Wednesday, 29 April 2026]

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ANNOUNCEMENTS, TABLINGS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

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The Speaker

1. Introduction of Bills

(1) **Adv G Breytenbach, MP**

(a) **Constitution Twenty-Fourth Amendment Bill** [B13–2026] (National Assembly – proposed sec 74(3)(b)) [Explanatory summary of Bill and prior notice of its introduction published in ***Government Gazette*** No. 53099 of 1 August 2025.]

Introduction and referral to the **Portfolio Committee on Justice and Constitutional Development** of the National Assembly, as well as referral to the Joint Tagging Mechanism (JTM) for classification in terms of Joint Rule 202.

In terms of Joint Rule 196 written views on the classification of the Bill may be submitted to the JTM. The Bill may only be classified after the expiry of at least seven parliamentary working days since introduction.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

National Assembly

1. Report of the Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation on the third Quarterly Expenditure Reports for Vote 41 Water and Sanitation 2025/26 Financial Year, dated 28 April 2026

The Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation (the Committee), having considered the Department of Water and Sanitation (the Department) 3rd Quarterly Expenditure Reports for 2025/26, reports as follows:

1. Introduction

The Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation considered the 3rd quarterly expenditure and performance report on the 24 March 2026. The Committee's report presents a brief overview of cumulative expenditure and performance as reported in the 3rd quarter. The Committee engaged extensively on issues relating to municipal capacity, water infrastructure performance, governance challenges, intergovernmental coordination, financial sustainability, and project implementation. Discussions also focused on systemic barriers to the delivery of reliable water services across the country. Lastly, the Committee made critical observations, and recommendations.

2. Briefing on the 3rd Quarterly Expenditure Report for the 2025/26 Financial Year

2.1. Overview of the 3rd Quarterly Performance Report

During the third quarter of the 2025/26 financial year, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) continued to implement critical policy, regulatory, and operational interventions aimed at addressing long-standing challenges in the water and sanitation sector. The period under review was characterised by notable progress in legislative reform, institutional strengthening, infrastructure delivery, regulatory efficiency, and initiatives to expand access to water services, particularly in underserved communities.

Legislative and Regulatory Reforms

One of the key milestones during the third quarter was the tabling of the Water Services Amendment Bill in Parliament in October 2025. Following its tabling, the Department briefed the Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation on the objectives of the Bill. The proposed amendments introduce important reforms intended to strengthen the governance, regulation, and accountability of water services provision. While the legislative process is continuing, the Department has concurrently accelerated the implementation of institutional and regulatory measures aimed at addressing the systemic drivers of the national water crisis. These interim measures are intended to stabilise water services delivery and create a stronger foundation for the reforms envisaged in the Amendment Bill. In support of regulatory strengthening, the Department published the Compulsory National Norms and Standards for Water Supply and Sanitation Services in 2025. These regulations establish minimum competency requirements for individuals appointed to key leadership positions within Water Services Authorities (WSAs), including roles in Water Services Planning Units and Operations and Maintenance Units. The norms and standards are a critical intervention to professionalise the sector, improve operational performance, and enhance accountability at municipal level.

Institutional Interventions in Distressed Municipalities

Significant progress was achieved in addressing water and sanitation service delivery failures in distressed municipalities. In November 2025, Cabinet approved the establishment of a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to assume full responsibility for the operation, maintenance, and rehabilitation of water and sanitation services in Emfuleni Local Municipality. This intervention represents a decisive step to stabilise services, restore infrastructure functionality, and protect public health and the environment in one of the country's most severely affected municipalities.

Water Pricing and Regulatory Efficiency

During the reporting period, the Raw Water Pricing Strategy was revised and approved by the Minister of Finance. The revised strategy will be implemented from April 2026 and is expected to contribute to improved cost recovery, financial sustainability of water resource infrastructure, and equitable water use across sectors. The Department also recorded a marked improvement in regulatory turnaround times for water use authorisations. The proportion of new water use licence applications processed within 30 days improved significantly, increasing from 35% in the 2022/23 financial year to 80% in

2025/26. This improvement reflects the Department's efforts to streamline processes, strengthen internal capacity, and support economic development while ensuring sustainable water resource management.

Water Quality and Efficiency Regulation

In 2025, the Department undertook comprehensive Green Drop (wastewater), Blue Drop (drinking water), and No Drop (water use efficiency) Progress Assessments of all municipal water and wastewater systems nationally. These assessments provide a detailed and evidence-based evaluation of the performance of municipalities in managing drinking water quality, wastewater treatment, and water conservation and demand management. During the third quarter, the Department focused on consolidating and finalising the assessment reports. The reports are scheduled for public release by the end of March 2026 and will serve as an important accountability and improvement tool for municipalities, sector stakeholders, and the public.

Financial Sustainability of Water Boards

The Department continued to support the financial sustainability of water boards, recognising that rising municipal debt remains a major risk to the bulk water supply system. During the quarter, the Ministry led high-level engagements with Premiers, Members of Executive Councils (MECs) responsible for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), and Mayors of affected municipalities to encourage the settlement of outstanding debts owed to water boards. These engagements were complemented by the involvement of the National Treasury, which has implemented measures to withhold equitable share allocations from the worst non-paying municipalities as a debt recovery mechanism.

In parallel, DWS and National Treasury continued to implement a municipal debt write-off framework, which allows water boards to write off historical debt where municipalities demonstrate a sustained track record of paying current invoices in full. Despite some progress, the overall debt position remains a concern. As at the end of January 2026, total municipal debt owed to water boards stood at R27 billion, including current invoices.

Progress on Water Services Infrastructure Projects

The third quarter saw the unblocking and completion of several long-delayed water services infrastructure projects, contributing to improved water supply in affected communities:

- The Babanana Bulk Water Pipeline Project, supplying villages in the Greater Tzaneen and Letaba Local Municipalities, was completed in December 2025.
- The Mooihoek Bulk Water Supply Scheme in Sekhukhune, which had experienced prolonged delays due to multiple challenges, became fully operational in December 2025 following departmental intervention.
- Phase 1 of the Mametja Sekororo Bulk Water Supply Scheme was completed in December 2025 and is now supplying water to six villages.
- Construction resumed on the Greater Mbizana Regional Bulk Water Supply Scheme and the Ngqamakhwe Regional Bulk Water Supply Scheme in the Eastern Cape, following the resolution of implementation constraints.
- The Loskop Regional Bulk Water Supply Scheme in Mpumalanga progressed to over 85% completion and is scheduled to begin supplying water by December 2026.

Water Access Acceleration Programme for Unserved Communities

The Department continued to implement the Water Access Acceleration Programme for Unserved Communities, which gives effect to the President's commitment to water as a national priority. The programme also directly supports the Department's Strategic Plan objective of reducing unserved communities to zero percent by 2030.

The programme comprises two key elements:

- Rapid, cost-effective interventions, including groundwater development, spring protection, rainwater harvesting, and similar measures. These interventions can be implemented quickly and are particularly suited to sparsely populated rural areas with low-income levels and limited economic activity.

- Prioritisation of infrastructure funding proposals, encouraging municipalities with unserved communities to submit projects for funding through the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG), the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant (RBIG), and the Water Services Infrastructure Grant (WSIG). In implementing this programme, the Department continues to work closely with municipalities and local communities to provide technical, planning, and implementation support to enable sustainable service delivery.

