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MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
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**PROCEEDINGS OF MINI-PLENARY SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY -
GOOD HOPE CHAMBER**

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

House Chairperson Ms Z Majozi took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Debate on Vote No 22 - Correctional Services:

The MINISTER OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES: Chairperson, Deputy Minister of Correctional Services, members of the portfolio committee, other hon members, National Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services, Inspecting Judge Justice Edwin Cameron, members of the National Council for

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Correctional Services, members of the Parole Boards, ladies and gentlemen, I rise today, and this esteemed House must take note that I am humbled by the mandate bestowed upon me and conscious of the immense responsibility that comes with leading the Department of Correctional Services.

As we approach the one-year mark since my inauguration as Minister, it is not only fitting to reflect merely on the strides we have taken in stabilising operations, tightening accountability, and intensifying our service delivery efforts within a complex and heavily burdened environment, but it is also essential to be honest about the problems still prevalent in the department. I am standing here in front of you and the people of South Africa today, and I do not intend to sugarcoat our challenges or the problems we experience in Correctional Services. My philosophy is always that you can only properly deal with a problem if you put the real facts on the table and not be in a state of denial.

We know these challenges encompass issues such as overcrowding, dilapidated infrastructure, a rising number of remand detainees, deteriorating facilities, staff shortages, the presence of crime syndicates and gangs within our

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institutions, and emerging crime patterns that pose challenges to our rehabilitation programmes.

I want to start with the budget. It is very important to remember that the department's allocation was cut due to the fiscal and economic constraints our country is facing – over the last five years, more than R11 billion. The appropriation for our Vote, at this time, for the 2025-26 financial year is R29 221 952 000, increasing to R30 567 412 000 in 2026-27 financial year, and reaching R31 950 271 000 in the 2027-28 financial year. We are doing our level best to explore alternative revenue streams so that we are not solely reliant on the fiscus.

The cuts to our budget translate to the provision of security equipment being compromised, capital investment in skills development being cut, the budget for nutritional services being cut, capital works projects being put on hold, and the monitoring of parolees possibly being impacted negatively. So, it is quite clear that the budget constraints have to deal with R29 billion for 2025, R30 billion for 2026-27, and R31,9 billion for the 2027-28 financial year. Those constraints and cuts have a severe effect on these matters,

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which are actually operational matters, and compromise the Department of Correctional Services when it comes to security.

This will require innovation, discipline and commitment, especially from the employees of Correctional Services. The capital budget shortfall of R220 million undermines our ability to conduct infrastructure upgrades and critical maintenance. The escalating cost of food, fuelled by inflation and the growing number of inmates, including a sharp increase in foreign nationals, adds another layer of financial strain.

We are also hamstrung by above-consumer price index increases in municipal tariffs, particularly for electricity, water, and sanitation. Fixed costs linked to our public-private partnership correctional facilities leave no room for reprioritisation, and the devolution of maintenance responsibilities from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, without corresponding budget support, has created a funding gap of R154 million. Our digital transformation agenda is also under threat due to budget constraints in the Government Information Technology Office environment, where infrastructure modernisation is both urgent and underfunded. I again emphasise these are serious matters.

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When we come to self-sufficiency, on the front of self-sufficiency, we have registered commendable progress in the construction of correctional centre-based bakeries and pharmacies. The number of operational bakeries has increased from nine to 11, with Standerton and Pietermaritzburg recently coming online. In the year ahead, the Durban Westville bakery will come into operation. The facility is already running at 50% capacity, and I hope to open it in its entirety in the near future. In the year ahead, we must also understand that, despite current budgetary pressures, we are committed to identifying suitable sites and establishing additional bakeries and pharmacies where feasible. This includes construction of bakeries at Nigel, Helderstroom, Brandvlei, Groenpunt, Upington, and Overberg, with target dates set in 2026, and Krugersdorp targeted for March 2027.

In the past financial year, we have produced just over 5 million loaves of bread, which translates to estimated savings of R27 197 251,20. Farm production has also yielded R130 491 122,81 estimated savings in food provisioning. This is a step in the direction of becoming entirely self-sufficient. Certain amendments were made to the cycle meal plan. The national commissioner generated savings of over

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R200 million per annum. These figures reflect our commitment to responsible spending of the taxpayer's hard-earned money.

I am proud to extend the invitation to other state departments to consider fulfilling their furniture and related supply needs through the Department of Correctional Services. This request is both legally supported and aligned with the broader goals of government cost-efficiency, skills development, and rehabilitation. I am proud to say that all the furniture in both my offices, here in Cape Town as well as at head office in Pretoria, was manufactured by inmates.

When we come to the parole system, it is also another area, and all communities in South Africa are currently suffering from disproportionately high levels of violent crime. The most vulnerable groups in our society – women and children – suffer the most due to a lack of effective protection and response to gender-based violence. Our courts are underfunded and understaffed, and our prisons are overcrowded.

In the criminal justice system, if there is more efficiency from the police's side, which is happening, it goes to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, to our

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courts, but everything ends with Correctional Services. So, we are in the process also, and we take note that there are too many media reports where parolees reoffended, and questions have been asked. We must say to each other that the Department of Correctional Services has a responsibility to protect our people, as I said, especially the women and children when it comes to rape. When parole becomes a loophole for further terror and criminality, it is not merely a policy failure. It is a failure of justice. Therefore, we will do everything we can.

Upon assuming office, I inherited 495 lifer profiles, a backlog. Only the Minister can approve or not approve parole for lifers. I am very strict when it comes to that, and I want to put it on record again that it doesn't matter whether an applicant went through all the courses and the rehabilitation programmes in our facilities. When I receive a psychological report or a criminologist report and the risk of reoffending is medium to high, I will not approve any parole for that specific case. I can say there are 495 I inherited, and 584 lifer profiles have landed on my desk since.

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Of this total of 1 079 profiles considered, I approved 29 parole applications and granted day parole in three cases. Five individuals serving life sentences have been granted parole and are subject to deportation. A total of 38 individuals' parole has been revoked, two cancelled, and one withdrawn. Unfortunately, I have had to utilise the powers granted to me to refer three parole placements to the Correctional Supervision and Parole Review Board, CSPRB, under section 75(8) of the Correctional Services Act. The CSPRB is tasked with reviewing the original decision made by Parole Boards and must confirm or replace it with its own decision. In all three cases, parole was withdrawn. We are in the process of reviewing the entire parole system, and you have already seen that.

When it comes to discipline, I can say that we can only address our problems if we recognise their true extent. This is the reasoning behind unannounced visits and raids to our facilities. I can declare that, in the past year, 466 raids were conducted. I have also conducted numerous unannounced visits to various facilities. These unannounced visits and raids will increase in the coming year. Since 3 July 2024, many cellphones, sharp objects, and everything have been

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recovered. In the last year, 515 officials received final written warnings, 181 were suspended without pay, and 146 dismissed.

When we come to overcrowding, we must say that our problem is that we have just over 104 000 inmates in our prisons. No, let me say that just over 104 000 inmates were sentenced, and, therefore, that is the number of sentenced offenders we have. We have 108 000 beds, but then we have just about 60 000 remand detainees awaiting trial. That is a severe problem. We must look ... and I welcome the initiative by the Inspecting Judge in terms of the proposed bail fund. I support it. It is not taxpayers' money. It will be private money because we have just over 2 500 remand detainees who could not afford bail of R1 000 and less.

