

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 1

THURSDAY, 03 JULY 2025

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MINI-PLENARY SESSION - GOOD HOPE CHAMBER

Members of the mini-plenary session met at the Good Hope Chamber at 14:00.

The House Chairperson Mr C T Frolick took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayers or meditation.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Debate on Vote No 17 - Higher Education:

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): There is too much noise in the Chamber. I am now inviting the Minister of Higher Education to deliver the Budget Vote.

The MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION: Hon House Chairperson and hon members of the National Assembly, the Chairperson of the

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 2

Portfolio Committee on Higher Education and Training the hon Tebogo Letsie, I dedicate this 2025-26 budget to the memory of our fallen heroes and heroines in the Post School Education and Training who have recently passed. In April this year, Sisonke Mbalekwa was shot and killed while running away during student protests at the Walter Sisulu University's Mthatha Campus. Further, just last week - Mr Sinethemba Mpambane, the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Institutional Support and Development at Walter Sisulu University was laid to rest. All these tragic gun violence-related deaths destabilise our institutions of higher learning communities and families as well as the broader academic community.

This violence forces our institutions to spend resources on security measures - resources that could be more productively applied to academic investments. I as the Minister of Higher Education condemn this violence in the strongest terms because now our institutions are becoming more unsafe. Despite this violence, our commitment remains steadfast to build a postschool education and training system that is inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of our young people and the nation.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 3

For the current Medium-Term Expenditure Framework cycle the department's budget has increased at an average annual rate of 4,4%, in nominal terms. The total budget allocation for the current financial year is R142,4 billion. It increases to R150 billion in the next financial year and to R158 billion in 2027-28. In real terms, this growth is not sufficient to meet growing demands for additional resources.

The year 2025 marks the first year of implementation of our five-year strategic plan for the period 2025 to 2030. Amongst others, during this period, our overall strategic focus areas will be on improving education outcomes and skills. We intend to complete Phase 1 of the University of North West Mining Campus by 2030.

Work to refurbish the erstwhile Giyani College of Education in Limpopo into a state-of-the-art campus of the Tshwane University of Technology with first year student registration in the 2026 academic year which is currently underway.

Hon House Chairperson, in terms of the sector allocations, the following comments on selected budget items bear relevance:

The budget of Technical and Vocational Education and Training,

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 4

TVET, for the current academic year is R14 billion, an increase from R13,1 billion in 2024. This budget is projected to increase to R14,7 billion next year. We remain committed to repositioning and rebranding our TVET Colleges as institutions of choice for various careers of our young people. For too long, vocational skills were seen as second-class - but today, we are saying to the people of South Africa loud and clear: Becoming an artisan is not a backup plan - artisanal training and development is the backbone of a thriving economy of the 21st century. We are saying, it is cool to be an artisan of the 21st century it is cool!

Our national skills development lever consisting of the Sector Education and Training Authority, SETAs, and the National Skills Fund have a combined budget of R26 billion for the current financial year. This budget will increase to R27,8 billion in the net financial year.

Student funding through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, has grown since 1991 from disbursing R21,4 million to R54 billion. Between 2019 and 2024, NSFAS disbursed R244 billion, benefiting 4 695 students in both universities and TVET colleges. The NSFAS budget for the

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 5

current academic year is R48,7 billion - and it will increase to R51 billion next year - and R53,4 billion in the year 2027.

While this is not sufficient to meet the growing demand for access to higher education, we continue to seek efficient ways of allocating limited resources to ensure that no deserving learner in South Africa is left behind. Many bright and talented students are left behind as they do not qualify for government funding and NSFAS will remain committed to implementing of a comprehensive student funding model for higher education to address the needs of the "missing middle".

Towards assisting the "missing middle", the National Skills Fund has set aside R3 billion over a three-year period. The first allocation of R1 billion was transferred to NSFAS in the year 2024 and progress on implementation of this R1 billion is underway. This is a clear indication that the government has been prioritising education and its quest to broaden access to those sections of our communities who had no access to Postschool and Education and Training in the past.

Students living with disabilities receive specific support in the form of assistive learning devices and NSFAS support

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 6

enables public institutions of higher learning to receive sufficient funding to ensure quality tertiary education outcomes. The NSFAS support to the property sector has enabled transformation across the student accommodation portfolio and has enabled aspiring landlords to start scaling their property enterprises.

Overall, budget for university education increases from R91,7 billion in 2024, to R96 billion in 2025 – and to R104 billion in the year 2026. In the current academic year, year, we acknowledge that there is R1,4 billion deficit of the universities budget due to United States, US, fees.

We continue to work with National Treasury to find a sustainable adjustment to university budget.

In February this year, I announced the appointment of the new board of NSFAS. The Board is comprised of highly qualified individuals with the expertise necessary to promote efficiency, accountability, as well as transparency within the organisation.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 7

In the 2025 academic year, NSFAS is supporting approximately 811 students across various universities and TVET Colleges. Of these, universities are sitting at 580 000, while TVET colleges are sitting at 231 000.

The NSFAS has initiated direct consultations with various institutions to assess their capacity to accommodate NSFAS, operations within their premises in its effort to decentralize its operations because we want to make sure that we are accessible. Following concerns regarding accommodation payment processes, NSFAS conducted a comprehensive legal review on the contracts of student accommodation intermediaries who are charging 5% fees. We believe that these fees can be redirected to our young people who do not have access to postschool education and training. We are waiting for a final report for us to decide in this regard. This is our commitment to clean governance; accountability and transparency and to root out any potential corruption and maladministration in our Postschool Education and Training.

Hon House Chairperson, we are committed to repositioning and transforming the National Skills Fund to target youth unemployment in line with the Medium-Term Development Plan.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 8

The fund will continue its support to the Human Resource Development Council of SA and the National Skills Authority in steering national skills and human resource development strategies.

In the state of the nation address, in February this year, His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a set of comprehensive measures to further support persons with disabilities as part of transformative initiative to empower over 10 000 persons with disabilities through tailored training programmes, stipends and specialised tools with an investment value of R1 billion. Furthermore, the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention, a key initiative aimed at reducing barriers and expanding employment and training opportunities for young people will receive priority because we want to make sure that young people have access to education and skills revolution as well as participate actively in the economy.

The National Skills Fund will continue to fund artisan development and contribute to National Development Plan target of 30 000 by 2030.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 9

Hon House Chairperson, funding for the Just Energy Transition skills requirements will be provided through bursaries, scholarships, occupational programmes, and work integrated learning programmes. I am proud to share that as the sector we are leading in South Africa in Just Energy Transition Skills Portfolio. As part of this work, the department will officially launch both the Just Energy Transition Skills Desk and the National Just Energy Transition Skills Advisory Forum on 29 August 2025. We will be working closely with the Minister of Energy and Electricity Dr Ramokgopa in ensuring that we implement this programme.

For its implementation we will be working in close partnership with government departments, industry, labour, education and training institutions, and communities to build a more inclusive and agile skills system.

Hon members, this year, South Africa took over the Presidency of the G20. The Department of Higher Education and Training will continue to lead; in collaboration with the Department of Basic Education, the G20 Education Working Group which will include hosting of the remaining Education Working Group Meetings in Mpumalanga province. We have identified three

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 10

priority areas for deliberation in the G20 Education Working Group: That is Quality Foundational Learning; the Role of the Early Childhood Care and Education to Improve the Quality of Foundational Learning. The Mutual Recognition of Qualifications in a Global Context; and Education Professional Development for a Changing World. We will ensure that our higher education institutions play an active role in the G20 Presidency through participation in seminars covering a variety of priority areas and topics.

Recognition of qualifications and skills across borders is no longer optional, it is mandatory. The significance of mutual recognition of qualifications and skills is critical to foster academic mobility for students, for our researchers and lecturers; labour mobility for skilled workers; policy coherence across countries and regions.

The Skills Development System will continue to prioritise key areas such as Artisan Development and Workplace-Based Learning Programmes. Over the past five years, South Africa has produced more than 95 000 qualified artisans, largely through the Sector Education and Training Authorities, Setas. However,

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 11

the said part is that we have not sharing our good stories It is now time for us to share what our Setas can offer.

I just want to reflect on key achievements key achievements on centres of specialisations. The centre of specialisation were expanded from 43 to 53 by end of 2024-25 financial year. The investments since the launch in 2019 has increased to R257 million to upgrade infrastructure at these centres.

The number of trade centres at Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, College also increased from 35 to 37 trade centres. Hairdressing was included as a funded programme for the year 2024. These Centres have trained over 5 000 artisans of which 1 073 have been tested already and 1 041 passed trade test achieving 97% pass rate. Planned projects and strategic priorities for the period ahead I think it is very important for me also to share that.

The Centres of Specialisation will be expanded to include the following strategic priorities. Music and performing arts at Central Johannesburg College.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 12

The mining sector in partnership with Mining Qualification Authority, MQA, the African Rainbow Mineral and Waterberg TVET college. This will focus on mining skills.

