving uncertainty in the progression of the *Sthesha Waya Waya* employment programme launched by the Provincial Government a few months ago, displaying that hosting the SAMAs is of more importance than tackling unemployment rates.

In our list of questions to the Portfolio Committee, we have requested an indication of how this will impact department's ability to fill vacancies.

We wish to make it known that ActionSA is not against the Province hosting the award ceremony, however, our main concern is the high budgeting costs for the award ceremony, noting that this award ceremony was not budgeted for by the Province.

Also taking into consideration that the eThekweni Municipality Mayor, Mxolisi Kaunda committed to spend R25 million to host the SAMAs, without seeking approval from council shows how the ANC-led coalition continues to undermine the municipal council and proper protocol and procedure that has to be taken before publically making such bold statements.

The commitment from both the Municipality and EDTEA totals at R53 million.

We note that in their budget breakdown, the department budgeted R11.5 million for live broadcasting of the award ceremony, while we know that public broadcaster SABC does not charge to broadcast the SAMAs, in fact SABC will often pay organisers to give them broadcasting rights for such events.

In our letter to Hon. Ntombela, we highlighted key issues that we believe the portfolio committee should use when probing the department for answers in this matter, and we trust that he will steer the committee towards playing their role in oversight without fear or favour.

Issued by:

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