2.2. Overview of the Financial and Non-Financial Performance

Overview of Budget Adjustments

During the 2025/26 Adjusted Estimates of National Expenditure (AENE) process, the Department's original budget allocation of R26.679 billion was reduced by a net amount of R3.296 billion, resulting in an adjusted appropriation of R23.383 billion. The reduction relates primarily to the uMkhomazi Water Project, where funding was rescheduled to outer financial years. This adjustment was necessary to align the Department's budget with the revised implementation timelines and cash flow projections of the Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA). The reprioritisation does not represent a reduction in the strategic importance of the project but rather reflects prudent fiscal management to ensure that expenditure is matched to realistic project delivery milestones.

Overall Expenditure Performance

As at the end of the third quarter, the Department had incurred total expenditure of R18.106 billion, representing 78.4% of the adjusted annual appropriation (planned spending by the end of Q3 was 72%). This level of expenditure indicates that the Department is spending ahead of plan and remains on track to fully utilise its budget by the end of the 2025/26 financial year. Total unspent funds amount to R5.277 billion, the majority of which is committed to fourth-quarter payments, particularly in relation to transfers and subsidies and capital infrastructure projects.

While financial performance has been strong, performance achievement stands at 59%, indicating a mismatch between expenditure and non-financial performance. This variance is largely attributable to:

- The nature of capital-intensive and multi-year infrastructure projects, where expenditure may be incurred ahead of measurable outputs;
- Timing differences between financial payments and the achievement or verification of performance indicators; and
- Delays in some project milestones despite committed spending.

Management has noted this challenge and continues to strengthen alignment between financial execution and performance delivery.

Expenditure by Economic Classification

Expenditure on Compensation of Employees amounted to R1.492 billion, representing 72.9% of the adjusted budget of R2.047 billion. Spending remains within projected levels and reflects a stable personnel environment. The Department is in the process of finalising staff matching and placement, including the implementation of Catchment Management Agencies transfer agreements. All prioritised and funded critical posts are being filled to ensure that operational capacity is strengthened without placing undue pressure on the compensation budget.

Spending on Goods and Services totalled R1.438 billion, equivalent to 70.7% of the adjusted appropriation of R2.034 billion. Expenditure under this item is aligned to operational requirements, including municipal support, regulatory activities, planning, and technical services. The Department continues to implement cost containment and savings measures to optimise the use of the operational budget while ensuring that service delivery and oversight functions are not compromised.

Expenditure on Transfers and Subsidies amounted to R11.839 billion, which is 79.5% of the adjusted budget of R14.893 billion. These transfers primarily relate to allocations to water boards, implementing agents, public entities, and municipalities for bulk water, water services infrastructure, and related programmes. The remaining balance is scheduled for transfer during the fourth quarter, in line with contractual agreements and project implementation schedules.

Spending on Payments for Capital Assets reached R3.337 billion, representing 75.7% of the adjusted appropriation of R4.408 billion.
This expenditure includes investments in:

- Regional bulk water infrastructure,
- Water services infrastructure projects,
- Bucket eradication programmes, and
- Other strategic capital assets.

Capital spending is being implemented in accordance with approved project plans, cash flow projections, and implementation milestones, with several projects progressing towards completion in the final quarter of the financial year.

Planned spending remains closely aligned with Departmental priorities and the implementation plans of implementing agents, including water boards and the TCTA. Financial projections, recovery plans, and ongoing budget monitoring indicate that the Department is on track to spend the full adjusted allocation by the end of the 2025/26 financial year. Although financial performance has outpaced non-financial performance to date, management is actively monitoring projects and performance indicators to ensure improved delivery outcomes in the fourth quarter, with corrective actions in place where delays have been identified.

In summary, the Department's financial performance during the third quarter of 2025/26 has been strong, with expenditure at 78.4% of the adjusted budget, exceeding planned spending levels. While performance achievement currently stands at 59%, this is largely attributable to timing differences inherent in infrastructure-intensive programmes, refer to Table 1 for details on under performance and recovery strategies. The Department remains confident that, through continued oversight, reprioritisation, and recovery plans, both financial and non-financial targets will be substantially improved by year-end, ensuring value for money and progress towards sector objectives.

The table 1 below shows a performance summary with a list of targets that were not achieved together with strategies to address under performance.

Programme	**3rd Quarter 2025/26**		**Areas of under performance**	**Strategies to overcome areas of under performance**
	% actual achievement	**% budget spent**		
Administration (P1)	65	73.3	• Compliance with approved audit plan • Vacancy rate for engineers and scientists • Safety and security inspections and assessments of facilities and	• **Audit plan:** the process is underway to outsource technical audits to augment internal capacity. • **Risk management plan**: The activities have been deferred to the subsequent quarter • **Health and safety inspections:** The activities have been deferred to the subsequent quarter.

			installations conducted • Implementation of the financial recovery plan. • Number of debtor days • Finalisation of the NWRIA establishment	• **Security threat risk assessment**: The activities have been deferred to the subsequent quarter. • **Security inspections:** The activities have been deferred to the subsequent quarter. • **NWRIA board appointment**: The process of governing board appointments is underway • Long outstanding historical debt because of non-payment by municipalities and water boards affected the Department's ability to reduce the water debt. • The Department has appointed service providers who are participating in the National Treasury Transversal Contract on debt collection to assist Department with recovery of outstanding debts. • The Department is currently engaging with customers to enter into debt repayment agreements, and the interest will be waived. This measure serves to encourage our customers to settle historical debts within a reasonable period.
Water Resources Management (P2)	68	89.4	• Completion of Record of Implementation Decisions (RID) for bulk raw water planning projects • Completion of water resources classes, and determined resource quality objectives for river systems • Bulk raw water projects in preparation for implementation and under construction • Dam safety rehabilitation projects under construction • Kilometers of conveyance systems rehabilitated	• **Completion of RIDs**: An acceleration to recover from the underperformance is underway with the plan to finalise these in the subsequent quarter. • An acceleration plan to recover from the underperformance is underway with the plan to finalise these in the subsequent quarter. • Tzaneen Dam: Process to obtain an alternative supplier to provide the required material is underway. • Mzimvubu Dam: The procurement process to get the requisite technical expertise is underway • Dam safety rehabilitation: The appointment of the requisite technical expertise is underway • Conveyance systems: An acceleration process is underway to recover from the underperformance • Compulsory licensing: Further consultations are underway to address several technical issues raised by stakeholders • Monitoring of resource directed measures: The monitoring has been deferred to the fourth quarter