Water utility in partnership with Umngeni-Thukela Water and Rand Water. This will assist Water Boards and our water services authorities with skills needed for water utility infrastructure as well as to fight water leaks.

Hon House Chairperson, it is our commitment to build an inclusive, responsive, and transformative postschool education and training system. We have commenced with prioritising two Community Education and Training, CET, colleges, Gauteng and Northern Cape they at the procurement stage and construction should commence by the end of this financial year.

To support better co-ordination in our application processes, the Draft Central Application System Bill is finally on route to the Speaker of the National Assembly following Cabinet approval.

With the review of the statutory amendments in the Public Sector Education and Training, PSET, we hope to improve the

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 13

efficiency and performance of the Postschool Education and Training System in South Africa.

Hon House Chairperson, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Orbit TVET College Football Club for its promotion to the Betway Premiership Soccer League, PSL. We love you and we are proud of you as the postschool education and training. Thank you so much. [Time expired.]

Mr W T LETSIE: Chair of Chairs, Minister, Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, members of the House, distinguished guests and fellow South Africans, engaging in this crucial debate through broadcast digital platforms, I greet you all. It is a profound honour to rise in this House on behalf of the African National Congress, the historic leader of our democratic breakthrough and a movement entrusted with the responsibility to advance social transformation through state power.

Today, we speak in firm support of the Budget Vote for the Department of Higher Education and Training as a transformative instrument, a tool of justice, and a pillar of nation-building. The budget is a political commitment rooted

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 14

in the clarion call for the Freedom Charter and shaped by the developmental vision of the National Development Plan. As we mark the 70th anniversary of the Freedom Charter, we recommit to its demand that: "The doors of learning and culture shall be opened to all." The ANC's support for this budget is grounded in that enduring struggle to expand access, deepen inclusion and build a postschool education and training, Pset, sector that reflects the aspirations of a democratic developmental state. Education remains the most powerful weapon we possess to fight poverty, inequality and unemployment. Through this budget, we are resourcing that fight. As parliamentarians and members of this committee, oversight is not just an administrative function. It is a solemn responsibility entrusted to us by the people. We will hold the department, National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, universities, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, colleges and sector education and training authority, Setas, accountable.

We will ensure that public resources are used efficiently, effectively and transparently to deliver the ANC's vision of an inclusive and accessible Pset sector. In this context, we commend the strategic direction the department has taken to

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 15

expand access and inclusivity. As a progressive movement, we welcome the steady rise in enrolment across the PSET system, a clear indication that our policies are taking root. University enrolments, for example, are projected to grow from a baseline of 1,77,768 to 1,133868, I hope ...

IsiZulu:

... uzwile ukuthi angizange ngithi ...

English:

... listen carefully. By 2025-26 financial year, an increase of 56 100 students. This is not just a statistical growth. It is a tangible expression of the ANC's commitment to expanding access to higher education to benefit all. However, we must also confront the alarming concern that over 3,4 million young people aged between 15 and 24 remain not in employment, education and training. This is a structural challenge that demands urgent and innovative solutions. While targeted support for youth is already part of the departmental strategy, it must be significant and scaled up. We need to expand the reach for community education and training colleges.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 16

We are happy, Minister, you have just announced that we will build to strengthened skills programme and build agile partnerships with industry to create real path for learning, work and livelihoods. Alongside these efforts, we commend the department for its work in increasing funding for students with disabilities, upgrading ICT infrastructure and continuing to roll out the Student Housing Infrastructure Programme. This intervention reflects a holistic approach to access, one that the ANC will continue to champion as we deepen transformation across the Pset sector.

However, progress must not blind us to shortcomings. We cannot turn a blind eye to ongoing challenges, such as student accommodation crisis where black-small business owners are facing nonpayments from NSFAS and many of them are about to lose ... their property, funding delays and defunding of students and infrastructure backlogs that continue to hamper the realisation of accessibility to Pset system. We urge the department to address these challenges with the seriousness and urgency they deserve.

Alongside these efforts, we commend the department for its focused investment in community education and training, CET,

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 17

infrastructure grant will support the construction of the skills centres, workshops, ICT laboratories and teaching facilities across all provinces. The investment ensures that CET colleges are equipped to meet local demand while also benefiting from much-needed ICT upgrades that support them. Digital learning environments together with the continued roll-out of the Student Housing Infrastructure Programme and an increase in funding for students with disabilities. These initiatives reflect a holistic and integrated approach to expanding access. The ANC continues to champion in building a truly inclusive PSET sector.

The numbers reaffirmed this progress with over 274 000 TVET college students funded through NSFAS bursaries in the baseline year, with a projected 269 314 students supported in the 2025-26 financial year and a target of over 300 000 in the next outer years. On the university front, the NSFAS loan scheme aimed at the missing middle will reach 11 000 students annually. These interventions are instrumental, or instruments of social justice and redress made possible by an ANC-led government, which prioritise the needs of the people. The current budget allocation must be scrutinised for how it

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 18

supports transformation and equity, especially for historically disadvantaged students and institutions.

Annual Performance Plans from the department and all these entities must be realistic, achievable and must be aligned with available resources. We cannot afford a disconnect between policy ambition and budget realities. Our people deserve results, not excuses. Furthermore, the department's commitment to multilingualism must be strengthened and expanded. Yes, listen carefully. Education must embrace the linguistic diversity of our people. Diversity of our country to improve learning outcomes and ensure that no learner is left behind due to language barriers. A notable example in the collaboration between the Department of Institutional Advancement, DIA, and the University of South Africa, Unisa, through Language Development Plan, which supports pilot programmes in indigenous languages aimed at improving student comprehension in their mother tongue. This initiative showcased through recent - listen carefully again - multilingualism road shows in provinces such as Mpumalanga, the Western Cape and Northwest reflect a practical step towards equalising all official languages in teaching, learning, research and support. The task before us is clear,

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 19

to advance social transformation through a Pset sector is truly inclusive and accessible to all.

This committee, as parliamentarians and custodians of the people's mandate, must exercise a robust oversight to ensure that the department delivers on its mandate and that every Rand spent contributes to transformation of life. The ANC leads this fight with courage, discipline and vision. We owe it to the generation who marched before us and millions of South Africans who look to us with hope. Together, we will open doors wider and keep them open, not just in policy but in practise.

To the people of South Africa, as we present this Budget today for consideration. I ask you to listen and listen very carefully. I ask you to watch and watch very carefully. To those who will not be supporting this budget, many of them have already indicated that they are going to reject this budget on the basis that they do not believe that the Minister should be a Minister today, which is a very skewed reasoning. We want you to listen to them when they reject this budget. We want you to remind them that they will literally be saying all poor students who are receiving NSFAS bursaries, all poor

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 20

students who are getting their allowances must go home, sleep hungry and not have a place to stay. This is what they will be saying to you. They will be saying to you that all small businesses in the sector, who are providing accommodation to our students must close-down. They will be saying all the owners of these properties must lose their properties. They will be saying all workers in our universities, TVET colleges and everywhere else must go home because those universities and TVET colleges must close down.

When you vote in 2026, we are asking you to remember them because that is what they will be saying. They will be saying to you, your poor child must not go to school, must not go to university because they have a problem with the Minister. That is what they will be saying. When you vote next year, when you register to vote for next year, remember them because they are betraying your children. Thank you very much.

IsiZulu:

Mnu M P MSEZANA: Angibingelele kuwe Sihlalo, ngibingelele amaLungu ePhalamende nabantu baseNingizimu Afrika. Njengeqembu loMkhonto weSizwe sifuna ukukubeka kucace ukuthi sifuna

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 21

imfuno yamahhala engezukugcina kuphela kwa-undergraduate kodwa ezofika ezingeni le-postgraduate.

As MK Party, we call for free quality and decolonised education, which is why we unequivocally reject Budget Vote 17.

We further reject this budget on the basis that we do not have confidence in the Ministry and certainly not in the accounting officer in the form of the director general, DG, who is alleged of gross misconduct, fraud and corruption, yet the Minister fails to suspend or even investigate him.

So, we are not rejecting this budget because of all the things that you are claiming. We reject it because we do not have confidence in the ministry and the department to oversee this budget.

The 2025 Annual Performance Plan, APP, Budget Vote stands as a cold indifferent document that dares to speak of plans and progress, yet it is shamefully silent on the agony of thousands of students whose future is hanging in limbo.

Nowhere does it mention the sons and daughters who have labour

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 22

through years of study, only to find their certificates withheld, their dreams imprisoned behind unpaid fees.

It is silent and criminally silent on the settling of historical debt that shackles the poor of our youth, the forgotten souls who have fallen through the cracks as the so-called missing middle. Today, as I speak to you, there are students sitting at home, degrees earned but worthless in their hands, not because they lack ambition, but because they simply cannot afford it.

Tell me, how is it just, that a child of a police officer who risks their lives and limb each day to keep our streets safe but must be denied future because of debt. How is it right, that a child of a nurse who attends to the sick and broken and the death of the night is locked out of progress because of fees? How can it be that a child of a social worker who fights tirelessly to mend the wounds of society cannot claim the price of education because the price is too high. And how is it in a country that calls itself free, does a child of a teacher, a mother of all professions sit at home degree with health simply because their parents cannot pay or in a worst-case scenario, they are financially excluded?