I want to open a debate today. That debate is, if you look at our criminal justice system and specifically justice, we must start a debate to ask whether we shouldn't bring back corporal punishment.

Afrikaans:

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Dis weer tyd dat ons gaan kyk na laaities. 'n Jong persoon wat 10 brode steel, sit in die tronk en wag drie jaar miskien voor daar 'n vonnis is. Gaan dink oor of ons nie liever ...

English:

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majola): Hon Minister, your time has expired.

Afrikaans:

The MINISTER OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES: ... moet terugbring om die taak te kan aanspreek nie. Baie dankie.

Ms K A RAMOLOBENG: Hon Minister, members of the executive present here, the National Commissioner, members of the portfolio committee, Inspecting Judge, Judge Cameron and all hon members. Our Budget Vote derives its mandate from the apex priorities of the National Development Plan, which is the governmental blueprint for our country's transformation in addressing the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

The Department of Correctional Services, DCS, has been allocated a budget of 29,2 billion for 2025/26 financial year,

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which will increase to R32 billion in 2027/28 financial year. This is the budget that the department must utilise to ensure that everyone in South Africa is safe and feels safe, as expected by the National Development Plan Vision 2030. The NDP further tasks the department to ensure that women are able to work freely at night and children play safer outside our communities.

In terms of rehabilitation and reintegration, the department's budget also aims to ensure that all those entrusted to it are rehabilitated, receive training and acquire the much-needed skills to avoid reoffending. Currently, the department has a total of 19 schools, ten of which are juvenile schools registered by the Department of Basic Education.

On capital works and infrastructural maintenance. The DCS is the department with specialised and complex infrastructural needs. The committee received a briefing in February on the state of correctional facilities or infrastructure projects. And members were not pleased about the non-performance and poor performance of many contractors appointed by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, DBPWI. Most

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work is behind schedule and in some areas where work has been done, the maintenance is already regressing.

The committee was shocked by the conditions and lack of maintenance in prisons across the country. Observations included uncovered kitchens and non-functioning pots. The committee was forced to recommend the closure of the kitchen at Durban Westville Correctional Centre as it did not meet minimum health and safety standards. We found that several other kitchens had to be closed due to lack of maintenance or similar issues related to the kitchen at Durban Westville.

The department has raised several challenges to the committee for lack of repairs and maintenance of critical infrastructure, including the user fee charges from the DPWI. While we have recommended to the department to look into self-sufficient means for immediate infrastructure repairs and make use of the offender-labour where appropriate, under a skills development curriculum, we call on the DPWI as the custodian of all government buildings to take their mandate seriously to repair, refurbish and maintain critical infrastructure. We welcome the department's move to provide additional bed space in the current 2025/26 financial year.

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In terms of the Triple-P facilities, we know that the term of contract for the two privately run prison facilities - Mangaung in Free State and Kutama-Sinthumule in Limpopo are coming to an end in 2026 and 2027, respectively. We welcome the decision of the department to take over the two privately run facilities and have them operate under the full control of the DCS.

We must reiterate that the provision of law and order is a key function of any government, and this duty should not be delegated to the private sector. The success of any correctional facility should be judged on its ability to rehabilitate offenders and to reduce rates of recidivism. Up to so far, private prisons have failed to demonstrate that. They are not cost-effective, innovative nor produce better results. Despite the fact that the issue of privatisation is recognised by legislation, the issue of Triple-P's facilities remains deeply and controversial and requires us to look into the affordability value for money and risk allocation for such contracts. If we do not act swiftly in terms of our state of readiness to take over privately run facilities, we run the risk of privatisation continuing to consume significant public

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funds without delivering measurable outcomes over public correctional facilities. In the interest of transparency, accountability and improved oversight, we are looking forward to these contracts reaching their end of term.

On remand detainees with bail, some of less than R1000, or less than that, we are concerned with the staggering cost to keep and maintain remand detainees in correctional facilities, which currently cost the department R482 a day and just above R13 000 a month on each detainee, taking into consideration the pressurising issues of overcrowding in correctional facilities that many remand detainees are in centres for a month or years, simply because they cannot afford to pay bail, which at times is as low as than R300.

Chair, I am reminded of the former Chief Justice Pius Langa's observations on transformative constitutionalism and adjudication of constitutional rights in Africa. He made a worthwhile observation of law from below and the need to address poverty, which perpetuates inequality. He highlighted the need to promote economic security as a priority to the injustices that our constitutional democracy so desperately tries to correct.

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House Chair, it is in this context that we congratulate Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services, JICS, for their efforts to undertake a feasibility study on a pilot project of a bail fund for remand detainees with a bail of amount of R1000. Although this is a band-aid to pressing challenges of overcrowding, we trust it will in the meantime, assist with the immediate decongesting of our facilities as we work towards more sustainable means in the future, whilst correcting the unintended consequence of discriminating offenders based on their socioeconomic status. There are two legislative provisions which are, in theory supposed to assist with managing overcrowding in correctional facilities, but they are in reality, producing very minimum results. Those are the provision of section 63(a) of the Criminal Procedure Act and section 49(g) of the Correctional Services Act.

The department's 2023/24 annual report records that it submitted a total of 19 000 to 391 referrals to court under section 63, but only 5000 were successful, which is around 26%, and 9 666 applications were referred to the court under section 49(g) and this yielded a very minimal success rate of 3%.

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Under the review of legislation, we are pleased that the DCS will be reviewing the Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998. This would also allow the committee to make inputs on areas that the committee thinks should be amended or strengthened, including the section 73 of the Correctional Act to deal with the management of foreign nationals' inmates in our correctional.

We call for a review of the section 73(1)(a) and subsection (2) of the Correctional Service Act, which provides for the length and form of the sentence. We intend to review this provision specifically where it relates to the incarceration of foreign nationals to make provision for foreign nationals who are serving life sentences to serve their sentences in their countries of origin because of the costs associated with keeping foreign inmates in our correctional facilities. We encourage the Minister to consult further with the Minister of Home Affairs on the intention of reviewing this provision.

In conclusion, the ANC supports Budget Vote 22 as it is in line with our manifesto commitments of creating a safer South Africa and the broader DCS's Vision of 2068, of shaping

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corrections for the future. We support this budget in the context of continuity and change, which is to appreciate the good work done, but also to offer insight and recommendations in areas of concerns, as I have alluded above. The ANC supports this Budget Vote. Thank you.

Mr M M GASA: Hon Chair, the MK Party firmly rejects the Budget Vote and the accompanying annual performance plan of the Department of Correctional Services and the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services. This budget reflects a profound misalignment with the urgent needs of South Africa's correctional system, prioritising the GNU's expenditure over transformative justice.

The allocation of resources, declining performance targets and systemic mismanagement demonstrate a lack of commitment to rehabilitation, overcrowding, reduction and accountability. This budget disproportionately favours incarceration over rehabilitation, with 79% of the R29,2 billion allocation directed towards administration, R5,2 billion; and to incarceration, R17,9 billion. In contrast, rehabilitation and social reintegration programmes, critical to reducing recidivism, receive a mere 12%.