			• Dams where recreational areas for tourism will be initiated • Draft water economic Regulator Bill development process • Oversight assessments for compliance monitoring activities in CMAs • Monitoring of wastewater systems against regulatory requirements	• Oversight assessment in CMAs: The assistance of compliance monitoring for CMAs was prioritised and this will be resumed when the CMAs are fully capacitated • Water economic regulator: the economic regulator scoping document is being prioritized • Wastewater systems monitored against the Regulatory Requirements: The monitoring has been deferred to the fourth quarter
Water Services Management (P3)	44	73.3	• Development of 5-year water and sanitation reliability plans for metropolitan municipalities • Completion of feasibility and implementation readiness studies for water and wastewater services projects (RBIG) • WSAs assessed for compliance with the requirements of the No Drop Regulatory Programme • Mega, large, small and BFI regional bulk infrastructure project phases under construction • Mega and large regional bulk infrastructure project phases completed • Water services infrastructure grant projects under	• **Metropolitan municipalities' reliability plans:** the procurement of service providers to accelerate the finalization of the plans underway. • Metropolitan municipalities' reliability plans: the procurement of service providers to accelerate the finalization of the plans underway. • Metropolitan municipalities' reliability plans: the procurement of service providers to accelerate the finalization of the plans underway. • Metropolitan municipalities' reliability plans: the procurement of service providers to accelerate the finalization of the plans underway. • developing a revised construction timelines and close monitoring on the project implementation

			construction and completed	
Total	**59**	**78.4**		

The annual procurement analysis indicates strong performance in advancing inclusive economic participation, particularly for black-owned companies. Procurement from black companies with at least 50% ownership accounted for 88% of total procurement expenditure, amounting to approximately R2.49 billion out of an annual spend of R2.8 billion, significantly exceeding transformation targets. Procurement from women-owned companies reached 32%, equating to R906 million, although this remains below the target of 40%. Youth-owned companies received 11% of procurement spend, amounting to R307 million, against a target of 30%, while procurement from companies owned by persons with disabilities remained very low at 0.42%, or R12 million, compared to a target of 7%. Overall, while procurement from black-owned enterprises reflects substantial progress, focused efforts are still required to improve participation by women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

In summary, the Department's financial performance during the third quarter of 2025/26 has been strong, with expenditure at 78.4% of the adjusted budget, exceeding planned spending levels. While performance achievement currently stands at 59%, this is largely attributable to timing differences inherent in infrastructure-intensive programmes, refer to Table 1 for details on under performance and recovery strategies. The Department remains confident that, through continued oversight, reprioritisation, and recovery plans, both financial and non-financial targets will be substantially improved by year-end, ensuring value for money and progress towards sector objectives.

2.3. Irregular, Fruitless and Wasteful and Unauthorised Expenditure (IFWUE)

Table 2 shows the status of IFWUE as of the end of 3rd Quarter 2025/26. The total unauthorised expenditure amounts to R641 million all located within the Main Account. This expenditure arises primarily from two historical financial years. In 2016/17, the Department overspent its allocated budget by R111 million, driven largely by the Bucket Eradication Programme, which itself incurred expenditure of R292 million. In 2017/18, a further R349 million in unauthorised expenditure occurred as a result of the War on Leaks Programme, a multi-year initiative that continued operating despite having no dedicated budget allocation. This programme is now the subject of ongoing investigations by the Special Investigating Unit. Currently, all unauthorised expenditure remains under review by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA), which is assessing the circumstances and compliance failures that produced these overruns.

Table 2. Irregular, Fruitless and Wasteful and Unauthorised Expenditure

Expenditure Variables (IFWUE)	Main Account		Water Trading Entity		TOTAL
	Q3-2025/26 R'000	2024/25 R'000	Q3-2025/26 R'000	2024/25 R'000	Q3-2025/26 R'000
Unauthorised expenditure	641,109	641,109	-	-	**641,109**
Fruitless and wasteful expenditure	114	114	32 244	197 092	**32,358**
Irregular expenditure	4,792,733	4,793,881	257 153	1 036 405	**5,049,886**
Total	**5,433,956**	**5,435,104**	**289,397**	**1,233,497**	**5,723,353**

The total fruitless and wasteful expenditure recorded for the third quarter of 2025/26 is R32,358,000. Of this amount, the Main Account contributes R114,000, which is largely attributable to fraudulent subsistence and travel claims processed in prior years. The Department successfully recovered these funds from the responsible officials' leave payouts, though the outstanding balance has been recorded as debt after the officials' employment was terminated. The Water Trading Entity carries the remaining R32,244,000, consisting mainly of irrecoverable construction unit costs that were not capitalised to projects. Within this amount, R14.998 million has been referred to the State Attorney to initiate formal recovery processes. These cases illustrate the weaknesses in financial oversight in project costing and travel claim administration that the Department is currently working to correct.

Irregular expenditure constitutes the most significant category of financial non-compliance, with a cumulative total of R5,049,886,000. The Main Account accounts for R4,792,733,000, while the Water

Trading Entity contributes R257,153,000. This expenditure stems from non-compliance with procurement legislation, contract mismanagement, and irregular extensions of service contracts, many of which originated several years ago and continue to undergo investigation and adjudication. The Main Account's irregular expenditure is heavily influenced by several large cases. Of the total, R3.622 billion is currently subject to court proceedings involving, among others, the Lepelle Northern Water projects, the Richards Bay Desalination Plant, and the Bucket Eradication Programme. A further R1.163 billion has been submitted to the National Treasury for condonation, while R8 million remains under departmental disciplinary processes. Among the largest matters is the Giyani Water Services Project, which alone carries irregular expenditure of R3.3 billion and remains under SIU and Hawks investigation. The War on Leaks Programme, with irregular expenditure totalling more than R1 billion, also continues to undergo legal and disciplinary review, alongside the Richards Bay Desalination Plant irregularities, which amount to just over R301 million. For the Water Trading Entity, irregular expenditure of R257,153,000 comprises R6.073 million incurred in the current financial year, largely linked to compliance failures in the Raising of Clanwilliam Dam Project. The service provider responsible has since been terminated, and disciplinary processes are underway. Additionally, R28 million of the WTE's irregular expenditure is the subject of ongoing court cases, while R229 million relates to unresolved disciplinary proceedings involving procurement and contract management failures. Overall, these cases reflect systemic issues in procurement compliance, contractor oversight, and project governance that the Department is actively working to resolve.

3. Committee Observations and Responses by the Department

During the engagement on the Department of Water and Sanitation's 3rd Quarter Performance, the Committee noted widespread and persistent governance and capacity failures in municipalities. These weaknesses continue to undermine water service delivery despite significant financial transfers. The Department acknowledged these concerns, confirming that municipal dysfunction remains deeply rooted, exacerbated by corruption, political interference, and chronic technical skills shortages. The Department emphasised that although it has unblocked many projects, municipal weakness still impedes full delivery. It reiterated that constitutional constraints limit direct national takeover of municipal water functions, requiring careful legal navigation before deeper interventions can be executed.

The Committee observed that municipalities frequently divert water revenue to other expenses, substantially weakening water service operations. The Department agreed that poor leadership and failure to ring-fence revenue are major contributors to declining municipal performance. It expressed support for stronger enforcement measures and confirmed ongoing engagements with Treasury to secure directives compelling municipalities to prioritise payment of water revenue.

Concerns were raised regarding the inability of water boards to collect directly from large water users in municipalities where billing systems have collapsed. The Department stated that it is already exploring mechanisms for water boards to collect directly, explaining that such models exist in other regions and could be expanded. It affirmed the need for structured reforms and highlighted new integrated arrangements, including special-purpose vehicles and concessions, are under consideration.

The Committee noted the continued escalation of municipal debt to water boards. The Department explained that the increase is partly due to interest accumulating on old debt. It also indicated that inconsistencies in reporting between current and aged debt categories may have contributed to misinterpretation. The Department committed to providing a detailed written breakdown and noted that the long-term solution lies in improving municipal performance, enforcing credit control, and restoring reliable water supply to ensure residents are willing to pay.

Fragmentation between DWS, COGTA, Treasury, and other departments was identified as a critical barrier to resolving the national water crisis. The Department confirmed that the President has convened a National Water Crisis Committee comprising key ministries, with the aim of developing a coordinated national action plan. Meetings of this committee are already underway, and the Department affirmed that it is committed to driving a unified, cross-departmental response.