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 23

These are families who sacrificed their lives time and service to this nation, yet they are punished by a cold arithmetic of National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS cap, trapped in a system that tells them that, you learn to earn too much to help but too little to pay.

So, we must rise and ask does this budget really and truly serve the marginalised and the working class and the poor, or is it merely a ledger of numbers, blind to the tears, the pain and suffocated the potential of those whose only crime is to be born into poverty.

We demand a budget that speaks the language of justice, of transformation and of humanity. Until then we refuse to be silent when the youth of this country are sacrificed to corruption, mismanagement, and elitist policies.

The National Skills Fund that has a five billion looted, we cannot ignore the scandal consuming the National Skills Fund. The Auditor-General has exposed nearly five billion unaccounted for. Money stolen from our unemployed youth and working class desperate for skills. This is not just mismanagement, it is an economic violence.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 24

Yet, this budget proposes more pouring billions into the NSF despite the crisis of mismanagement and underspending of three point seven billion last year alone. How can we trust an institution that cannot spend its funds effectively or even account for billions that have been lost?

Let's address the issue of NSFAS, a programme that is supposed to be powerful lifeline for the disadvantaged, whilst we are still in pursuit of free quality decolonised education. However, instead it was developed into a catastrophe of mismanagement. Over 128 million has been squandered due to fraud and ghost students. An additional 166,9 million has gone down the drain on extravagant offices leases and 18,6 million wasted on parking bays while our students are left to suffer.

In 2024, the direct payment system failed, drastically forcing thousands of our students into homelessness, hunger, preventing them from purchasing text books or even basic sanitary products. The MKP demands that the NSFAS be dismantled and rebuild from ground up. Enough is enough. The betrayal of the poor must end. Thank you very much.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 25

Ms L M MASEKO: House Chairperson, hon members, a budget is not merely about numbers on page, it is a declaration of intent, it is a moral document, it speaks to what the government values and what it doesn't. The Department of Higher Education and Training claims to prioritise quality education, equity and excellence, yet, under the current Minister, these values are just empty slogans, not guiding principles.

We are not here today to debate technical estimates, we are here because the very integrity of our higher education system is being systematically eroded by incompetence, deception and the unchecked abuse of power.

The Minister has repeatedly given conflicting representations to this House. She told Parliament that an independent panel oversaw the appointment of key Sector Education and Training Authority, SETA, Board Members, yet the very individuals named as chairs of that process, including Advocate Terry Motau, has publicly disassociate themselves from any involvement. That is not miscommunication. That is deliberate manufacturing of the facts. It is a deception with consequences.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 26

Today, public confidence in the sectors, those very institution meant to train, upskill and empower our youth lies in tatters. Politically connected individuals and ANC insiders have been gifted board seats, not based on merit, but on patronage. A job's factory for comrades while millions of young sit unemployed, untrained and forgotten.

The rot does not stop at the SETAs. Despite the Minister's empty assurances, National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS remains a disaster. Students have gone months without allowances, appeals are backlogged, bursary guidelines are issued late and now we learn that about 27,000 students may be defunded even after they have been admitted, housed and taught.

What kind of Minister punishes students for her own failures? What kind of Minister speaks of hope while gutting the very mechanisms that offer it? This budget cuts infrastructure grants to Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET and university sectors while ballooning administrative costs. Colleges serving poor rural out of school youth received just 2,2% of the department's budget.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 27

Meanwhile, consultants walk away with a whopping R22,8 million in advisory fees. A department that cannot even spend its allocated infrastructure grants now wants to advise itself on how to spend more.

We are told that the department will deliver a just energy transition, but who will train the solar technicians and wind turbine engineers when TVET colleges still lack electricity, Wi-Fi and qualified lecturers? A transition in name only is not just, it is delusion.

House Chairperson, this is a department that has spent millions on forensic investigations, but it's Minister, the executive authority has taken no action against officials implicated in fraud and maladministration, not one disciplinary hearing and not one criminal charge, not one clawback of stolen public funds.

Hon members, when corruption is left unpunished, it becomes a policy, when incompetence is promoted, it becomes strategy. Under Minister Nkabane both flourish. She has failed to fill critical vacancies, she has failed to protect the financial viability of NSFAS, she has failed to deliver student housing,

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 28

she has failed to be honest with this Parliament and above all, she has failed our youth.

The DA believes that our students deserve better than this. They deserve action, they deserve to have their budgets treated with care, they deserve to have the billions earmarked for their future to benefit them, not the connected few. They deserve a Minister with competence and integrity. They deserve a Minister that treats their future as a mission, not a meal ticket.

President Ramaphosa must remove Minister Nkabane without delay. The future of our youth depends on strong ethical, caring leadership. And until there is accountability at the very top, every rand in this budget will be another drop in the leaking bucket.

Hon members, this budget, if implemented by an ...

[Inaudible.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon member, your time is now expired. Thank you.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 29

Ms L M MASEKO: ... but to risk future of our youth in the hands of ... [Inaudible.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon member, your time is now expired.

Ms L M MASEKO: ... to pay. I thank you.

Mr S LONZI: House Chairperson, perhaps we must quickly start by exposing the white lies of the DA, that it can support certain departments, but not support other departments. There are four key Budget Votes in Parliament. The first is the Fiscal Framework and Revenue Proposals. It gives the budget Bills, the blueprint and sets the economic policy direction. The DA voted in support of this and passed.

The second one is the Division of Revenue Bill. Now this one deals with the allocation of national, provincial and local government. The DA voted in support of this Bill, and it passed. We're now dealing with the Appropriation Bill, which allocates funds to individual government departments and programmes.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 30

The DA cannot cherry-pick. Voting for the Appropriation Bill means approving the entire budget inclusive of all the departments. So let us be very clear South Africans, the DA will vote for the Appropriation Budget, which funds each and every department, including the Department of Higher Education and Training, including the Department of Human Settlements.

The DA's narrative is a deliberate distortion at best or sheer ignorance at worst. The EFF has been at the forefront of confronting the crisis in higher education, even when those who are making the most noise now stood on the sidelines. We are perplexed that the DA only discovered corruption when their Deputy Minister was fired. Before the firing of the Deputy Minister, there were singing praises about the Government of National Unity, GNU. Today, they want to behave like an opposition.

Fortunately, the people of South Africa are not stupid and can see straight through your lies. So, we are not going to waste time with this fake fight between the DA and the ANC.

Minister, we're going to present to you seven urgent and practical steps to rescue higher education from the collapse.

Firstly, you must fix the National Student Financial Aid

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 31

Scheme, NSFAS or eradicate it entirely. There is absolutely no reason why NSFAS still struggles to pay students.

We've got about 19 million people in South Africa on SA Social Security Agency, Sassa and an additional 9 million receiving R350 each and every single month. NSFAS only deals with an odd 1 million students. Why can't you develop an efficient payment system that will pay students, institutions, and accommodations directly?

Minister, you have got four companies here that NSFAS pays to pay students. But what makes this even more infuriating is that these four corrupt companies don't have Financial Services Provider, FSP licenses. So, the likelihood is that these middlemen also have their own middlemen to pay the students. What happens? NSFAS pays the corrupt fintech. The fintech has a middleman which has an FSP license, only thereafter, do students get paid by middleman of a middleman.

The second thing you must do is to clean up the Sector Education and Training Authorities, Setas. You must blacklist corrupt board members Minister. You must blacklist corrupt CEOs. Not this thing you're doing now. Someone gets suspended

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 32

in one Seta, you take them and put them in a separate Seta. The third thing you must do Minister, is to support the Student Debt Bill of the EFF. We are going to keep labouring this point until it sinks in. It makes no sense why you withhold the certificates and qualifications of students who owe you debt, because they must use the same degrees to go and seek employment opportunities so that they can be able to have funding.

You spend billions bailing out Eskom, billions bailing out SA Airways, SAA. You are now going to spend R700 million on a useless National Dialogue. Why don't you take that R700 million and bail out the youth of South Africa? The fourth thing you must do, Minister, is to declare a student housing emergency. I hope you are writing together with the Deputy Ministers. Introduce a one student one bed policy by 2027.

The state of student accommodation in South Africa is not only inhumane, but also gross negligence. Partner with municipalities, partner with Human Settlements, introduce a Built- Operate- Transfer, BOT model for student accommodation. Invite progressive business to come, they build, they operate

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 33

for a period of 15-20 years, thereafter they back the buildings to government and our institutions. Free education here for you, Minister.

The fifth thing you must do is to professionalise and protect workers and academics in our institutions. Minister, excellence in education begins with the workers and the educators but many of them are exploited. Standardise pay, insource workers and reward hardworking lecturers and academics. You cannot expect a world class education from an exploited workforce. The sixth thing you must do Minister, is to raise the status of TVET colleges. I am happy you spoke about it today. We must stop treating TVET colleges like glorified high schools. Give them more funding, equip their infrastructure and market them with the same pride and passion that you do with institutions. By the way, Germany built its economy and artisans. South Africa can do the same.