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This punitive approach contradicts the mandate of the DCS to rehabilitate offenders and reintegrate them as law-abiding citizens. Furthermore, this remand detention subprogramme, which directly impacts overcrowding, is allocated only R874,1 million, which is 5% of the incarceration budget, despite overcrowding being identified as the biggest risk by the committee.

The committee's observation revealed a troubled trend of lower performance targets, including relaxed benchmarks for unnatural deaths and reduced infrastructure projects. The lack of ambition in rehabilitation targets, such as only 84% of offenders completing correctional programmes, underscores a culture of complacency.

Additionally, the misalignment between expenditure and outcomes persists, with cuts to critical areas like fleet resources - R8 million reduction - undermining operational efficiency. The absence of targets for filling vacancies further exacerbates system inefficiencies.

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The Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services, JICS, was tasked with upholding inmates' rights. It is similarly compromised by poor resource allocation, inspection and compliance monitoring. It is a core mandate that received only R18,8 million, which is 15% of the JICS budget, while regional oversight received R43,2 million, prioritising administrative functions over actionable oversight.

The lack of youth employment targets and reliance on consultants further highlights the failure of JICS to build internal capacity and promote equitable representation.

The opposition demands a radical allocation of funds to prioritise rehabilitation and social reintegration, a minimum of 25% of the total budget for immediate collaboration with the Department of Justice to address overcrowding and binding targets for youth employment, and 40% audit compliance.

Until these reforms are implemented, Budget Vote 22 must be rejected. South Africa deserves a correctional system that fosters justice, not perpetuate failure. This budget is a betrayal of the mandate of DCS and public trust. The MK party will not endorse a plan that entrenches inefficiency, neglect,

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rehabilitation and ignores overcrowding crises. We call for a comprehensive revision that aligns spending with measurable outcomes. This is an outright rejection of Budget Vote 22. We reject it.

Ms K KGOBISA-NGCABA: House Chair, in an ideal world, South Africa would have an infinite budget with which to tackle the challenges that are crushing our correctional system. However, in this world, with the real financial constraints that we have for the foreseeable future, it is going to take vision and focus to identify and tackle the most important challenges first.

It is not clear from this budget or from the annual performance plan that was presented to the committee what the priorities are. Unfortunately, the strategic plan does not help in this regard. Instead, it gives us a list of executive authority priorities. The trouble with that is, if everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority. What we needed was a concise list of priority focus areas that address the biggest challenges first and those that can be realistically solved within the budget.

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Now, one might expect corruption would be a priority, since stopping the outflow of unlawful funds would leave the department with more money to spend. Perimeter fencing should be a priority, it protects inmates and staff, it stops dangerous criminals from escaping and it curbs the inflow of contraband.

A focus on staffing would have been a good priority. DCS officials are the backbone of the system. Without them, nothing can be achieved, but these officials live in dilapidated housing, they rarely ever get new uniforms, and they are stuck with no prospect for career development. Addressing these challenges would motivate officials to perform at their best, knowing that their safety, their dignity and their aspirations are respected.

Finally, the construction of new facilities, as well as the renovation of currently unused facilities should be a priority, given the dire state of overcrowding in our prisons.

Now, none of this would mean that other issues in the department do not matter, but it would demonstrate that the leadership has applied its mind to the landscape and

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rationally thought through a systematic approach to tackling the challenges in an order that fulfils our constitutional obligations and the promise of our Constitution.

Instead, what we have is a picture of a department that is overwhelmed and uninspired. Now, they say you cannot manage what you do not measure. That is true, but that is not a reason to randomly set targets that measure things that don't matter. There is no point in setting a target for the number of successful section 49(g) applications, when it is not in your power to do anything about that. There is no point in setting targets for rehabilitation and for integration programmes that are much lower than what you achieved in previous years. Is it your aspiration to move backwards?

You cannot set a goal for the number of people to be paroled. What if there are not that many people who can be released, who are fit to be released? Are you incentivising parole boards to release people who should not be released, in order to meet a target? A department in dire financial need, one that was the sight of large-scale corruption during Bosasa, and it still is today, cannot afford to have vague incoherent targets about corruption. It is one thing to measure the

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successful conclusion of corruption charges, but the most important thing is to improve how you detect corruption, so that you can have more cases that are adjudicated.

Now, to be fair, there are rays of light in this budget. The Minister did make reference to the effort to expand the network of in-house bakeries and hopefully this will lower the cost of feeding inmates. The same is true for the effort to expand agricultural production, which provides skills for inmates, at the same time.

My hope is that the leadership of the department will take the time between now and the next budget cycle to create a truly visionary performance plan and a budget allocation that will tackle the biggest problems first and build on the department's successes. This is the only way to improve conditions in our centres, and to effectively rehabilitate offenders, so we can have safe communities that are conducive to economic and social development in South Africa. Thank you.

Ms B K DIALE: House Chair, greetings to the commander-in-chief, officials, commissars, and fighters. The EFF unequivocally rejects the 2025-26 budget for the Department of Correctional Services. The R28 billion set aside for this

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department is hopefully inadequate to cater for the real needs of the department and to enable it to fulfil its constitutional mandate. With a mere 0,35% real increase, the budget fails to counter 4,5% inflation, rendering it stagnant and incapable of addressing the Department of Correctional Services systemic crisis. The EFF cannot accept a budget that rejects its principles, is wholly insufficient, and undermines humane incarceration, rehabilitation, and societal protection.

It clashes with our vision of a just, equitable, and transformative correctional system rooted in job creation, anticorruption, and antioutsourcing that demand a bold alternative that serves South Africa. Our correctional centres are in crisis, holding 157 000 inmates against the capacity of 107 000 beds. Facilities operate at 146% capacity, with 59 574 remand detainees languishing due to judicial delays.

Overcrowding fuels violence. With a 4,6% assault rate, it violates human dignity, going against the very purpose of the corrective prison service. Only 4% of 243 correctional centres across the country are in good condition. With a R5 billion maintenance backlog worsened by a poor R354 million allocation, a 2,3% increase that mocks the urgency of leaking roofs, faulty plumbing, and unsafe wiring. Rehabilitation,

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which is vital to breaking the 70% recidivism rate, is staffed at 7% of the budget, or 2,4% of a billion - limiting education to 12% of inmates and psychological support to one psychologist per 2 000 inmates. This is not transformation, it is neglect.

Corruption and outsourcing plague the system. Private public partnerships, PPP, like Mangaung and Kutama-Sinthumule correctional centres are hotbeds of inefficiency and malfeasance. Mangaung's failure for example, including Thabo Bester's 2022 escape and a recent inmate murder, exposes the incompetence of private firms like the G4S.

The EFF demands the immediate termination of these PPP contracts and the return to full public control. Outsourcing, maintenance, security, and catering drains resources. It undermines accountability and defines our antioutsourcing principles. We insist on insourcing of all services to ensure transparency and redirect funds to public sector jobs. The 10% vacancy rate and constrained 18 000 compensation budget perpetuate understaffing, low morale, and high turnover of the staff. The Department of Correctional Services could create 12 200 to 17 500 jobs through infrastructure, rehabilitation,

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and insourcing, employing construction workers, artisan, psychologists, and parole officers, prioritising unemployed youth, women, and rural communities. Yet this budget squanders the potential, leaving unemployment at 33,2% and our correctional system crumbling.