Several observations were made regarding stalled or delayed mega projects and the limitations of municipalities acting as implementing agents despite lacking capacity. The Department reported notable improvements in unblocking projects and clarified that implementing agents are now assigned only after formal capacity assessments. Where municipalities fail, DWS is increasingly making use of water boards, districts, and other state entities through indirect grants and alternative implementation mechanisms.

The Committee emphasised the need for a joint session with COGTA to address local government failures affecting water services. The Department agreed that such engagement is long overdue and committed to participating in future joint meetings. The Committee also sought clarity on the release of the Blue Drop, Green Drop, and No Drop reports. The Department confirmed its intention to release the full Green Drop report and the Blue and No Drop progress reports at the end of March, pending the Minister's availability.

Concerns were expressed that programme-level expenditure did not correlate with performance, including instances where budgets were significantly spent while targets were only partially achieved. The Department responded that expenditure and performance do not always align linearly, as certain targets require minimal cost while others are resource intensive. It reported that its vacancy rate is approximately 4% and that most personnel budget has been utilised, with technical posts prioritised for filling. Delays in technical audits were attributed to limited internal capacity, though these are expected to be finalised by year-end.

Committee observations on the slow progress of Catchment Management Agencies (CMAs) were paired with the Department's confirmation that staff transfers to CMAs are nearing completion and executive appointments (CEOs) are either complete or awaiting Cabinet concurrence. With transitional arrangements ending, CMAs will now be permitted to fill outstanding vacancies and are expected to improve performance.

Region-specific issues, including bucket eradication delays in the Free State, wastewater treatment risks in Matjhabeng, and the unsustainable reliance on diesel to power major wastewater facilities, were highlighted. The Department confirmed that the service level agreement for Matjhabeng has been agreed to, including a payment commitment of R30 million per month which will be reviewed regularly as this amount is less that the court ordered amount of R70 million. However, significant leaks, effluent discharge risks, and power supply limitations persist. The Department committed to engaging the Ministry of Energy and Electricity to address these constraints, recognising that diesel reliance is not sustainable. Written updates on other Free State concerns will be submitted.

The Committee noted widespread procurement challenges and requested the establishment of framework contracts to reduce delays in replacing non-performing contractors. The Department confirmed that it is finalising such framework contracts, which will enable quicker appointment processes. It also noted that strict legal processes must be followed when terminating contracts, but ongoing efforts aim to streamline transitions to replacement contractors.

4. Recommendations

Having considered the briefing and responses provided by the Department, the Committee makes the following recommendations to the Minister:

4.1. That the Judge Ngoepe Inquiry Report on access to water and water use rights in the Middle Letaba Dam catchment be presented to the Committee within 14 days after the Minister has formally communicated the findings to the affected communities.

4.2. That the implementation of the National Water Action Plan be accelerated through sustained and coordinated collaboration among the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), National Treasury, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, and other relevant departments, with a consolidated joint recovery plan submitted to the Committee by 30 June 2026.

4.3. That a written submission be provided to the Committee within 14 days outlining the long-term plan for energising major pump stations and wastewater treatment facilities in Matjhabeng, particularly those currently dependent on diesel, including clear timelines and interdepartmental actions involving the energy sector.

4.4. That quarterly reporting be strengthened to provide more detailed project-level information, including progress updates, identified risks, financial trends, and clearly defined corrective action frameworks.

4.5. That a signed Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Vaal Central Water Board and Matjhabeng Local Municipality be submitted to the Committee within 14 days.

4.6. That a written confirmation be submitted to the Committee within 14 days detailing the assistance being provided to Maluti a Phofung Municipality with respect to its Budget Facility for Infrastructure (BFI) applications, including technical support arrangements and progress toward meeting funding requirements.

4.7. That a written confirmation be submitted to the Committee within 14 days indicating whether the projects listed for Mafube Municipality are linked to the Bucket Eradication Programme and, if not, when such interventions will be initiated. This should include project timelines and funding details for affected areas in the Free State Province.

4.8. That a comprehensive written explanation be submitted to the Committee within 14 days explaining why the reduction in municipal water services debt from R28 billion to R27 billion is reflected as a deteriorating trend. The submission should include a detailed breakdown of aged debt, current debt, interest accruals, recoveries, and any applicable adjustments.

4.9. That a written assessment be submitted to the Committee within 14 days on the impact of untreated effluent discharging into the Sand Spruit and subsequently into the Integrated Vaal River System in the Free State, including planned remedial actions and compliance measures.

5. Concluding remarks

The Committee welcomed the Department's responses but remains concerned about the continued deterioration of water services, escalating municipal debt, governance failures, and slow progress in key infrastructure projects. The Committee expects decisive implementation of interventions and will intensify oversight in the forthcoming quarter. Furthermore, the Committee noted with pride that, during this meeting, the Department responded to the 900th official question posed by the Committee—a significant milestone that marks a historic achievement in the Committee's oversight work since its establishment.

Report to be considered.

2. REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMTTEE ON WATER AND SANITATION ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE 10TH INTERNATIONAL WATER REGULATORS FORUM AND THE IWA WATER DEVELOPMENT CONGRESS, BANGKOK, THAILAND FROM 8-12 DECEMBER 2025

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The report provides the outcomes and the policy implications arising from Committee's participation in the 10th International Water Regulators Forum, held during the International Water Association (IWA) Water Development Congress and Exhibition in December 2025 in Bangkok, Thailand. The report highlights issues of direct relevance to the Committee's oversight, legislative, and policy review responsibilities, with particular focus on regulatory reform, institutional independence, and sector resilience.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The 10th International Water Regulators Forum brought together regulators, legislators, policymakers, and development partners to deliberate on the theme *Building Effective and Adaptive Water and Sanitation Regulatory Frameworks for a Resilient Future*. Discussions took place against the backdrop of increasing service delivery pressures driven by climate change, ageing infrastructure, financial sustainability challenges, and governance constraints. South Africa's participation was informed by its ongoing water sector reform agenda, including the establishment of an independent economic regulator for the water and sanitation sector.

3. KEY ISSUES OF RELEVANCE TO THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE

3.1. Regulatory Reform and Parliamentary Oversight

South Africa's parliamentary contribution underscored that effective regulation requires sustained political and legislative support. Deputy Minister Isaac Sello Seitlholo MP emphasised that reform must be approached as a long-term institutional process, noting that *"reform is not easy, but it is necessary — progress requires political will, accountability, and shared purpose."* This insight is particularly relevant to the Committee's mandate to oversee the implementation of reform legislation, monitor institutional performance, and ensure that reform objectives translate into service delivery improvements.

3.2. Independence and Accountability of Economic Regulation

The Forum reaffirmed that regulatory independence is a cornerstone of credible economic regulation. South African representatives highlighted the distinction between independence established in statute and independence realised in practice. The Committee's role in scrutinising appointments, funding arrangements, performance reporting, and governance structures was recognised as critical to ensuring that regulatory institutions operate without undue interference while remaining accountable to Parliament.

3.3.Climate Risk, Infrastructure Stress, and Legislative Readiness

Discussions at the Forum highlighted climate change as a systemic risk to water and sanitation services. Committee Members contributed perspectives shaped by domestic droughts, flooding events, and infrastructure failures. These discussions reinforced the importance of legislative readiness and policy coherence in enabling timely regulatory responses during crises. The Committee's oversight role is central to ensuring that laws and policies remain responsive to emerging climate risks and support long-term resilience rather than reactive crisis management.