Lastly, and that's point number seven, introduce an unemployed graduate grant. I know you are going to say this is beyond your mandate, but you must lead the discussion. Partner with Employment and Labour, Social Development, Treasury, even The Presidency for oversight. Our young people are graduating, but

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 34

they don't have jobs. Look at the painful thing happening to the unemployed doctors. Minister, young people in South Africa must be paid for looking for jobs because looking for a job is extremely expensive in South Africa. It is worse when someone is a graduate.

Now, I've got a simple advice for you, Minister. The comrades who are claiming to support you because they are stealing from the sector, are not going to be there when you are removed as Minister of Higher Education. When you fall, you are going to fall alone. Therefore, you must decide, it's either you are going to be on the side of students, or you are going to be on the side of corrupt comrades of the ANC. This is why we cannot accept this budget because we've got no certainty that the R142 billion is going to be used correctly. Why? NSFAS has a middleman, of a middleman, of a middleman. Thank you.

Mr S S ZONDO: House Chairperson, I am being intimidated here to support this Bill at all costs. But as IFP ... [Laughter.] Firstly Minister, I think as young people of this country, we must congratulate the former chairperson of ANC Youth League Malusi Gigaba for obtaining his PhD. It's an inspiration to us young people of this country that no matter what, we go

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 35

forward. No matter the challenges that we face, but we continue with education because it's the only key that will open everything for us in the near future. We want to say to you hon Gigaba, holding a PhD must be accompanied by being humble and no arrogance. Treat South Africa as you wish your children to be treated. Hon Chair, I think, the hon Minister is disturbing me.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon members, honourable members, just calm down, please. Proceed hon member.

Mr S S ZONDO: Both the portfolio committee and citizens of South Africa have witnessed some of the most concerning lapses in accountability from the Ministry of Higher Education. That has been shown by all the clips that are doing round of the Portfolio Committee of Higher Education, whereby the transparency and accountability has been denied. South African citizens have been denied the right to know everything that is happening within the department that they voted for.

To make it worse, the legislation arm of government remain dissatisfied with the explanation and justification provided

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 36

by the Minister regarding the controversy surrounding the Seta Board appointments. We still want answers from that because you cannot say that we trust this budget, whereas is it going to be implemented by the Setas that are not trustworthy. We need transparency and accountability for our people.

In 202-25, the capital infrastructure and efficiency grant, CIE was allocated for Gert Sibande and Majuba TVET colleges. Still now, those accommodations that were meant to be built are not up. You ask yourself if you continue to announce that the more beds for accommodation of students are being allocated in this budget, are they going to stand up or not, because the previous grants have not delivered what was desired to be delivered. However, this should not dent the significance of this department. It plays a pivotal role including the capacity, ethical and development state. A strategic drive of transformation in South Africa.

The department's importance is highlighted by the substantial allocation it received. While the commitment to increase bed space steps of the right direction, we urge the department to accelerate the effort of expanding accommodation capacity of the institutions of higher learning as a matter of urgency.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 37

Hon Chairperson, no amount of money can solve the problem if they underlying diagnosis is incorrect. Unfortunately, this appears to be the case with how this department is approaching the challenges between the TVET sector and NSFAS.

Rather than addressing the root cause such as a poor governance, systematic efficiency and a lack of accountability, the department continues to allocate funds without a clear substantial strategy. As a result, we witnessed the recurring issues including delays in payments, administrative backlogs and the continued marginalised students who rely on the system for their education and the future. Without fundamental shift in how these institutions are managed and supported, the injection of funds will do little more than a much deepening crisis.

Hon Chairperson it's time that South Africa faces the staggering youth unemployment crisis. What is urgent needed is bold ethical and visionary leadership to drive the skill development in question. In the context, the role of Seta Board is even more critical. Seta must function efficiently, transparent and align with the national priorities to ensure that young people of this country are equipped with relevant

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 38

and high-quality skills to open the pathway for employment and entrepreneurship.

We cannot afford the dysfunctional or mismanagement of an institution meant to serve the backbone of our skills development agenda. The department faced numerous challenges, thus remain a critical pillar of our development. The IFP will continue to closely monitor the development of the department, holding accountable where necessary.

However, we are firmly committed to principle of good governance. We will not hold the department hostage for political gain. The IFP supports this budget because we are here to support and work along with the Ministry to deliver what is required for our people. Thank you.

Mr A SAULS: Greetings in the wonderful name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Niuu:

!Honkia u huniki.

English:

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 39

In his internationally acclaimed work, *The Basic Laws of Human Stupidity*, the economic historian Carlo Cipolla asserts: "A stupid person is someone who causes harm to another person or a group while they themselves do not benefit from it and may even suffer losses."

Attempting to cause a potential legislative backlog in order to be perceived as the blue cape-wearing hero whilst knowing the harm it may cause to South Africans with no benefit to themselves is not heroic, it is myopic.

Our committee consists of the PA, ANC, EFF, MK Party, IFP and DA, together as one strong team. We have been the most effective in enforcing section 55(2) of the Constitution, holding the executive accountable. Make no mistake, it is not the effort of one single alternate member, as the current DA ... ceptive narrative wants you to believe.

The department is allocated R450,5 billion in total, that is shared amongst six programmes, of which we want to zoom in on two. Programme one contributes to two Medium-Term Development Plan, MTDP, outcomes, one which is social cohesion and nation-building, with 65% of public procurement set aside for black-

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 40

owned businesses. We want to reiterate that the department must take the recommendation in the report under section 8 that racial targets should be included, seriously. We will hold you accountable for coloured, African, Indian and white African inclusion in all opportunities.

Programme three is university education. A total of R407,3 billion of the department's expenditure over the next three years shall be spent largely on higher education institutions. We cannot be spending a combined 90,5% of the budget just for institutions to ignore our authority and tell us about academic autonomy, which institutions like the Central University of Technology, CUT, uses as a smokescreen to appoint foreign nationals over qualifying academics like Prof Mpekoa, who is now being ignored by them and the department. We see you. We see you marginalising highly skilled professionals like Keanan Jacobs just because he is a coloured South African. We see you. Institutions like the University of SA, Unisa, that promotes foreign nationals over academics like Dr Jonas Thinane who almost committed suicide and is now fired because he wrote to us. We see you. The principal of Motheo Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, College, who pays legal fees from these

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 41

subsidies via a foreign national chief financial officer, CFO, to his sister who is hired as the lawyer of the college, with a member of council also getting a cut. We see you and we are coming for you.

Hon Minister, we support this budget with the commitment to continue to hold you accountable without fear or favour. This is bigger than us.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon Sauls, will you just take your seat, please. Why do you want to be recognised, hon member?

Mr E MTHETHWA: Chair, I would love to find out whether the hon member would be prepared to take a question.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Are you prepared to take a question, hon member? Order.

Mr A SAULS: No, hon Chair, I'm ... [Inaudible.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): The hon member is not prepared to take a question. Thank you. Please continue.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 42

Mr A SAULS: Hon Minister, we support this budget with the commitment to continue to hold you accountable without fear or favour. This is bigger than you. It is bigger than us. Take accountability where you have erred and correct it for the sake of all South Africans. Proverbs 12 vs 1 says, "Whoever ..." Minister, listen to the Bible. "Whoever loves correction is wise, whoever hates it is stupid." Despite the popular belief and the popular view, hon Minister, I know you are not stupid. Salute!

Dr W J BOSHOFF: Hon House Chair, a revolution comes along only once in so many years and about 30 years ago there was one in which many systems and ways of doing ... were set aside to be replaced with new ones.

Afrikaans:

Nou, 'n onderwysstelsel is baie keer 'n ding wat stukkie vir stukkie inkrementeel groei en wat 'n onsamehangende ingewikkelde soort van werklikheid word wat onderwys hervormers en die soort mense nogal in die versoeking bring om te sê kom ons skuif alles van die tafel af en ons kry 'n hele nuwe stelsel. Die probleem daarmee is dat as jy 'n fout maak, dan maak jy 'n baie groot fout. 'n Stelsel wat bietjie vir

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 43

bietjie reggestel en verander word in die rigting wat 'n mens hom wil hê is baie beter as 'n totaal nuwe stelsel wat nie werk nie.

Nou kom ons kyk na wat die veranderinge is wat aangebring is. As ons begin by outonome universiteite wat elkeen met sy eie ... volgens sy eie wet geregeer is, is alles onder die Departement van Hoër Onderwys ingebring. Teknikons is afgeskaf en by universiteite ingeskakel, net soos wat universiteite ook bymekaar ingeskakel is. Daarmee het ons eintlik 'n baie belangrike tegniese aspek van onderrig en van hoër onderwys prysgegee omdat teknikons tweederangse universiteite geword het in plaas van wêreldklas instellings van dit wat hulle was. Tegniese kolleges wat met ambagsopleiding gewerk het en grootliks met die Departement van Arbeid verweef is, is onder hierdie nuwe departement ingebring. Tegniese kolleges het ook vaardigheidsopleiding gebring en nou is daar 'n hele nuwe Community Education and Training sektor of arm van die departement, waar 'n mens jouself afvra waarom was dit nodig om so 'n hele nuwe een in te bring?