The EFF proposes an ideal budget of R30 billion, a 9,21% nominal increase with 44,5% growth, allocating R17 billion for incarceration. This should include R2 billion for 5 000 new beds, and R500 million for maintenance, R3 billion for rehabilitation to reach 50% inmates, R1,5 billion for social reintegration, R5 billion for security, R1 billion to hire 2 000 officers, and R1,66 billion for administration. This should also include R100 million to strengthen The Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services, Jics. At an amount of R29 billion or R30 billion, the budget with 2% real growth is essential to prevent collapse. The current R29 billion is a disgrace, risking further deterioration. We demand the protection of critical programmes such as incarceration, rehabilitation, social reintegration, and Jics. These are non-negotiable humane conditions that reduce recidivism and accountability.

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We call for R500 million for maintenance, R2,8 billion to tackle overcrowding, and R3 billion for rehabilitation. We reject privatisation outright. Mangaung and Kutama-Sinthumule must be insourced immediately, creating 1 500 to 2 500 jobs and ending corruption fuelled by private greed. The EFF cannot accept this budget and reject it as woefully inadequate. We envision a correctional system that rehabilitates, creates jobs, and upholds dignity. We demand a strategic overhaul, rooted in public employment, transparency, and confirmative justice. South Africa deserves better than a failing system propped up by private profiteers. The EFF will fight tirelessly for a correctional system that serves the people. I thank you.

Ms B E MACHI: Hon House Chairperson, the department's mandate, grounded in the Correctional Services Act and the National Development Plan speaks directly to the safety and dignity of all citizens, including those in prison. The IFP notes the allocation of R29,2 billion to the Department of Correctional Services for the 2025-26 financial year - 5,27% increase for the previous year. While we acknowledge the upward trajectory for spending, we are compelled to ask: "Are we getting value for this investment?" We recognise the department's intent to

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modernise and humanise our correctional system, but persistent inefficiencies and the systematic bottlenecks undermine these goals.

We must ensure that every rand allocated translates into a safer, more rehabilitative, and effective correctional environment. We share the concern about the misalignment between expenditure and performance. The department must demonstrate more effective fiscal discipline and target realism. For instance, while billions are channelled into imprisonment and care, performance in areas such as rehabilitation and reintegration remains weak and undermeasured. Budget allocations must not merely preserve the system as it is but must transfer it. A large majority of the budget is spent on programme two.

This shows we are mainly funding condemnation rather than correction. We need to change this by spending more on rehabilitation and reintegration since reoffending makes society less safe. Programme three and five, rehabilitation and social reintegration, are allocated just R3,8 billion. These programmes are key for helping offenders change, learn new skills, and successfully rejoin communities. We believe an

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urgent review is necessary to determine if these funds are sufficient to achieve the department's goal.

We welcome the target of 30% youth employment, up from 20% in the previous year, and call on the department to take bold steps in expanding economic opportunities for young South Africans, both inside and outside correctional facilities. We are encouraged by the department's infrastructure commitments, including efforts to reduce overcrowding and improve conditions. However, the inconsistency between the annual performance plan and the estimates of a national expenditure regarding infrastructure targets are cause for concern. We urge the department to correct these discrepancies and provide clearer measurable outcomes, moving forward.

The IFP supports Budget Vote 22 in principle, but we do so with a clear call for stronger accountability, efficiency and outcomes. The 29,2 billion allocation must serve the constitutional promise of the correctional system that is just rehabilitative and reintegrative, not merely custodian. This budget must serve the people of South Africa, not only by keeping them safe, but by ensuring that those who transgress

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the law are given a real opportunity to become productive, reformed members of society, I thank you, House Chairperson.

Mr M V DANIELS: Can I get this time, House Chairperson? There is 53 seconds.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Don't worry. You will be given your proper time.

Mr M V DANIELS: House Chair, hon Minister, Deputy Minister, fellow colleagues, and fellow South Africans, the PA rejects those parties that want to blackmail South Africa when things do not go their way, those who operate like members of members, and now South Africa is blackmailed until their member is reinstated. We don't roll that way. You know, the biggest problem with budgets ... As we all appreciate, it is the officials who manage the implementation of the budgets. We as politicians fight each other, whether we are going to approve or not approve, and the problem is actually with the officials. I will come to that now.

I've listened to the hon Minister. I want to thank you, Minister, for your uncomfortable truths when you mentioned that we have so many foreign nationals taking up so much of

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our budget. It affects the entire system when we invest so much money in foreign nationals because we spend about R358 million a month to keep foreign nationals in our prisons. How much further could that money go? I also heard the hon Minister make reference to bringing corporal punishment back. As the PA ...

Afrikaans:

... moenie baiza nie, agb Minister.

English:

Corporal punishment is mild. Bring back the death penalty. If you kill someone, be prepared to be killed.

Now, you know, I want to say that what we suggest as the PA is that money must be ... [Interjections.] Hon House Chairperson, may I be protected, please?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majazi): Hon members, let us not howl so much that we drown out the speaker at the podium. Hon Daniels, please take your seat. I think there's a point of order. Yes, hon member.

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Mr M B BLOSE: House Chair, I think we should not be mischievous and call for things that are not ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majazi): What is your point of order?

Mr M B BLOSE: My point of order is that the hon member is calling for the death penalty to be returned. If there was a death penalty in this country, his president would not be alive today. Gayton would be dead if there was a penalty.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majazi): That is not a point of order, hon member. Order! Can you please switch off your microphone?

Mr M B BLOSE: If you put the same charge that Gayton got, don't call for the death penalty ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majazi): Hon member, switch off your microphone.

Mr M B BLOSE: ... when your president was guilty as charged.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon member, I'm cautioning you again. You can't do that. I gave you an opportunity, and I did say that it is not a point of order but a point of debate. I asked you not to continue and to switch off your microphone. You can't proceed in that manner. Hon Daniels, please take to the podium.

Mr M V DANIELS: Thank you, hon House Chair. I just want to register a point: You don't point at me when you talk to me. I see that as a threat, and I don't take threats lightly. I don't take threats lightly.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Daniels! Hon Daniels, I am requesting you to continue with your speech, please.

Mr M V DANIELS: Thank you, House Chair.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon members! Hon members, no. Let us not drown out the speaker at the podium. Let us not drown out the speaker at the podium. [Interjections.] I did not recognise you to speak. No, I did not recognise you to speak. You address it to me. Why did you press your microphone? Hon members, no. No. I am ... Hon member, that is

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not allowed. I'm telling you that I have asked the hon Daniels to focus on the speech that he is going to give now. I am addressing a matter of an hon member pressing a microphone without being recognised. It has nothing to do with what the hon Daniels said. So, when I am addressing that, you cannot tell me that I must address the hon Daniels. It is not him that pressed the microphone, and she knows who I am speaking to because I saw. So, can we please have that level of respect as Members of Parliament? Hon Daniels, please continue.