3.4.Data, Information Systems, and Evidence-Based Regulation

A strong emphasis was placed on the need for reliable, real-time data to support regulatory decision-making. Participants highlighted that weak data systems undermine oversight, tariff setting, and performance benchmarking. This issue is directly relevant to the Committee's oversight of the Department of Water and Sanitation and associated entities, particularly in relation to the adequacy of information systems and reporting frameworks.

3.5. Public Trust and Inclusive Governance

South African parliamentary engagement reinforced the importance of public legitimacy in regulatory decisions, particularly relating to tariffs, service standards, and access to water and sanitation services. The Portfolio Committee was identified as a key platform through which community concerns can be elevated into regulatory and policy processes, strengthening transparency and accountability across the sector.

4. OUTCOMES RELEVANT TO THE COMMITTEE

The Forum concluded that resilient water and sanitation systems depend on strong regulatory institutions, credible data, adaptive frameworks, and sustained political leadership. There was broad consensus that regulatory models must be tailored to national contexts and supported by effective parliamentary oversight. South Africa's contributions were recognised as practical examples of how legislatures can support regulatory reform in complex and constrained environments.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMITTEE PROGRAMME AND OVERSIGHT

The outcomes of the Forum suggest the need for continued committee engagement on regulatory reform implementation, including scheduled briefings from the Department of Water and Sanitation and the economic regulator. The Committee may also consider thematic oversight visits focusing on infrastructure condition, regulatory compliance, and climate risk preparedness. These actions would support the Committee's constitutional mandate to ensure effective governance and service delivery in the water and sanitation sector.

6. INVITATION TO THE 11TH INTERNATIONAL WATER REGULATORS FORUM (GLASGOW)

The International Water Association (IWA), as convener of the International Water Regulators Forum, formally extended an invitation to participating countries for continued engagement at the 11th International Water Regulators Forum, scheduled to be held in Glasgow, Scotland, from 04-08 October 2026. This invitation was explicitly extended to South Africa's parliamentary leadership, including the Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation, in recognition of the Committee's active oversight role and the substantive contribution made by Committee Members during the 10th Forum in Bangkok.

The invitation reflects international acknowledgment of the Committee's leadership in water and sanitation sector governance, regulatory reform, and institutional oversight. Participation in the 11th Regulators Forum would provide the Portfolio Committee with an opportunity to engage directly with

international parliamentary peers, regulators, and development partners on emerging regulatory responses to climate risk, infrastructure sustainability, and financial resilience. Attendance would also allow the Committee to share South Africa's evolving regulatory experience and to strengthen peer-learning exchanges that support its oversight and legislative mandate.
Consideration may therefore be given to this invitation within the Committee's international engagement programme, subject to parliamentary processes and approvals, as part of strengthening informed oversight of water and sanitation regulation in South Africa.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

South Africa's participation in the 10th International Water Regulators Forum highlighted the central role of Parliament, and specifically the Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation, in advancing effective and adaptive regulation. The Forum reaffirmed that while reform is complex and politically demanding, sustained parliamentary oversight, legislative clarity, and institutional support remain essential to building a resilient and equitable water and sanitation sector.

The Committee commends the Water Research Commission receiving the Resource Recovery Cluster Best Practice Award 2025 together with its Senior Research Manager, Mr. Jay Bhagwan who received the 2025 IWA Water and Development Practice Award for his leadership in advancing non-sewered sanitation innovation through the South African Sanitation Technology Enterprise Programme (SASTEP).

- The Committee should continue to strengthen its oversight of water and sanitation regulatory institutions, with particular attention to safeguarding regulatory independence while enforcing accountability for performance and outcomes.

- The Committee should prioritise scrutiny of funding and capacity arrangements for the economic regulator to ensure durability and effectiveness. Greater focus should be placed on reviewing the adequacy of legislative and policy frameworks in addressing climate resilience, including the integration of adaptive and nature-based solutions.

- The Committee is further encouraged to engage with the Department and regulators on improving data systems and transparency, enabling evidence-based oversight and informed tariff and service delivery decisions.

- The Committee should continue to facilitate inclusive public engagement processes to ensure that regulatory reforms maintain public trust and contribute to equitable service delivery.

- The Committee recommends that the Committee Secretariat requests the Parliamentary Library to subscribe to the International Water Association journals to ensure that the members of the Committee have access to latest publications on water and sanitation issues.

Report to be noted

3. Report of the Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation on the Consolidated Annual Reports of Water Boards for the 2024-25 Financial Year, dated 28 April 2026

The Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation (the Committee), having considered the consolidated annual reports for water boards for the 2024/25 financial year on the 03-17 March 2026, reports as follows.

1. Introduction

Water Boards (WBs) are established by the Minister of Water and Sanitation in terms of section 28 of the Water Services Act, 1997 (Act No. 107 of 1997). The primary activity of a water board is to provide water services (bulk and reticulation) to other water services institutions (water services authorities, water service providers, and water service committees) within its service area as outlined in section 29 of the Water Services Act, 1997. The Minister of Water and Sanitation is a shareholder and executive authority for water boards and has the mandate to appoint the Board and to provide oversight management.

Water boards are classified as schedule 3B public entities in terms of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), 1999 (Act No. 1 of 1999). Section 55(1)(d) of the PFMA requires the Accounting Authority for a public entity to submit annual report and financial statements within five (5) months of the end of the financial year to the Executive Authority (Minister of water and sanitation) responsible for that public entity. Section 55(3) of the PFMA requires that the Accounting Authority must submit the annual report and audited financial statements to the relevant Executive Authority through the Accounting Officer of a Department, for tabling in Parliament. The Department of water and sanitation tables the Annual Reports of the Water Boards to Parliament during the second week of December each year. The reports for the 2024/25 financial year were tabled on the 05 December 2025.

There are seven water boards spread across the country. The water boards collectively employed 6 827 employees in 2024/25 financial year. These Boards differ significantly in scale, reach, and institutional history, with several having undergone recent restructuring in line with national reforms. Amatola Water (AW), established in 1997, serves the Eastern Cape and employs 375 people. Its head office is located in East London. As a medium-sized Water Board, its operations are focused exclusively within one province. Lepelle Northern Water (LNW), one of the older Water Boards established in 1960, operates solely in Limpopo. With a staff complement of 372 and a head office in Polokwane, it has a long-standing operational footprint in the province. Magalies Water (MW), headquartered in Rustenburg, is a multi-provincial Water Board serving the Northwest, Limpopo, and Gauteng provinces. It employs 678 staff members, comprising 69% male and 31% female employees. In recent restructuring processes, Magalies Water also absorbed parts of the former Sedibeng and Bloem Water Boards following their disestablishment, expanding both its service area and operational responsibilities. Overberg Water (OW), based in Somerset West, serves only the Western Cape province. Established in 1993, it is one of the smaller entities, employing 106 staff members.

Rand Water (RW) is both the largest and the oldest Water Board listed, established in 1903. With a workforce of 3,557, it supplies water across Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Northwest, and the Free State. Its head office is located in Glenvista. The organisation's scale and multi-provincial mandate reflect its historic and strategic role in South Africa's water sector. Vaal Central Water (VCW), one of the most recently established Water Boards (formed in 2022), emerged from the disestablishment of the former Sedibeng Water and Bloem Water Boards. Its jurisdiction covers the Northern Cape, Free State, and Northwest provinces, and it employs 653 people (64% male, 36% female). The head office is situated in Bloemfontein. As part of the restructuring process, elements of the disestablished Sedibeng and Bloem Water operations were redistributed between VCW and MW to optimise regional service delivery. Finally, uMngeni-uThukela Water (UUW), established in 2023, was formed through the disestablishment of the former uMhlathuze Water Board and transfer of its assets to Umngeni water. It now serves the KwaZulu-Natal province exclusively and employs 1,085 staff members. Its head office is in Pietermaritzburg. As the newest Water Board, it reflects ongoing efforts by the national government to consolidate and strengthen water service institutions.