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 44

Dan kom ons natuurlik by die Nasionale Finansiële Hulpskema vir Studente, NSFAS. Die NSFAS was 'n kleiner beursskema wat toe oornag in 'n baie groot toelaagskema omskep is. Daar is twee probleme. Die een probleem is dat van dag een af was NSFAS se administratiewe struktuur nie in staat om die las te dra wat op hom gelê is nie en dinge het nog nie verbeter nie. Die tweede probleem is dat dit 'n toelaag geword het, waar mense wat dit anders nie sou kon bekostig nie, wel toegelaat word om te studeer. Dit is fantasties, maar daar moet altyd 'n teenprestasie wees. Onderwys is nie gratis nie. Hoër onderwys kan nie verniet wees nie. Om mense op die lopende betalingstelsel te registreer en te sê, wanneer jy begin verdien met die geld wat jy uit die staatskas gekry het, moet jy dit wat jy gekry het terugbetaal, en dan word dit 'n saak wat homself kan voortsit.

Die vorige Minister van Hoër Onderwys het inderdaad gesê dat die struktuur van befondsing waarbinne die hoër onderwys sektor nou funksioneer nie volhoubaar is nie en sal verander moet word. Daar het egter niks gebeur nie. Dit is nie besig om beter te word nie.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 45

Trouens, daar was 'n beleid rondom universiteite wat universiteite en universiteits-kolleges as verskillende klasse van universiteite tot stand gebring het om universiteite te begelei om meer doeltreffend te wees. Dit is 'n inkrementele verbetering op dit wat ons gehad het, maar ons hoor niks meer daarvan nie.

Die NSFAS, wat veronderstel was om beter te word, het slegter geword met die aanstelling van die vier Fintech maatskappye wat eenvoudig nie in staat is om die werk te doen nie. Ons sit hier met 'n probleem waar 'n mens vir jouself moet sê, wat is die sterkste manier waarop jy jou afkeur vir die verkeerde rigting van die lyn kan uitspreek? En dit is om te sê ons kan nie die begroting ondersteun nie. Dankie.

Ms M P KOBE: Hon House Chair, there is a crisis in higher education. Let us begin with access. Each year over 337 000 learners achieve a bachelor's pass, yet there are only 202 university spaces available. This is a slammed door in the face of achievement. For those who do eventually make it through the door, they often find themselves with nowhere to sleep. The student housing backlog stands at over

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 46

500 000 beds. At the start of each academic year, we see students sleeping in hallways, on floors and on the streets.

Then there is the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, a bureaucracy of despair. If it is not corrupt, politically connected contractors fleecing students and lining their own pockets, it is the fact that this system itself is broken. Each year tens of thousands of missing middle students are excluded, not because they failed, but because there is no funding available for them. And NSFAS' response? Radio silence. Its 2023-24 annual report is nine months overdue. On paper, this institution barely exists. In practice, it fails students without consequences.

What of the sector education and training authorities, setas, making headlines? Action SA has consistently raised the alarm that these bodies are black holes consuming over twenty billion annually, with no transparency, no measurable outcomes and certainly no public confidence. Walk out onto the streets and ask any South African what setas actually do and you will be met with silence.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 47

It is also interesting and worth noting that the DA has only in the past week miraculously discovered its outrage and chosen to vote against this budget. I will remind them that just a year ago, on the 16th of July, they ascended this very podium and supported this budget despite these longstanding issues.

As Action SA, we do not pick and choose moments of principle. Since entering this House in 2024, we have been clear. We will not support this department's budget, not because this is a budget for Higher Education, but because this budget reflects continued chaos.

At the helm of this disaster is a Minister who embodies indifference. She concealed the names of the so-called independent seta selection panel. Then got caught. However, this behaviour seems to be common practice from the hon Minister. She buried our questions about departmental travel under 800 pages of bureaucratic obfuscation, concealing, among other things an R11,2 million travel spree.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 48

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon member, will you just take your seat. Hon member, why do you want to be recognised?

Ms K L KHAKHAU: House Chairperson, I'm rising to ask if hon Kobe is prepared to take a question.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon member, are you prepared to take a question?

Ms M P KOBE: Certainly not. I am busy. As Action SA, we propose real reforms. Overhaul NSFAS' leadership to restore trust, transparency and efficiency, including scrapping the exploitative Fintech payment platforms. We ask you to support the missing middle by raising the NSFAS income cap to R500 000 to offer low-interest loans with repayments deferred until two years of employment capped at 10% of income. Convert hijacked buildings in our central business districts, CBDs, into student housing, and scrap broken setas and channel their budgets into an innovative opportunity fund. There is none of that boldness in this budget, none of this vision under this Ministry, and we will therefore again this year be voting no.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 49

Just to address the hon Letsie who came and attempted to blackmail us into voting yes, I would like to make it clear to you that Action SA's vote against this budget is a vote for students who are sleeping in libraries and public toilets, for the youth who are losing their hope and for the future of a functional and fair world-class education system. As it stands today, the budget under Minister Nkabane does not reflect this. In fact, it maintains the status quo of exclusion, poor governance and academic decline. I thank you.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION (Dr M M Gondwe):
Chairperson, this Budget Vote is being considered in the wake of Youth Month, a poignant moment in our national calendar that does more than just commemorate the courage of past generations of young people. It also reminds us of our present and pressing obligation to ensure that the young people of this generation are given every available opportunity to thrive and prosper. At the very core of this vision is a post-school education and training system that must not only educate but also empower.

More than 30 years into our constitutional democracy, poverty and unemployment remain persistent intergenerational

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 50

realities. It is these very cycles of poverty and unemployment that we are determined to break as a sector. The socio-economic challenges beleaguering our country, more especially the burden of youth unemployment, underpin the three priorities of the Government of National Unity, GNU, which are: to drive inclusive growth and job creation; to reduce poverty and the high cost of living; and to build a capable, ethical and developmental state.

Since assuming office in July 2024, we have ensured that the work that we do and our interventions respond directly to these three priorities of the GNU. We inherited a sector seriously marred by dysfunction from a failing National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS to Sector Education and Training Authority, Seta, embroiled in allegations of corruption and waste. At the start of this academic year, we witnessed the manifestation of these systemic failures when students were left without funding, without accommodation, and without answers.

But we have not responded from behind a desk. Over the past year, I have conducted executive oversight visits across all

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 51

nine provinces, with a particular focus on Tvet and community colleges.

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Hon Deputy Minister, can you take a seat please. Hon Lozi, why are you rising?

Mr S LONZI: Not a long one. Thank you, Chair. I would like to find out if the DA Deputy Minister of Higher Education is going to support her own budget or reject it.

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Hon Lonzi, you should have asked the Deputy Minister if she is willing to take a question and then if she says yes, you would continue with your question. Can you proceed, hon Deputy Minister.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION (Dr M M Gondwe): These visits were not ceremonial in nature. They were opportunities to learn, to observe, and to act. The voices and challenges of students, lecturers, and institutional leaders have directly shaped the work and interventions I discuss here today.

In a time of constrained budgets and limited resources, we have turned to the private sector for strategic partnerships.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 52

In the past year, we partnered with Old Mutual to expand industry and career exposure for students in rural institutions. We are presently at the tail end of agreements with Shoprite, Microsoft, and Takealot designed to bridge the gap between the world of work and higher education. During this time, I also engaged both the FP&M Seta and the Energy and Water Seta in an effort to ensure that their service level agreements with employers guarantee that students trained through learnerships are permanently placed and absorbed into the economy.

On the topic of infrastructure, we welcome Cabinet's allocation of over R1,2 billion over the next two years to expand student accommodation. But beyond budgets, we need innovation and thinking that is outside of the box. We are, therefore, grateful to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works for its commitment to handover unused state buildings for student accommodation. We are also grateful to Harmony Gold in the Free State, for making buildings available for student accommodation.

Institutions like NSFAS must perform and function and this is non-negotiable. As such, the new board of NSFAS must

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 53

prioritise efficiency and accountability. To support students in the sector, we proudly launched a Helpdesk in August 2024. Since its establishment the Helpdesk has processed approximately 25 000 queries, the majority of which are related to NSFAS. The Helpdesk has further maintained an impressive 89% resolution rate. This is not just a statistic; it reflects our commitment and my commitment to responsive, student-centred service delivery.

Gender-based violence remains a national crisis and last year's Commission for Gender Equality, CGE, reports on sexual harassment and GBV in our higher education institutions were a stark reminder of this fact. In response, we launched the "Safer Campuses, Safer Spaces" outreach and awareness campaign in collaboration with the CGE, Higher Health, National Prosecuting Authority, NPA, SAPS, Department of Social Development, and NSFAS to promote and create safer learning environments for all our students, particularly our female students.