Mr M V DANIELS: Thank you, hon House Chairperson. We want to suggest, as the PA, that those in the "Four Corners", there is so much skill that they acquire over the years, but, when they leave, there's no accreditation for such skills acquired. We therefore request that they must be afforded accreditation for the work they do in metal work, woodwork, clothing manufacturing, and other things that they are doing so that, when they come out and reintegrate into society, they can then find meaningful jobs with the accredited qualifications. It does not have to signify that it is from a correctional service centre. It can just be from a government institution. Lastly, I want to address the Minister and the Deputy Minister. When I said the officials are in charge of this

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budget – and how they sometimes abuse this budget – we are sitting with an area commissioner from Venda at St Albans prison, Mr Netshivhazwaulu, who, for almost three years, has been staying in a hotel after he was deployed to St Albans in Nelson Mandela Bay. He draws sustenance and travel allowances. You must see the houses they have. I went to look at the houses at St Albans. There are beautiful houses, even better than the ones we live in as parliamentarians. So, that is wasteful expenditure. It just shows you how the officials abuse the money because one even blatantly said: I am building my house with the sustenance and travel allowances that I'm getting every month.

So, I request the Minister and Deputy Minister to look into that. That is unnecessary, and that is how our budgets go askew and pear shaped. Then we have to account to the other South Africans when things don't work out for us. I thank you very much.

Mrs H DENNER: House Chair, the mandate of the Department of Correctional Services, as derived from the relevant legislation, is to ensure the safe and humane detention of offenders and remand detainees. In other words, it is about

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ensuring that criminals and those who are accused of crimes are removed from society for a certain amount of time under humane conditions to ensure the safety of those of us who are law-abiding citizens, as well as the rehabilitation of these sentenced offenders and to reintegrate them into society – ideally having seen the error of their ways, thus wanting to contribute meaningfully to society without again posing a threat to the rest of us.

This is an enormous ask, which, looking at South Africa's recidivism rate and all the social ills and factors that fuel it, very little of which can actually be controlled by the Department of Correctional Services, has to date not been addressed very successfully. This emphasises the need for realistic targets, clear direction, and the political will to obtain and maintain the necessary performance.

This brings me to the targets the department has set for itself. The committee report notes two aspects that stand out regarding targets: One, the committee is of the opinion that there is a misalignment between expenditure and performance of the department and, two, that some targets, compared to previous years, have been lowered, requesting that targets

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should be adjusted higher. Yes, targets should always be set to improve on current performance, but what is the exact context here? It is an old ANC-led government tendency to set unrealistic targets that look good on paper but are never really achieved. This we have seen in all spheres of government for the past 30 plus years, from local to national.

Targets should be realistic. Once a realistic target is achieved, a higher target can be set. Taking into account the mess the seventh administration found this department in, we welcome the realistic targets set by the department. You cannot run before you can walk. In this case, this department has to learn to crawl first, due to years upon years of mismanagement, corruption, and decay.

Afrikaans:

Onder die bekwame leiding van Minister Groenewald en sy span is 'n merkbare verskil in die funksionering van hierdie departement reeds te bespeur. Die selfvoorsienings- en volhoubaarheidsinisiatief wat deur die Minister gedryf word, het reeds letterlik en figuurlik vrugte begin afwerp, soos die Minister hier aan ons voorgehou het. Die agterstand in paroolaansoeke van lewenslange gevonnisdies, wat onder die

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vorige administrasies bloot toegelaat is om op te hoop, is binne rekordtyd weggewerk, streng beoordeel, en op meriete afgekeur waar nodig. Die funksionering van die paroolstelsel en -rade word nou behoorlik onder die loep geneem, en daar is 'n groter fokus as ooit op die oorbevolkingsprobleem in tronke, met daadwerklike planne wat nie net by praat bly nie.

Hierdie veranderinge is te wyte aan die feit dat die departement nou sy eie Ministerie het met 'n Minister wat oor die politieke wil, kennis, en vaardigheid beskik om werklik 'n verskil te maak, 'n vaardige span mense saam met hom het, sowel as die doelgerigte bestuur en beplanning wat hier aan ons voorgehou is.

Daar is baie probleme in hierdie departement. Die Minister het dit eerlik hier aan ons voorgehou: diepgewortelde korrupsie wat uitgeroei moet word, basiese boublokke soos omheininge, personeelprobleme, en vervalde fasiliteite wat oor jare heen afgeskeep is. Rome is egter nie in 'n dag gebou nie. Daar sal nooit genoeg geld wees nie, en verbeterde samewerking binne die justisiegroepering is nodig, maar die merkbare veranderinge na slegs een jaar gee hoop, en die hoop beskaam nie. Dankie, Voorsitter.

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English:

Ms D E JAMES: Hon Chairperson and fellow South Africans, ActionSA supports this budget, but, let me be clear: We do so with serious reservations.

Our correctional facilities are failing in their most basic purpose. They have become revolving doors of reoffence rather than centres of genuine rehabilitation. Just last year, 6 500 parolees reoffended, with R1,2 billion allocated to so-called social reintegration. Why are we still failing and seeing those released recommit devastation in our communities? Let me tell you why. There is no behavioural tracking system, no clear way to measure whether these programmes are working or simply wasting our money. How can we call this rehabilitation? Many rehabilitation programmes in our prisons aren't even accredited. We give them so much, yet they leave with nothing, wasting taxpayers' money.

In 2022, the department outlined the concept of an integrated inmate management system, which aimed at implementing a more reliable, centralised inmate database and an agile inmate management environment solution for the benefit of the

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Department of Correctional Services. That's what it remains. It remains a concept three years later, and we don't hear anything about this concept. A total of 243 correctional centres and 218 community centres were targeted for this integrated inmate management system project roll-out. This project has fallen by the wayside it seems.

Even more concerning is the department's failure to implement a mini drug master plan. They say they participate in the National Drug Master Plan. This week with International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking I asked for a programme, and they couldn't even present one. What is the plan to combat drug abuse, if not this? What is their strategy? There is none.

We are also alarmed by the R5,2 billion allocated for administration, much of which goes to employee compensation, yet it is these very employees, those entrusted to uphold order, who are often implicated in smuggling in contraband, cellphones, drugs, you name it, with very little accountability. Our prisons remain insecure because we call them "centres" – still no cellphone blockers, still compromised security systems.

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During an oversight visit, members witnessed how drugs and contraband get transported from one prison cell to the next on a string and a broom. Today, when you visit those prisons, those centres, you see the same brooms, and you see the same strings continuing to hang out that window.

I asked the Minister how much we spend on an inmate. Just a reminder to South Africans: It is R17 000 per month. This is why we allocate R17,9 billion to incarceration. Prisoners live in relative comfort whilst our communities are being destroyed, broken, underresourced, and forgotten. Recent videos from raids – raids we welcome – have proven one thing about what we run in the centres. We run spaza shops, and we run drug dens, but it is a centre that lacks will, it lacks ethics, and it lacks common sense – something money cannot buy.

We cannot continue these so-called correctional centres whilst delivering no correction. ActionSA calls for a complete rethink of the correctional system, one grounded in accountability, transparency and, above all, real rehabilitation where inmates repair the communities they have

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devastated, not retreat from them or reoffend in them. The reality is what we see during oversight is staged. What we are told during meetings – and I have just told you what was said in 2022 – is scripted. Budget will never be adequate for as long as we call these prisons “centres”. I thank you.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES: Hon Chair, the Minister of Correctional Services, portfolio chairperson on Correctional Services, portfolio committee members, hon Members of Parliament, our National Commissioner of Correctional Services, our Inspecting Judge of the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services, Parole Board members and fellow South Africans, our message today is centred on rehabilitation as the cornerstone of our work. We are repositioning correctional centres as sites of meaningful education and skills building.