2. Overview of the 2024/25 Performance

The water boards' performance during the year under review is distinguished by the establishment and operationalisation of the Emfuleni Local Municipality and Zanzibar Water Project Special Purpose Vehicles by Rand Water, following approval by the Minister of

Finance. Further notable achievements include progress in sustainable energy generation through the waste-to-energy initiative at the Darvil Wastewater Treatment Works, as well as uMngeni-uThukela Water's ongoing technical support to eThekwini in strengthening the operation and maintenance of its wastewater treatment facilities. These two water boards that are listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) (RW and UUW) also maintained strong credit ratings, underscoring their financial stability. In addition, major infrastructure investment was unlocked through Budget Facility for Infrastructure approvals, with R1.8 billion allocated to MW for Phase 2 of the Pilanesberg Bulk Water Supply Scheme to secure potable water for municipalities in the North West, and a further R1.9 billion granted for the Moretele North Klipvoor Bulk Water Supply Scheme to enhance water supply to communities in the North West and Limpopo provinces.

The consolidated performance of water boards shows a broadly improved performance over the year under review with water boards achieving 86% on average of their planned targets as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative Overall Performance of Water Board (%)			
Water Boards	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
Amatola	52	63	73
Vaal Central	58	63	74
Lepelle	63	79	90
Magalies	93	90	90
Overberg	87	80	88
Rand Water	92	90	90
Umngeni - Uthukela	92	96	98
TOTAL (average)	**77**	**80**	**86**

Overberg Water Board received a clean audit opinion (unqualified with no findings) while the rest received unqualified audit opinions with findings, signalling progress in governance and financial management. The water boards generated R43.7 billion consolidated revenue, with Rand Water generating R22.9 billion followed by uMngeni-uThukela Water with R7.65 billion. The water boards collectively reported R6.1 billion in capital investments for the year under review as reflected in Table 2.

Table 2. Water Boards Capital Expenditure (CAPEX) (R'000)			
Water Boards	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
Amatola	R57 000	R21 575	R16 000
Vaal Central	R85 112	R145 094	R118 000
Lepelle	R69 700	R62 500	R61 000
Magalies	R387 347	R1 095 947	R1 006 000
Overberg	R25 119	R2 000	R3 000
Rand Water	R1 410 000	R1 460 000	R1 998 000
Umngeni - Uthukela	R1 802 000	R2 839 000	R2 899 000
TOTAL CAPEX	**R3 838 301**	**R5 628 140**	**R6 103 025**

Regarding service quality and reliability, the water boards reported improvement in water quality while water losses and reliability of supply stagnated. It is worth noting that only Amatola and Magalies water boards failed to meet some of their SANS 241 targets with Amatola failures linked to operational risks (i.e. pipe breaks, faulty valves and settling tank design) and Magalies (turbidity and microbiological non-conformances linked to raw water quality and dosing/equipment issues). Reliability of supply positively stagnated at sector level, with uMngeni-uThukela (gasket failure, delayed high-voltage cable) and Vaal Central (asbestos/terrain-related pipeline fragility and Eskom outages) missing their reliability targets while Amatola improved from the previous year.

The water boards water losses stagnated from 2023/2024 to 2024/2025 with Amatola (17.9%), Vaal Central (18%), Overberg (regressed to 23.9%) remaining in the red while Rand (4.4%), uMngeni-uThukela (3.5%), Magalies (improved to 4.7%) and Lepelle Northern (5%) met their internal targets.

3. Overview of the Municipal Debts to the Water Boards and the Debt Collection Programme

The municipal debt to water boards has tripled since 2018, reaching around R25.5 billion by December 2025, materially constraining liquidity, capex execution and raw-water payments across the system, refer to Table 3. The total top 17 arrears amounted to R20.4 billion, of which

R17.86 billion is >120 days old. It is worth noting that the overall debt was reduced by R4.4 billion from January 2025 while the current account was reduced by R3.6 billion to R782 million. This is indicative of the improvement in payment of the current accounts by municipalities following the withholding of equitable share initiative.

Table 3. Municipalities Debt owed to Water Boards as of 31 December 2025 (R'000)			
Water Board	**Municipality**	**Balance (R'000)**	**Current (R'000)**
Vaal Central Water	Matjhabeng LM	9 127 415	130,049
Rand Water	Emfuleni LM	1 887 690	180,735
Rand Water	Merafong LM	1 489 680	38,952
Umngeni–Uthukela	King Cetshwayo	1 302 135	11,934
Rand Water	Randwest City LM	963,13	43,016
Umngeni–Uthukela	Msunduzi LM	909,23	94,369
Rand Water	Goven Mbeki	865,25	55,483
Umngeni–Uthukela	Ugu DM	634,91	20,613
Vaal Central Water	Mangaung LM	551,01	94,328
Rand Water	Victor Khanye LM	505,93	8,978
Magalies Water	Ngaka-Modiri DM	420,77	13,255
Magalies Water	Maquassi Hills LM	390,53	6,580
Amatola Water	Amathole DM	374,35	15,371
Umngeni–Uthukela	eThekwini Metro	313,43	26,131
Magalies Water	Thabazimbi LM	247,35	3,899
Lepelle Northern	Sekhukhune DM	241,09	17,116
Lepelle Northern	Mopani DM	183,39	21,124
TOTAL		**20 407 290**	**781,933**

The Matjhabeng water debt to Vaal Central Water (VCW) remains at more than R9 billion with R8.6 billion being over 120 days old. This is because Matjhabeng pays far below the cost (when it pays) despite multiple intergovernmental relations (IGR) processes, Section 216 (2) of the Constitution on treasury control which relates to equitable-share withholdings requests (Dec 2024–Jul 2025) and debt-relief invitations. These arrears remain structurally high and threaten short-term solvency of VCW if this trend persist.

The Department of Water and Sanitation has negotiated with municipalities to enter into a payment agreement to settle their water debts to water boards. This initiative has enabled some municipalities to pay while others failed to enter into these agreements citing lack of budget.

Table 4. List of 47 municipalities submitted for equitable share withholding					
Water Board	Municipality	Dec 2024	March 25	July 2025	Dec 2025
Magalies Water	Thabazimbi LM	X	-	-	-
	Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati	-	X	X	-
	Ngaka Modiri Molema	-	X	X	X
	Maquassi Hills	-	-	X	-
Vaal Central Water	Matjhabeng LM	X	X	X	X
	Nala LM	-	X	X	-
	Phokwane LM	-	X	X	X
	Dikgatlong LM	-	-	X	--
	Khai-Ma LM	-	-	X	X
	Kopanong LM	X	X	X	X
Rand Water	Victor Khanye LM	X	-	-	-
	eMfuleni LM	-	X	X	X
	Lesedi LM	-	X	X	-
	RandWest LM	-	X	X	X
	Merafong LM	X	X	X	X
	Ngwathe LM	-	X	-	-
	Govan Mbeki	-	-	X	X
Lepelle Northern Water	Sekhukhune DM	-	-	X	-
	Greater Letaba	-	-	X	-
	Vhembe DM	-	-	X	-
uMngeni-uThukela Water	Msunduzi LM	-	-	-	X
	Ugu DM	-	-	-	X

X – denotes submission

In cases where there is no payment agreement the Water boards backed by DWS and National Treasury have escalated equitable-share withholdings across a cohort of 47 municipalities (per quarter in 2024/25), alongside credit-control steps and the standardisation of bulk service level agreements (SLAs) refer to Table 4. However, compliance and payment discipline remain uneven. VCW instituted parallel measures such as a payment plans, Water Services Act, 1997, Section 4(5) restrictions, legal attachments, prepaid metering advocacy but notes limited behavioural change by major defaulters (mainly Matjhabeng LM) to date.