We are also cracking down on bogus or illegal colleges. Through partnerships with SAPS, Labour, Home Affairs, and municipalities such as Johannesburg, eThekweni, and soon

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 54

Buffalo City, we are running awareness campaigns to ensure that students enrol in registered and accredited private institutions of higher education.

Chairperson, allow me to close with the story of two young women Matlhogonolo and Zinhle whom I met during oversight visits to Mpumalanga and Limpopo. Both young women became pregnant while at school and subsequently had to drop out of school. Later, they both enrolled at a community college in the hopes of completing their basic education and ultimately pursuing their dreams. To the many Matlhogonolos and Zinhles across our country: you are not invisible. I see you and I will continue working for you.

In closing, this budget must reflect more than numbers and expenditure - it must also reflect our resolve and undeterred determination to build an ethical - and the emphasis here is on the word "ethical" - inclusive and responsive post-school education and training system. I thank you, Chairperson.

Mr W M THRING: Chairperson. Hon House Chairperson, the 2025-26 budget for Higher Education and Training stands at some R150,2 billion, reflecting a 4,8% nominal increase. This

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 55

growth masks persistent structural challenges in the post-school education and training system. The ACDP notes the department's priority to increase enrolment across universities, Tvet colleges and community education and training colleges. However, barriers such as funding delays and infrastructure backlogs persist.

The ACDP calls for increased interventions to remove the stubborn stigma surrounding Tvet colleges perceived as second tier options despite their potential to drive economic inclusion. It cannot be denied that National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, governance lapses and delayed disbursements have eroded student and public confidence. The appointment of the new board, however, has failed to decrease operational inefficiencies at NSFAS. A newspaper article in February this year noted that funding delays and institutional barriers years plague South African universities at the start of every academic year.

Now, while the roll-out of the Comprehensive Student Funding Model targeting the missing middle was allocated some R3,8 billion in 2024, it could only fund just under half of the estimated 68 446 students from this category. Many of the

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 56

students feel excluded and some who have qualified for the loan scheme alleged that they have not been paid for the previous year. The ACDP agrees with the call for a system to monitor and enforce repayment of loans because without a robust repayment system, the model risks becoming unsustainable.

House Chair, the allegations against the Minister of misleading Parliament of political patronage in the appointment of ANC connected individuals to the Sector Education and Training Authority, Setas, must be fully tested within the ambits of the law and parliamentary rules. The ACDP states that the heads of all departments must be held to the highest ethical and moral standards. Anything short of this is a disservice to the poor, the marginalised and in this case, the struggling students of South Africa.

While the budget reflects intent delivery remains uneven. The ACDP as kingdom builders, calls for governance reform, data integrity and a cultural shift in this department that values vocational pathways as engines of growth. I thank you.

Xitsonga:

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 57

Tat S M GANA: Mutshamaxitulu, ...

English:

... hon members, fellow South Africans, this afternoon I want to rise for a Grade 12 learner in Limpopo, in the Eastern Cape and in Eldorado Park. The learner who dreams of becoming a doctor, a teacher, an engineer or a plumber, but is anxious. Anxious not because of ability, but because they don't know if they will find space at a university or Tvet colleges next year. I rise for the young woman who passed matric last year with flying colours but is now sitting at home - her dreams on hold because she was turned away a due to lack of space. I rise for the students who did find space but now find themselves caught in the chaos, delays, and the cruelty of a broken National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS system.

This Budget Vote has attracted the attention, but not for the right reasons, but for the spectacles that it can provide. I refuse to take part in that spectacle. I choose to focus on the substance. As Rise Mzansi, we reaffirm our commitment to building a safe, prosperous, equal and united South Africa in one generation. But that South Africa is impossible without access to higher education. Education, and especially higher

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 58

education is not a luxury, it is a path out of poverty it is the foundation of a prosperous nation.

The department's R142 billion budget is substantial, but not enough, because our crisis is not just funding, its space its access is a system that is failing the poor and nowhere is that failure more glaring than in NSFAS. I have to say, hon members, NSFAS changed my life. I am a product of it - many in this House are. But what I see today is heartbreaking. Hyenas and tenderpreneurs ... [Inaudible.] ... what should be a lifeline for our youth.

The R95 billion for NSFAS has to go to students and not middlemen. Those that have stolen from NSFAS must be prosecuted. We cannot continue to play political football with the futures of our youth. We need to clean up NSFAS - get it working. Our future depends on it, and we dare not fail. Minister, get NSFAS to work.

Xitsonga:

Ndza khensa, Mutshamaxitulu.

Setswana:

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 59

Rre M A MAIMANE: Bagaetsho dumelang.

English:

Hon members, you cannot delink the ambition of freedom to the ambition of higher education. What is factually true is that we focused on the intrinsic nature of education, but we've never linked it to our economic outputs. It becomes important that when we derive a plan for what South Africa needs to look like in the future, we become clear about what type of graduates we want to produce.

And to this regard, Minister, I want to focus on a few things. Firstly, is the notion of empowerment. The harsh reality of it is that this department, progressively, is overseeing the number of black students declining, who are going to higher education, instead, Indians and Asians are increasing that number. It tells you that our empowerment story has been delinked from higher education.

Secondly, is the issue of capacity. The university that hon Gigaba is graduating from, our university ... [Interjections.] ... Chairperson, protect me, please [Laughter.] ... what's become common cause is that, that university expected ... it

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 60

had applications of over 360 000, but could only fill 10 and a half thousand slots. It's clear that infrastructure build in higher education is poor.

The fact of the matter, Minister, is that we are talking about a shortage potentially of about 500 000 beds in this country. So, frankly, if we are going to see the doors of learning open, as is the ambition, we clearly need to fund the capacity thereof.

I need to raise the question of how we deal with efficiency. It's now common cause the fact that National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, is no longer ... is not an efficient institution of managing how many students we want to get in to higher education.

So, Minister, either we reform NSFAS or actually shut out the middleman. Yes, historically, universities need to allocate ... used to allocate slots, and sure it didn't work. But the truth is when students were able to walk into an office, speak to someone, they were able to get answers. Today when students try to talk to anyone at NSFAS they get no responses and they constantly are coming to complain.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 61

The last issue is the issue of leadership. You and I can sit here today and debate whether this is the right Minister or not the right Minister. The issue of whether the Minister misled Parliament or not needs to be brought before a parliamentary committee and an investigation must be sought, so we can get to the bottom of this, is not a violation of my feelings or anyone's feelings, it's about ultimately constitutional obligation that must be felt.

And so, on behalf of BOSA I rise to say we will support this budget. We expect reform and ultimately, we need to make sure that South Africa is a different place from a higher education point of view. Thank you very much.

Mrs D VAN DER WALT: Hon Chairperson and members, under the leadership of the Deputy Minister, Mimi Gondwe, the department co-hosted the Skills and Jobs Investment Summit in November 2024 with excellent outcomes. Proof that there are indeed dedicated public servants working to strengthen the post-school education system. [Interjections.] ... Got you.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 62

Minister, your mandate is clear, to build a capable, skilled and well-educated citizenry through an effective post-school education and training system.

This department is meant to drive economic growth, social development and global competitiveness. Whilst ...

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Hon members, the noise from my right is very high. I'm struggling to even hear ... hon ... Hon Deputy Minister! Hon Deputy Minister, I'm making a ruling about what you are doing now. I'm saying, it's very noisy this side. I'm struggling to even hear what she is saying. Can you please lower down your voices!

Can you proceed, hon Van Der Walt!

Mrs D VAN DER WALT: Whilst your department is in intensive care unit, ICU, youth unemployment is in a crisis.

On Tuesday you referenced NSFAS' head office in their whole yard building, a contract that is still not been terminated. Let me remind South Africans, especially our students, of what this luxury lease entails: R2,5 million per month for five

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 63

premium floors with ocean views, 140 parking bays initially charge R1 750 per month each, and nearly R9,5 million excluding value-added tax, VAT, earmarked for improvements to the fancy leased premises. And while NSFAS executive enjoy ocean views, our students suffer.

What we need is on-campus presence, not boardroom luxury.

Before moving into Halyard, did your department not rent space at the Rockefeller Hotel building? Wonder what that have cost? And that, whilst students were sleeping in bathrooms, libraries and our city streets because you failed to do your job.

In April 212 000 Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Tvet, college students had their allowances delayed due to a system challenge. We now know it was linked to oversized batch files, an absolute unacceptable excuse in 2025.

R1,3 billion in dodgy direct payment deals were awarded to unqualified information technology, IT, companies ...

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 64

[Inaudible.] ... of them, that were neither financial service providers nor had any experience handling students' funds.

The former NSFAS Administrator was paid R5,5 million for 10 months of work and your written response to me, you confirmed that there was no requirement for a handover report in his contract. I don't think that could have been possible.