We wish to inform this House that our investment in accredited skills development facilities is yielding results. The drive is to have all our training sites receive full accreditation through partnerships with the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training, merSETA,

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Quality Council for Trades and Occupations and even global technology conglomerates such as Cisco.

We are creating skills training opportunities in welding, textile, technology, amongst many others. These initiatives aim to prepare inmates for employability, dignity and contribution post incarceration. Our partnerships are expanding. We are engaging with the National School of Government, Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority and the Professional Fire Arm Trainers Council to ensure that our programmes are nationally relevant and practically beneficial.

The Barberton, Thohoyandou, Witbank and Standerton management areas are at the forefront of these transformations. Not only are they securing accreditation, but they are also mentoring neighbouring centres, establishing a pipeline of the best practice. The partnership with Blackstar and merSETA at Grootvlei will yield 60 offenders being trained in welding in the upcoming financial year. A clear signal that we are scaling impact. It is critical to highlight all these efforts that are in addition to these existing establishments.

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To ensure continuity, we are moving to accelerate the recruitment over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF, period. The goal is to enrol 6192 learners over the next three years, with 3096 annually ... the Department of Correctional Services with the much-needed human capital to strengthen safety, rehabilitation and reintegration services. The Human Resources Directorate will ensure that half of those that will be recruited are youth with Grade 12 and NQF Level 4 qualifications. The remaining half are drawn from candidates from Correctional Services related qualifications, prioritising penology, criminology and skilled aligned to the self-sufficiency strategy.

The department is not waiting for society to change, but we are shaping it ourselves. In KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Western Cape and the Northern Cape, our officials are working very hard with parolees and community partners in building homes for destitute families. Through the use of offender labour and donated materials we are restoring hope and offering second chances to those that are incarcerated, but those who live within the margins of society.

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Offender talent is also being channelled into the creative economy. Seven arts and craft galleries have now been established across six regions. I hope as you walk into the Chamber you saw our paintings and what we are doing. These are the skills that we are giving and the produce that are coming from the self-sufficiency programme. These galleries offer a new narrative, one that sees incarcerated individuals as citizens with potential, not permanent labels, because we must do away with the stigma.

We are particularly proud of the strides made in education. The launch of the telematics system in the Johannesburg Female Centre in August 2024 is a game changer. The digital platform supported a 100% pass rate in our facilities. Nationally, 171 inmate learners sat for the 2024 National Senior Certificate exams, achieving a commendable 96,2% pass rate, including 110 bachelor passes and 135 distinctions. This is what we are doing. This is not just merely about numbers, it is about the life redirected through knowledge and learning.

We are investing further in our schools and the Witbank Correctional Centre has fully secured a full-time schooling accreditation for Grade 10 to 12, with classes set to begin in 2026. At Standerton, Grade 8 to nine are already in session in

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the 2025 academic year, with Grade 12 coming on stream by 2026. So, we must do away with this thing that, we are teaching them but we are not accredited. These schools, run in collaboration with the Department of Basic Education, reflect our unwavering belief in the redemptive power of education.

Our focus on improving the welfare of our officials remains unwavering. I must also indicate that the Thohoyandou official is back at his residence and no longer staying in hotels. Officials must be able to respond to emergencies with speed, professionalism and for that suitable accommodation, it is vital because we are governed by pieces of legislation that if you do work, you must be accommodated as such.

I am pleased to report that we have constructed new staff accommodation in Mthatha, and Burgersdorp Correctional Facility is underway along with the refurbishment of the existing married quarters. We have a fully institutionalised 'Life is a Garden' campaign to promote clean, green and well-kept correctional facilities environments, offering both aesthetic value and personal pride for our officials and our inmates.

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One of the noteworthy highlights of our progress has been the successful collaboration with global and local sporting entities, notably the FIFA Foundation and premier South African soccer clubs. The Twinning Project, now operational in several management areas across Gauteng, is an embodiment of power to sport rehabilitation and upliftment. The graduation of 15 female offenders in partnership with Keizer Chiefs is a testament to this inclusive nature of our rehabilitation efforts.

We have also launched a focused youth in partnership with Mamelodi Sundowns that reached 48 juvenile offenders and SuperSport United in the Kgosi Mampuru management area. These initiatives are more than recreational, they are transportive tools for social reintegration and self-worth.

This budget is not just about appropriating funds, but it is about affirming a vision that is geared to have a correctional system that is secure, rehabilitative and integrated with community upliftment, a system that places a human being at the centre regardless of their past, while we always ensure public safety remains paramount.

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To enhance community oversight and collaboration, we have reviewed and revitalise our policy on community corrections forums. Those forums will continue to work closely with community policing forums and our community safety forums, acting as grassroots mechanisms monitoring integration, reintegration and prevention of recidivism.

Since we came into office, we have shown that what we are doing now is possible. Now we must just intensify our journey ahead with discipline, empathy and accountability and we remain accountable to this House. Let us also continue to build a Correctional Services department that heals our nation because we need healing as a nation. We must make sure that we continue to build a safer and a just South Africa because South Africa tomorrow needs peace and a safer environment. Corrections is a societal matter. I thank you.

Mr S N SWART: House Chair, the ACDP is aware that this department is a receiver department. As crime increases and as the call for society increases for more people to be locked away, so this department has to receive all those awaiting trial prisoners and sentenced prisoners. This leads to the perennial problem of overcrowding which negatively impacts

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rehabilitation and places the security of inmates and officials at risk. One of the ways of dealing with this is section 49(g). It is concerning when so few applications have been approved by the judiciary. I do think further engagement needs to be taken in that regard or the Act needs to be amended in that regard.

Another way of dealing with overcrowding is that foreign nationals who have been sentenced should serve their sentences in their home countries. That is a process which we understand that the Minister and the Deputy Minister are engaging Home Affairs. The third aspect, of course, is to reduce recidivism by effective rehabilitation. Thank you, Deputy Minister, for pointing that out because we in the ACDP strongly believe in rehabilitation in restorative justice. Those criminals that are not a danger to society and those offenders that are not a danger to society should have a concept of restorative justice applied to them. That is very important in our view.

We are also, as the ACDP, very concerned about the high levels of corruption of contraband in the prison services. We welcome and commend the Minister for the unannounced visits. The Deputy Minister as well urged the portfolio committee to

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engage in more unannounced visits. We also wish to commend the commissioner for the night visits that he has had – the surprise visits. It has unearthed a lot of evil things and a lot of illegal actions that are happening. I've often thought when I served in the committee how would it be like for us as Members of Parliament to unannounced visit a prison at night to see what goes on there. I think that is also a very important aspect that we need to look into.

It is obviously very important for us to also bear in mind that whilst we need to balance societies rightful cry for justice and for punishment, but at the same time for the aspect of what Hebrews 13 says. Remember, those imprisoned as if you were there yourself. There should be an element of compassion as well to ensure that those that are imprisoned, those that serve sentences, come out rehabilitated and are good models in society.

We are concerned about the parolees that recommit offences. Obviously, there is a challenge in that regard. The ACDP, given these challenges by giving progress in the department, support this Budget Vote. I thank you.

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Ms C T NONTENJA: Hon House Chair, greetings. The UDM believes in a justice system that rehabilitates and restore. However, this budget does not reflect those values. It reflects containment without correction, spending without strategy and a system that has given up on its own purpose. Over 60% of this department's R29,5 billion budget is consumed by incarceration. In a staggering R17,9 billion, only 8% goes to rehabilitation and an insulting 4% goes to social reintegration. The very core of the department is rehabilitation and yet this budget does not reflect any of those cores.