4. Audit Outcomes of Water Boards (2021/22 – 2024/25)

The audit outcomes of water boards over the four-year period reflect varying levels of financial reporting quality, compliance with legislation, and effectiveness of internal controls across the sector. In 2021/22, the performance was mixed. Magalies Water achieved an unqualified audit opinion with no findings, indicating strong financial management and compliance practices. In contrast, Bloem Water (before disestablishment), Umgeni Water, Rand Water, Lepelle Northern Water, and Overberg Water received unqualified opinions with findings, signalling that while their financial statements were fairly presented, deficiencies existed in areas such as performance reporting and compliance. Amatola Water and Mhlathuze Water obtained qualified opinions with findings, demonstrating material misstatements or non-compliance that affected certain reporting areas. Sedibeng Water (before disestablishment) did not submit an annual report for the year, resulting in an adverse compliance outcome.

A notable shift occurred in 2022/23, when all audited water boards received unqualified opinions with findings. This included Vaal Central Water, Umgeni Water, Rand Water, Magalies Water, Amatola Water, Overberg Water, Lepelle Northern Water, and Mhlathuze Water. While this uniform outcome reflects improved financial reporting relative to the prior year, the presence of findings across all entities indicates persistent weaknesses in internal control environments, performance information systems, and compliance management.

In 2023/24, the sector maintained a similar pattern, with Amatola Water, Lepelle Northern Water, Overberg Water, Rand Water, Magalies Water, Vaal Central Water, and the newly consolidated uMngeni-uThukela Water all receiving unqualified audit opinions with findings. This demonstrates that although the boards were generally able to prepare credible financial statements, significant deficiencies remained unresolved—particularly in procurement processes, performance reporting reliability, and preventative controls.

By 2024/25, some improvement is evident. Overberg Water achieved an unqualified audit opinion with no findings, representing the most notable advancement in audit performance and signalling strengthened governance, internal controls, and compliance across its operations. However, all other water boards assessed continued to receive unqualified opinions with findings, indicating that systemic weaknesses persisted across much of the sector. No disclaimed opinions were issued during the reporting cycle, and no entity failed to submit an annual report after 2021/22 which is commendable.

Overall, the audit trajectory demonstrates moderate but uneven improvement across water boards. While financial statement preparation has stabilised at unqualified levels for most entities, the continued prevalence of compliance and control findings highlights the need for stronger governance, improved supply chain management, and more effective oversight frameworks.

5. Irregular, Fruitless and Wasteful Expenditure (IFWE)

Irregular expenditure across the water boards is closely linked to persistent weaknesses in supply chain management (SCM), contract oversight, and procurement controls, and these governance failures are often reflected in the entities' operational ratios—particularly creditor-days performance – refer to Table 5 for details on IFWE. Magalies Water, with extremely high creditors days of 524, demonstrates how extended delays in settling supplier invoices correlate with procurement non-compliance, including misapplication of Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act (PPPFA), 2000, 80/20 rules, incorrect tender-point calculations, and continued spending on contracts previously flagged as irregular.

Similarly, Amatola Water's critical creditors days of 431 and low current ratio (0.70) align with its irregular expenditure caused by non-compliance with SCM requirements and the use of expired contracts, indicating severe liquidity and process-management constraints. Overberg Water, despite firmer liquidity and significantly lower creditors days of 57, still incurred irregular expenditure due to awarding a contract to a supplier later found to have committed procurement-related fraud. At UUW, irregular expenditure stemmed from procurement and contract-management failures, although its creditors days of 156 show less severe delays than Magalies and Amatola but still reflect pressure in settling obligations. VCW's irregular expenditure also arose from SCM non-compliance, but its creditors days of only eleven (11) indicate comparatively efficient payment cycles and stronger financial discipline despite procedural lapses.

Table 5. Water Boards Irregular, Fruitless and Wasteful Expenditure				
Water Boards Irregular, Fruitless and Wasteful Expenditure (R'000)				
Water Board	**Irregular Expenditure**		**Fruitless & Wasteful Expenditure**	
	2025	**2024**	**2025**	**2024**
Amatola	R910 976	R835 569	R104 891	R104 602
Vaal Central	R347 089	R281 903	R306 504	R443 618
Lepelle	R0	R0	R0	R516 300
Magalies	R713 944	R392 860	R3 431	R2 372
Overberg	R262 890	R0	R625 982	R131 529
Rand Water	R1 676 861	R741 214	R713	R74
Umngeni - Uthukela	R5 842 107	R4 807 308	R155 242	R1 547 955
TOTAL	**R9 753 867**	**R7 058 854**	**R1 196 763**	**R2 746 450**

Fruitless and wasteful expenditure across these entities is similarly intertwined with their creditor-management profiles, where delayed payments frequently trigger interest, penalties, and litigation costs. Magalies Water's very high creditor-days figure of 524 is consistent with its fruitless and wasteful expenditure linked to interest on late VAT payments and substantial overpayments to suppliers identified only after engineering assessments. Amatola Water's 431 creditor days likewise correspond to its fruitless expenditure arising from interest on late VAT settlements and litigation-related payments, illustrating how prolonged payment backlogs directly convert into financial losses.

VCW's substantial fruitless and wasteful expenditure particularly the large interest costs on overdue raw water accounts stands in contrast to its low 11-day creditor cycle, suggesting that while VCW pays other suppliers timeously, long-standing arrears with DWS and Water User

Associations remain unresolved and continue to generate interest. UUW's 156 creditor days contextualize its penalties for late construction-project payments and inherited liabilities from Mhlathuze Water, further showing that payment inefficiencies remain a structural challenge. Overberg Water's fruitless and wasteful expenditure, arising mainly from late payments and vehicle-damage penalties, is consistent with its moderate 57-day creditor profile. Overall, there a clear relationship between poor creditor-management performance and the scale of fruitless and wasteful expenditure across most water boards.

In conclusion, the performance of the water boards remains constrained by rising municipal debt now at R25.5 billion which continues to undermine their financial sustainability and limits their borrowing capacity. These fiscal pressures are compounded by capacity challenges within some water boards to effectively plan and implement capital projects. While fruitless and wasteful expenditure has shown a welcome decline, the increase in irregular expenditure to R3.1 billion reflects ongoing weaknesses in financial controls. Collectively, these factors highlight the need for strengthened governance, improved municipal payment discipline, and enhanced project management capabilities to ensure the long-term viability and effectiveness of the water boards.