You often speak of supporting students with disabilities, yet, Ms Botha, a student from Malmesbury with a disability, has been waiting for two years for her certificate. She has secured a job offer but cannot begin work without proof of her qualification. And I personally raised this with the director-general and the chief executive officer, CEO, of NSFAS; no action. How can we claim to support disabled students, yet fail them when it matters?

In 2019-23, your department spent R79 million on venue hire. From January to November 2024, alone, R38 million.

Your entity spent an additional R6,4 million in 2019-23 and another R3,9 million in the first 10 months of 2024. It's

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 65

unacceptable that students can't get certificates, allowances are delayed and infrastructure is collapsing.

You've been in the office now for a year, but nothing has turned around and no strategy to link Tvet graduates to employment, except patronage.

In ordinary times with ordinary Ministers this budget, despite its shortcomings and despite the myriad challenges that the department faces, would have been supported. But this is not ordinary times and you are not just an ordinary Minister, and you cannot be trusted with R142 billion because of the lack of honesty and with integrity. Youth unemployment keeps on rising.

How can we, in good conscience, entrust tens of billions of rands ... [Inaudible.] ... for students to someone with such questionable ethics? Thank you.

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Hon Skosana, why is your hand up?

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 66

Mr G J SKOSANA: Chair, I'm rising on Rule 85. The hon member says the Minister lacks integrity. I think the hon member is casting aspersion on the Minister.

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): You should have raised it when she was still ... [Interjections.] [Inaudible.]

Mr G J SKOSANA: I raised it while she was still speaking, Chair. But you did not see me.

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): I did not see you, unfortunately.

Can we proceed! The hon Deputy Minister!

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION (Mr K B Manamela): Chairperson, our Community Education and Training, CET, institutions are the soul, in our view, of inclusive education in South Africa. They are the bridge between which learning and livelihood between survival and opportunity, especially for those left behind by the formal education and training system. And that his budget vote must take its rightful place at the centre of our transformation agenda.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 67

Over the past year we have made measurable progress in the CET sector. Completion rate at our Community Education and Training centres improved by 15%, supported by curriculum review, better learner support and stronger community outreach.

For 2025-26 we aim to increase CET enrolments by 10%, focusing on rural and township communities, where the hunger for knowledge meets the need for economic empowerment.

We will roll-out e-learning platforms across all CET centres to bridge the digital divide and we will also pilot blended learning models in partnership with universities, Tvet colleges, and we are finalising plans with provincial governments to repurpose our 200 unused schools and community buildings into vibrant modern CET learning spaces because education cannot be the preserve of urban centres alone.

But, Chairperson, CET is not only about access, it is also about relevance and that is why we are retooling our programmes to align with community needs, agro-processing Early Childhood Development, ECD, construction skills and also digital literacy.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 68

We are also working with the Department of Small Business Development to ensure that we expose all the products that students from CET colleges are creating to the market.

Our broader postschool system is also on the move. And I got a sense that some of the members may not have a sense of what interventions and how this particular system has changed over the last 31 years.

As we speak, university graduation rates have increased by 8%, Tvet job placements have grown by 22% through new industry partnerships and our Sector Education and Training Authorities, Setas, are innovating boldly, training young people in artificial intelligence, AI, green energy and community safety.

And I think it would be remiss if we conclude this budget vote debate speech without clarifying - I think - two most important issues:

Firstly, for some members, particularly the hon member from the Action SA, hon Kobe, who read the morning newspapers to prepare for this budget and listen to everything else that is

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 69

being said in the news about the portfolio committee and the budget on Higher Education and to come and regurgitate those here as if they are facts is actually unfortunate.

Secondly, some of the members who said some of the things about the National Students Financial Aid Scheme. As we speak today, 820 000 students are being paid through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme. The issue of the intermediary payments has been taken to court by those payment providers and that, whatever the terms of the court, the NSFAS will be obliged to respond to those.

The reality is, yes, there may have been challenges in our National Student Financial Aid Scheme, but some of those challenges are being overcome and that this narrative that is clinging to some of the challenges that the NSFAS has had in the past and try to repeat them today as if those are a matter of fact. In fact, if some of the things that the hon members are saying today about what's happening with the NSFAS, with the students in our colleges and in our universities, if those who were true, I do not think that any of our institutions will be operating.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 70

I think, finally, finally, there was a suggestion here that our director-general and our Minister and everybody else ... in fact, in particular, I think that our director-general is being charged with corruption, with graft, and that the Minister is ... again ... I mean this is not MKP where when you wake up, accused of witchcraft tonight, the following day you get expelled. Accusations do not constitute conviction. You cannot come here and say, people are being accused of this and that and everywhere else, and not prove any of those. You want our director-general or Minister to follow the route that Floyd Shivambu followed, for being the first politician expelled for witchcraft? Thank you very much.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: House Chair, Al Jama-ah acknowledges the world-class initiatives of the Department of Higher Education under the leadership of the director-general and Minister, and we will support this budget. One does not reject a budget because the Minister is viewed in a negative light.

What about the other two Deputy Ministers? It is an insult to the official opposition and other political parties because they are saying we are unable to hold the Ministry and the

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 71

Minister to account. A strong opposition party is key to a strong democracy. Now, we don't have one, which is the greatest threat to our democracy.

Tertiary education is one of the most powerful investments the nation can make. This speech has not been produced by artificial intelligence, which the fighters will take a century to understand and get used to. It is therefore unfortunate that funding for higher education remains a crisis in South Africa, but at the same time we must not overlook the significant progress made so far.

Higher education is the key to decent work. President Mandela got the first award by the International Labour Organization, ILO for promoting decent work. The Minister of Higher Education is the champion we need to ensure more people have decent work in South Africa. Decent work is a lifelong job with all the perks and benefits. Best practice employers offer their staff like excellent pensions, medical aid, housing bursaries and even to visit room, to visit room and make.

As the Deputy Minister of Social Development, I would like to thank the Minister of Higher Education who has made it so easy

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 72

for learner grant beneficiaries to automatically get National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS assistance if they accepted at the university and college. They do not even have to apply and fill in any form.

Eighty percent of the class of 2024 were learner grant beneficiaries, and this House gave the class of 2024 a standing ovation. The empty vessels of the DA in what we heard today so well, articulated by the fighters who don't understand artificial intelligence, has taken hypocrisy to the next level. So, apologies, Chairman, for that.

In 2024, the Minister of Higher Education launched the National Skills Fund Disabilities Programme. Thank you very much, Minister, for that, because 10 000 people will now go through tailored training programmes. Al Jama-ah supports this budget.

Sesotho:

Mof K L KHAKHAU: Ke a leboha Motsamaisi wa dipuisano.

English:

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 73

House Chairperson, the ANC wants the people of this Republic to believe that a fight against corruption is a fight against the future of this country. This isn't shocking because to them corruption is their daily bread. Living in a corruption free South Africa is a direct threat against the very core of their existence.

Unlike the other political parties who have today pledged their support to this budget under Minister Nkabane, the DA has not forgotten about our commitment to the people of this country. Our loyalty remains to nothing else but the people. South Africa can count on the DA to fight for them and to fight for justice against corruption.

The real enemy of progress against young people here is Minister Nkabane. It is the ANC for protecting her and corruption. It is President Ramaphosa for refusing to fire her. It is the political parties that think R141 billion is safe in the hands of Dr Nobuhle Nkabane.

Minister, through you House Chairperson. Minister, committing fraud and a statutory offence under section 26 of the Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Parliament and Provincial

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 74

Legislatures Act 4 of 2004 is not only a spit on the graves of the forefathers of this democracy, but it is a spit on the faces of young people whom you have failed to lead. It is a spit in the face of your Department of Higher Education and Training, DHET staff that you have sacrificed at the altar of your own protection.

Minister, you said that you are dedicating this budget to the memory of fallen heroes and heroines of the Post-School Education and Training, PSET sector. So, I dare you. Do the right thing in honour of these people. Resign! Detox! Detox the department... when you are calm, you can listen. Detox this department of the toxicity of your poor leadership, arrogance, effective allergy to honesty and commitment to no one else but yourself.

You don't need to wait for President Ramaphosa to fire you if you mean it that you are a servant of the people. The people of South Africa say they do not want you to lead the Department of Higher Education anymore. Serve them, be honest and resign.

Sesotho:

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 75

Ke a leboha, Modulasetulo.

Mr J S NGUBANE: Hon Chair, it sometimes saddens me. It looks like it has now become a culture where you sometimes own the damage that you always do. Minister, it saddens me that you come here, and you say you dedicate this speech to Sisonke Mbolekwa, a 24-year-old pursuing a bachelor of education degree, who passed away.

Let's explain why this student passed away. This student passed away because of protesting for dilapidating deplorable student accommodation and it's your system in NSFAS but you come here, and you are saying you dedicate this speech to him.

This is the same sequence used when Andries Tatane was protesting for better service delivery, he was shot, and you come here and say I dedicate this speech to you. Minister, in your closing remarks, I would appreciate it if you told us that you have visited Sisonke Mbolekwa's family, because they are claiming they are going to sue the higher education for compensation. We need to do something.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 76

Sisonke Molekwa died because of NSFAS negligence, the university's communication negligence with NSFAS. No one knows. No one is communicating to students about who has been paid and who has not paid. Fix the system. Don't come and dedicate speeches to the people that you caused the death to. It's the ANC government that killed the student. Their hands are not clean to the department. We need to do something about it.