The R1,2 billion allocated to programme of social integration is merely a revolving door back to the prison. Sadly, the poor interventions of this programme are some of the root causes for parolees to reoffend. We cannot expect parolees to reintegrate into society with no jobs, no mentorship and no support.

The committee's report acknowledges the mismatch between spending and performance. Instead of solutions we are served with lowered targets rather than improved.

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It is also important to note that overcrowding continues to plague our correctional facilities. The department says it wants to reduce overcrowding to under 50%. The UDM hopes that high investment in the incarceration programme will help to fix the overcrowding as it also negatively impacts the rehabilitation process.

Finally, the UDM supports the committee's call for improved self-sufficiency in correction centres through artisan employment, agricultural training and meaningful workshop participation. This would not only aid reintegration but also reduce the financial burden on the state in the long-term. I thank you.

Xitsonga:

Tat S M GANA: Mutshamaxitulu ...

English:

Hon members and fellow South Africans, one thing that is clear is that we are not safe. Many of us live in fear in our homes, in the streets and even in the schools where we send our children to. We have many communities in South Africa that are unsafe. As Rise Mzansi, we exist to build a safe, prosperous,

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equal and united South Africa within a generation. But let us be clear there will be no prosperity where there is no safety.

Correctional Services has a meaningful role to play in achieving that safety. The department is not just about locking people away, it is about contributing to a just, peaceful and safer South Africa. How can this be done effectively when the department is underfunded? The budget of just under R30 billion. While large on paper, it is not nearly enough when you consider the high number of offenders, overcrowding in our prisons and the lack of rehabilitation programmes and the shortage of qualified personnel.

Correctional Services carries two critical responsibilities, namely, incarceration and rehabilitation. What we do know is that South Africans want to see justice. They want to see criminals paying for their crimes. Justice must not only be done, but it must also be seen to be done. We need to be clear as Rise Mzansi. To ask for a parole is not a right, it is a privilege and one that must be earned through good behaviour, genuine remorse and demonstrated drive attention. The current practice of treating parole as a routine administrative step must come to an end because it has led to some individuals

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being released into communities that are not being prepared for. Some crimes, especially those that are committed by repeat violent offenders and those sentenced to life imprisonment, must be excluded from parole consideration. The safety of our people must come first.

We do know that in the third quarter of 2024-25, over 18 000 parolees reoffended while on parole or on their probation period. At the same time, we need to be innovative, Minister. It is not corporal punishment that we need, it is community service. There are many people that are housed in correctional facilities that shouldn't be there. We have said this before that let's send them back to work in the communities for free. Let's not reintroduce corporal punishment, but let's make them pay for their crimes. Let them clean the streets, let them clean the graveyards so that they pay for the crimes that they have committed against the communities. That is our proposal and not returning to corporal punishment.

Xitsonga:

Ndza khensa swinene, Mutshamaxitulu.

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The CHAIRPERSON (Ms L S Makhubela): I now invite the hon J Engelbrecht. Order, hon members. No, it is not. No, hon member, there are hon members who are not participating who were following before. Hon Engelbrecht, you are invited to the podium, hon member.

Mr J ENGELBRECHT: Hon Chairperson, Minister Groenewald, Deputy Minister Ntshalintshali, Judge Cameron, colleagues, in a setting where resources are shrinking and demand for those resources is rising, creating a practical budget becomes challenging, and here we are today, delivering a budget that touches the very core of our justice system - the humane incarceration, rehabilitation, and reintegration of offenders.

The Department of Correctional Services has been allocated R29,2 billion for the current financial year, which is a 5,27 nominal increase. However, beneath this increase lies a sobering reality of systemic failures, fiscal waste, and policy neglect that continues to undermine the department's constitutional mandate. For years, billions of rands have been lost to irregular and wasteful expenditure from Bosasa scandals to overinflated administration costs, misaligned priorities, rehabilitation and reintegration, which are the

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heartbeat of Correctional Services' mission received just 12% of the total budget. This cannot continue.

Employee compensation alone consumes R20,5 billion, which is over 70% of the entire budget, yet critical posts remain vacant, vehicles are slashed from R49 million to R41 million, and the infrastructure programme is erratic. This is not prudent budgeting; it is a consequence of years of mismanagement. The department's purpose is not only to detain, but to reform, yet only R2,2 billion is allocated to rehabilitation and R1,2 billion to social reintegration. Just 84% of offenders complete programmes, and the parole violation rate is 3%. South Africa cannot reduce crime if transformation within prison walls is under-resourced. You cannot budget for the containment and hope for rehabilitation.

The continued overcrowding of correctional centres, driven largely by remand detainees, is a humanitarian and logistical crisis. The Remand Detention subprogramme gets only R874 million, a mere 5% of the incarceration budget. There must be co-ordinated action across the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster. If bail systems are broken, we must innovate, and if court backlogs persist, we must

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intervene. The recent decision to reduce performance targets is unacceptable. Escapes, inmate assaults, and unnatural deaths remain high. Lowering expectations does not solve problems; it hides them.

Amidst all this, there is still hope. Inmates who participate in education and training programmes often show the best chance of successful reintegration. Facilities that invest in agriculture and skills training have already started showing signs of self-sustainability. These pockets of progress prove that transformation is possible if we commit to it meaningfully.

To our correctional officers working under immense pressure and in overcrowded and dangerous conditions, your sacrifice and perseverance do not go unnoticed. You are the frontline defenders of safety and rehabilitation. You deserve tools, respect, and leadership that match your commitment.

So, what should be done? A shift in resources meaningfully towards rehabilitation and reintegration; strengthen collaboration with the SAPS the National Prosecuting Authority, NPA, and the Department of Justice to unclog the

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remand detainees that overwhelms the system; fill vacancies; curb reliance on consultants; ensure expenditure matches impact; accelerate legislative reforms to ensure that we have a functioning and effective parole system; and that the entire correctional system becomes more efficient and self-sufficient.

This budget may not fix everything, but it should be used to turn the tide, to start rebuilding what has been broken, and to restore dignity and purpose to our correctional system. All the best to the National Commissioner Thobakgale and his team, who inherited most of these problems. I thank you.

Mr M S MOELA: House Chair, greetings to the members of the executive, Deputy Minister, Minister Groenewald, the National Commissioner, Inspecting Judge, Judge Cameron, parole board members, hon members, and South African citizens. I stand to affirm that the ANC supports the budget allocation that has been tabled for the 2025-26 financial year as per the circumstances outlined by Comrade Ramolobeng, who is the chair of the portfolio committee.