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Hon Ngubane, please take a seat.

Mr G J SKOSANA: Chair, I'm rising on Rule 85. Hon Ngubane is casting aspersions on the Minister. He says the Minister caused the death of people. I think he should submit a substantive motion to that.

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): I did not hear him saying that but let me check and I will come back to you.

Mr J S NGUBANE: I will repeat. Indirectly, the department, you must listen when I speak. The department, under the Minister

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 77

and its negligence caused the student's death. So, there are lots of things in strategic priority planning.

One, drive inclusive growth and job creation. There is no inclusive growth in this government, there is no economy and there is nothing. What you need to know, I will invite you, Chairperson. Every year in December, Jacob Zuma in Nkandla celebrates students who have graduated with degrees.

Chairperson, I've met pilots three, you must come, I will invite you. I've met pilots, I've met chartered accountants, I've met medical doctors, I've met engineers in electricity, information technology, IT and construction. They graduated because of being funded in higher education by Jacob Zuma.

A simple thing done by a President who never went to school has produced so many educated kids. That's how passionate Jacob Zuma is about education. So, as the MK party, we cannot support a budget that is a mockery to the poor of this country. Recently, you increased the fuel levy, it is going to affect our students as well.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 78

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Hon Ngubane, stay on the podium. Hon Ngubane, can you come back to the podium. There was point of order that suggested the hon Ngubane mentioned the Minister. He said it's the government and the ANC. So, he is not out of order. You may leave the podium hon Ngubane.

Mr G D KGABO: House Chair, let me start by clarifying that contrary to a popular view driven by prefects of the ruling class, there's no crisis in the head. We've got a capable leadership that will respond to every challenge that is confronting the head.

Hon House Chair, hon Speaker, Minister and Deputy Ministers, many members of this august House, distinguished guests and fellow South Africans engaging in this crucial debate through broadcast and digital platforms receive my revolutionary greetings. Let me start by acknowledging Kabelo Seboko, Lebogang Medupe, Tsepang Sebande. These are young shining innovators highlighting a shining example of homegrown innovation. These young people are designing and building a cutting-edge computer right here on the soils of South Africa, Deputy Minister.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 79

Liema, the computer that I'm using currently is the South African product, a tangible proof that indeed the ICT can be done in manufacturing in South Africa.

House Chairperson, it is indeed a privilege to rise on behalf of the ANC and as a proud voice of the marginalized and vulnerable South African youth in championing the call for advancing socioeconomic transformation through the tool of education. Today, we rise firmly and unflinchingly to support Vote 17, the Budget Vote of Higher Education and Training. This is not just a financial instrument, but this is a revolutionary tool that we can use to respond to the triple challenges that are confronting the majority of young people in this country.

It is our firm belief that we are not here just to participate, but to lead, as the ANC has always done, in an ongoing struggle for a just, inclusive and economically empowered South Africa. Frantz Fanon has reminded us, I quote: "Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it".

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 80

Today, as we stand as the generation in the ANC, we reaffirm our commitment to that mission of ensuring that education and skills development remained the national priorities and levers of economic freedom and social change.

Through transformative instruments such as Sector Education and Training and National Skills Fund, we're injecting some life to the Master Skills Plan building structured pathways to quality training, sustainable employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. The numbers are not lying; the numbers are telling us a very good story. And what is this good story? In 2024-25 financial year, over R24,4 billion was allocated through skills levies to the National Skills Fund, NSF, and Sector Education and Training Authorities, SETAs, rising to R26 billion into 2025-26 financial year. These are not just target in a budget. These are a strategic investment in economic liberation and a direct draw to the realisation of the National Democratic Society.

Importantly, under Programme 5, the department is ensuring that all 21 SETAs develop credible and responsive skills plans that can be met annually. This consistency is crucial if we are to build a demand-led skills development system that

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 81

accurately reflects the realities of our labour market growth path.

Hon Chairperson, this budget responds to the Freedom Charter's clarion call to open the doors of learning and culture.

Basically, this budget reaffirms that no child of the working class and the poor must be denied access to education simply because they were born in the peripheries, in the deep rural areas of Giyani, the deep rural areas of Taung, in the dusty streets from Bamigbade and Christiana, hon Msezane. if you are listening.

Central to our transformation agenda, it is repositioning of the Tvet as an institution of choice, not as the last resort. We are not merely reforming curriculum. We are revolutionizing it as a way of aligning our Tvet programme with the industry needs, strengthening work-based learning and prioritising artisan as a way of making sure that we restore the dignity of vocational education. We are clear that the artisans are a backbone of progress of this economy. Without them, infrastructure will crumble, services will stall, and development will hold. So, the ANC recognized this and continues to prioritise investment in Tvet and skills

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 82

development as a foundational pillar of inclusive industrialisation. We also commend the department for a strategic direction it has taken in expanding access to skills development by investing in new Community Education and Training, CET, colleges and in establishment of the North West mining campus in the Rustenburg and the establishment of Tshwane University of Technology, Giyani campus, but not forgetting most importantly, the Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati Tvet college that remains the only district in this country without a Tvet college. However, as a movement founded on the principles of a representative and accountable government, we must not only expose or confront weaknesses that threatens our developmental agenda, but we must decisively deal with them, hon Minister. We remain concerned about the ongoing delays in the implementation of infrastructure projects, which are often caused by nonperforming contractors, lack of monitoring and evaluation and poor project management by the department. These delays are not just an abstract, but they hamper direct intervention that government seeks to bring to the lives of our people.

Hon Chair, we believe that the intervention that the department must bring must not only to deal with contractors

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 83

as a way of blacklisting them, but the department must equally decisively deal with officials who are colluding with contractors as a way of milking the budget allocated for skills development in South Africa.

The Auditor-General's finding, hon Minister, adds further weight to these concerns. While we welcome the department's efforts to implement the audit action plans and findings, we agree that enough attention must be paid in making sure that we address these underlying issues that has been raised by the Auditor-General. We also emphasize the critical need for information management system integration across the department SETAs, Tvet and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, and universities and other entities of the department.

The current fragmentation creates room for inefficiencies and appetite for corruption, double dipping and fraud. We urge urgent progress on developing and unified digital platform to track learner funding and across all the training system. Without any fear of contradiction, we stand here to reaffirm our support for Budget Vote 17. And most importantly, it is important for us to reaffirm our support for the Oble Tvet

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 84

college for reaffirming their position in the Pearson. But as we move towards conclusion, to the MK members would adhere to your invitation, provided that will still be members in good standing of the uMkhonto weSizwe Party. To the DA, we are forever warning you, it is important for you to know that it is not necessary for you to overestimate your importance in the GNU. If you want to leave the GNU, you can do that. You must never threaten the President of this country. In fact, for your information on your way out of the door, you'll meet other members who are entering the GNU. To the EFF, it does not make sense for you to try and sound smarter here. You must never try and seeing harder for your dinner table in the GPU. Everything that you have addressed or raised as a concern, the Minister has addressed them, and we want to tell you that the EFF, if you would want to instruct the Minister what to do, you must go and contest elections and win them. You must not want to lead this country through a backdoor. And with that being said, we unapologetically support the leadership of Minister Nkabane. Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION: House Chairperson, I'm going to start with indicating before the House and the people of South Africa that National Student Financial Aid Scheme,

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 85

NSFAS, is actually coming up with some reforms that are trying to respond to issues of student accommodation, regionalization and student funding. So, they are in a right track. We believe that they are going to deliver as expected by the people of South Africa.

The second part that I want to speak on, is that the DA is misleading Parliament and the House here. Our own issue of a lease termination because they know that we have been appealing this court ruling for two times and then the Court of the Western Cape keeps on ruling against the department and the people of South Africa on Top Fintech companies, as well as on the termination of the R2,5 million per month in that rental office. We do not want that. We want to cut ties. We are committed in ensuring that we explore each and every legal route to make sure that we get rid of these people. They come here and lie, but they are supporting those people. The issue that I want to indicate is around the 27 000 students that are alleged to be going to be defunded by NSFAS. What we have House Chairperson and members, is that we have the shortage or shortfall of R11 billion. But to date, we have managed to secure R11 billion and now we are busy engaging the National Treasury to come and close that gap. We do not want to leave

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 17 - HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Page: 86

any student in South Africa left behind. No one is going to be defunded. I want to assure you people of South Africa.

And the last part that I want to indicate is that I'm not going to dignify direct attacks to me. I'm going to focus on the task at hand of serving the people of South Africa. Thank you.

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule) Thank you, hon Minister. Members, you are reminded that two debates are scheduled simultaneously at 16:30 today. The International Relations and Cooperation Budget Vote debate will be held here. While the Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities will take place in Committee Room M4.

The mini-plenary session rose at 15:53.