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It is worth mentioning that the budget is in line with our policy priorities, and we support it based on both continuity and change. Regarding incarceration and security, though we welcome the relatively low numbers of prison escapes across the country, we need to emphasise the need to ensure maximum security in all operational facilities. Security measures are essential to prevent escapes, smuggling, contraband, and other security breaches that could potentially endanger officials, inmates, and the public. In several of the oversight visits across the centres, we have noted several contrabands, including drugs, cellphones, and money that have legally made their way into the correctional centres. Correctional centres are places of rehabilitation, and contrabands act contrary to the process of rehabilitation. It has also been our observation that the areas where some of the centres are located make it easier for the smuggling of contraband. It is indeed common knowledge that the department is having a challenge with perimeter fencing around the facility to close off the facility from smuggling. The other concern has been the use of security systems and scanners to detect contraband from visitors and officials coming into correctional facilities. As we face unprecedented levels of overcrowding in our facilities, we welcome the filling of vacancies in

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correctional supervision boards, and we trust that this will help alleviate the problem that no offender will be unreasonably denied parole due to the departmental deficiencies. As the correctional supervision boards commence with their work, we want to further emphasise victim participation in correctional appeals to prevent traumatised victims when they meet the perpetrators out on parole.

Regarding care, we welcome the department's treatment and management of communicable diseases in correctional facilities. Our oversight visits have demonstrated that health care and treatment tracking and tracing are taken very seriously in the centres. We also welcome the use of offender labour to help build clinics and pharmacies in some of the centres. The availability and access to medicine are of critical importance in ensuring the provision of comprehensive primary health care services to the inmates. We remain concerned with the shortage and number of skilled professionals, such as social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists, who can facilitate rehabilitation programmes for the inmates. The ratio is currently standing at 1:240, which means social workers and health care practitioners are responsible for overseeing 240 inmates. This is, without a

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doubt, a recipe for disaster. We wish to see a fully-fledged correctional centre, adequately resourced with staff and skilled personnel who can bring meaningful counselling and rehabilitation services to the inmates.

We remain shocked at the number of natural and unnatural deaths recorded in correctional facilities every quarter. The high numbers and vague explanations evoke the memory of a poem by Chris Van Wyk called *In detention*.

He fell from the ninth floor

He hanged himself

He slipped on a piece of soap while washing

He hanged himself.

Those were the brutal and vague excuses that the police and correctional officers gave during apartheid when accounting for the deaths of prisoners - vague and insincere. We condemn any acts of violence taking place in correctional facilities. We were deeply disappointed to learn about the inmate's death at Mangaung Correctional Facility, which was framed as a natural death until further investigation revealed that some correctional officials were involved in the killing of this inmate. He died from asthma, as they reported, until a

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postmortem report revealed that he was pepper-sprayed to death. The state is responsible for the inmates' safety and custody, and there can never be any excuse for torture and excessive use of force. I wish to reiterate that the rights and human rights of prisoners are indivisible and inalienable

Regarding rehabilitation and social integration, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, held that:

No one is born a good citizen, and no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline.

This goes hand in hand with the English proverb that says:

The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth.

This simply means that when individuals feel rejected or excluded, they are more likely to resort to destructive

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behaviour to get attention or a sense of belonging. This highlights the importance of community support and the need for social reintegration and rehabilitation.

We note that the Rehabilitation Programme is the second smallest allocated programme in terms of the budget and comprises only 8% of the total budget for the 2025-26 financial year. The programme has been allocated R2,2 billion, which is 3,93% more than the allocation of the previous year's allocation.

We congratulate the department on trying to offer diverse programmes aimed at providing inmates with second chances. We note the 96% matric pass rate in the 2024-25 year, and we are confident that the department will continue in that particular manner. People in correctional facilities must be given second chances to learn, self-correct, and acquire skills that will enable them to engage meaningfully in the economy. Though there are various programmes available, we are concerned with the actual number of offenders participating in these programmes vis-à-vis the total inmate population. We urge the Department of Correctional Services to encourage greater participation in the rehabilitation programmes and make use of

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the partnerships to offer rehabilitative programmes to offenders.

Noting the relatively high numbers of overcrowding, particularly in the third and fourth quarters, we are now forced to investigate alternative sentencing arrangements, including community corrections. We welcome the expansion and diversification of community correction systems. The reintegration of offenders under the system of community corrections provides offenders with an opportunity to lead a socially responsible life within their communities. Since the advent of democracy, community corrections have become a core component of the criminal justice system, as they provide a useful alternative to incarceration. Community correction is a much-needed shift in focus from sanctions and deterrents to rehabilitation and reintegration. We must encourage more of these noncustodial sentencing arrangements. Hon members, as the ANC, we support this budget. Thank you.

Die MINISTER VAN KORREKTIEWE DIENSTE: Agb Voorsitter, ...

English:

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Firstly, I want to thank all the members participating in this debate and it is quite clear that there are some issues that is generally worrying for the hon members. Firstly, let me start by agreeing with hon Engelbrecht when he said that one cannot eradicate crime without rehabilitation. That is true.

Quite a number of speakers here referred to rehabilitation and the fact of the matter is, if a criminal received a sentence of 10 years, after 10 years, even if he or she does not get parole, he or she is back in society. Therefore, we have a responsibility to ensure that they are successfully reintegrated into our societies, preventing them from continuing with criminality. So, we understand that.

It was referred to by Rise Mzansi; hon Gana, the UDM; the ACDP, hon Swart; and he also put quite emphasis on restorative justice. I agree that is what we should look at, because it needs a change of heart not to continue with crime. It was also raised by Action SA, hon James. I know the hon member. She is very vigilant when it comes to rehabilitation, and I understand that.

Afrikaans:

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Die agb Denner is heeltemal korrek, as sy sê dat dit nie help as ons teikens stel en ons weet ons gaan dit nie behaal nie. Dit is soms meer demoraliserend vir jou werknemers, want hulle sien hierdie onmoontlikheid voor hulle. Dit moet 'n realistiese teiken wees, wat behaal kan word, want daar is niks wat so inspirerend is vir werknemers, as hulle hul teikens behaal nie. So, ek stem heeltemal saam daarmee.

English:

When it comes to foreign prisoners, hon Daniels from the PA, you are quite right and let me say, some other members also referred to foreign nationals in our prisons. It is costing the taxpayer of South Africa R460 per day for each and every prisoner. So, you can make your calculations. If we look at foreigners in our facilities, we have about 24 000 of them. That is costing the taxpayer more or less R11 million per day.

Therefore, I can ensure you that we are in conversation and meetings to see how we can deport these foreigners, so that they can serve their further sentences at their places. In fact, you would remember that I said there were foreigners whose parole was approved, but they were immediately deported back to their country of origin.

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Overall, it is about the budget and the hon chair from the portfolio committee, hon Ramolobeng, referred to the infrastructure. You are quite right, but it costs money, and you are also correct when it comes to triple-Pos and after the Thabo Bester issue, we will have to reconsider. You are also correct when it comes to the remand detainees.

Can I say on the budget, everyone agrees that there is a problem with the budget. Now, let me say, as far as the EFF and the MK party are concerned, I agree with you. There are critical shortfalls in the budget, but it is your decision, and I respect it. If you rejected the budget, just remember, I don't hope you succeed completely with that, because then we are going to get even less than R29 billion for this financial year.

I know my time is running out. Lastly, allow me just to mention that I already wrote a letter to the President, requesting that Correctional Services goes back to the security cluster. The President must make the decision and that will open doors for more funds to Correctional Services,

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because we must be seen part of the security and crime prevention in South Africa.

I want to thank my personnel in my office, the Deputy Minister, the National Commissioner, all officials, Members of Parliament, members of the portfolio committee, and the chair of the portfolio committee. Thank you that we can take hands to solve this problem in the best interests of every South African. Thank you.

Debate concluded.

The mini-plenary session rose at 15:43.