6. Observations

The Portfolio Committee having considered the presentations by the Department and water boards made the following observations:

Across all engagements, Members consistently observed that while Water Boards presented clean audits, improved governance frameworks, and evidence of financial recovery, these reported achievements did not match the lived experiences of communities. Members highlighted that residents across the country continue to suffer from unreliable water supply, poor water quality, and prolonged outages. They emphasised that despite strong bulk supply performance by Water Boards, failures at municipal level particularly within reticulation systems negate these successes and leave communities without functional water services. In fact, members noted with serious concern the bulk–reticulation misalignment where bulk projects are completed and capable of higher throughput, but municipalities lack ready reservoirs, pressure management, metering, or secondary pipelines to convey water to households.

Members also reflected on the constitutional obligation to provide basic water services, noting that clean audits and sound financial reporting cannot be celebrated while households continue to go without water for days or weeks. The Committee stressed that the purpose of oversight is not only to acknowledge administrative compliance, but also to ensure that the constitutional right to water is realised in practice across the Republic.

Members expressed serious concern about persistent issues of debt and non-payment by municipalities such as Matjhabeng, Maquassi Hills, and Ngaka Modiri Molema. They noted that these municipalities repeatedly fail to honour repayment agreements, continue to accumulate arrears, and often default on service level agreements. This chronic non-payment directly undermines the financial sustainability of Water Boards, many of which are owed hundreds of millions of rands.

The Committee further observed that strained relationships between certain municipal councils and Water Boards have worsened service delivery challenges, especially in cases such as Ngaka Modiri Molema and Maquassi Hills LM, VCW and Matjhabeng LM. Members urged the Department to intervene urgently, arguing that long-standing disputes have contributed to water shortages, service interruptions, and poor coordination across the water value chain.

In addition, Members expressed strong opposition to the premature handover of large wastewater treatment works (WWTWs), particularly the upgraded facility (Thabong WWTW) in Matjhabeng. They argued that municipalities with severe capacity deficits, governance weaknesses, and financial distress are unable to manage such infrastructure effectively. Members insisted that handing over multimillion-rand upgrades without ensuring capacity will inevitably lead to collapse. Consequently, the Department committed that it will not proceed with the handover before appropriate capacity is established at Matjhabeng and the Committee would be kept abreast of this issue.

Members noted that although both Lepelle Northern Water and Overberg Water displayed signs of improved performance, several structural risks remain. For Overberg Water, financial sustainability continues to depend on grant funding, raising concerns about its ability to operate independently in the long term. Lepelle Northern Water, while showing revenue growth, still faces dangerous levels of non-payment from municipalities, and Members observed that its cash reserves have declined significantly over several years. In response, the Board explained that its revenue performance is not primarily driven by tariff income but is significantly affected by a substantial reduction in grant funding, which declined from R600 million to R300 million. This decrease has had a direct impact on overall revenue levels.

The Board also provided an overview of the progress and challenges faced by the Northern Water Board since assuming its mandate in 2021. They highlighted that, despite initial governance shortcomings, the board has made significant strides—achieving two consecutive years with zero irregular expenditure, finalising the Nandoni–Nsami pipeline, and improving its financial position from R11 million to R1.2 billion. With a board composed mostly of women, their leadership has been commended for efficiency, transparency, and strong supply chain controls, resulting in no audit findings. The board reminded the Committee that while it ensures adequate water supply, the responsibility for final delivery to households lies with the Water Services Authority. Encouragingly, stakeholder surveys have reflected notable improvements in this regard. Addressing the issue of non-revenue water, the board outlined several strategies to curb losses caused by illegal connections, particularly in the Capricorn and Mopani District Municipalities. These strategies include the installation of zonal meters to better manage water balance and track revenue flows, as well as the establishment of a joint operations committee with the South African Police Service and State Security to monitor and respond to illegal connections. However, the board acknowledged that illegal connections remain persistent, requiring ongoing patrols and continuous repair work.

Staffing increases at Lepelle Northern Water also prompted questions, with Members seeking clarity on whether new posts were operationally necessary at a time of revenue pressures. Members further noted that Lepelle Northern Water's positive trajectory does not erase its historic governance failures, including the highly publicised Giyani Water Project, and they questioned whether the affected communities are finally receiving water as promised. In responding to the Committee's question, the Department explained that it has intensified its interventions in both the Giyani and Mametja Sekororo Regional Water Schemes, largely due to capacity constraints within the affected municipalities. These interventions are aimed at stabilising service delivery and ensuring that critical water infrastructure projects continue without disruption. The Department further reported significant progress in the Nandoni–

Nsami Project, which supports the broader Giyani Water Services initiative. The system is currently operational and supplying 15 megalitres of water per day. As part of the continued rollout, Phase 2A of the reticulation project—funded at R1.2 billion will bring water services to 15 villages. Ongoing coordination between the Department and the Mopani District Municipality is intended to ensure that both bulk and reticulation components proceed in alignment. In addition, the department outlined the project timelines tied to the Municipal Infrastructure Grant and the broader Giyani programme. The current phase focuses on regulating water supply to 16 of the 31 targeted villages. Tenders are expected to be issued by June, with contractors anticipated to be on site by August or September. Phase 1, which covers 15 villages, is projected for completion between late 2028 and early 2029. Planning for Phase 2B—intended to complement Phase 2A—is already underway, with funding scheduled for 2027. The total project cost is estimated at approximately R2.5 billion through the Water Services Infrastructure Grant. The board further noted that the drop in operating surplus is largely due to rising operational expenses, particularly following the inclusion of EPWP personnel and the hiring of additional staff to support schemes in the Sekhukhune region. In addition, emphasised that none of these appointments were made at head office level; instead, all increases were directed toward frontline operational teams to strengthen service delivery where it is most needed.

Infrastructure risks at Overberg Water were also raised. Members recognised that plants operating at or near full capacity, combined with ageing infrastructure and increasing drought conditions in the Western Cape, create significant long-term vulnerabilities. They stressed the need for future planning and investment to maintain system resilience.

Members observed that although Amatola Water has begun stabilising after years of poor governance, financial viability remains a major risk. They expressed concern about slow progress in addressing audit findings, especially those related to information technology controls. Members also noted that Amatola Water's ageing infrastructure requires substantial capital investment, and that long-standing staff disputes and disciplinary processes continue to strain operations.

Regarding uMgeni-uThukela Water, Members raised deep concern about the recent valve failure at Nagle Dam, which resulted in severe water restrictions for thousands of households in eThekwini. Members questioned the initial explanations offered by the Board, expressing strong suspicion that the incident could have been the result of sabotage, given similar patterns observed elsewhere in the sector. They reiterated the need for an independent forensic investigation to determine whether the failure was mechanical or deliberate but subsequently agreed that the Board of uMgeni-uThukela should determine the best way forward on this matter and inform the Committee accordingly.

Members also scrutinised delays in the Mbizana project, questioning why the initial contractor—DWS's in-house construction unit—was unable to deliver, and how uMgeni-uThukela Water intends to prevent similar setbacks in future projects. Furthermore, an observation was made regarding powering water projects with diesel which is expensive. The UUW and DWS were encouraged to negotiate with ESKOM to expedite the installation of electricity to these projects, for example, the KwaXimba Package Plant.

Rand Water received commendation for strong financial performance, high capital expenditure, and its expanding regional footprint, including work on the African continent. However, Members remained worried that municipalities in Rand Water's service area continue to lose over half of their water through non-revenue water. They argued that increased abstraction is merely a temporary measure that does not address the underlying causes of water shortages, and they called for an integrated provincial strategy to reduce leaks and modernise municipal distribution systems.

Throughout the engagements, Members consistently reiterated their concern with the issue of non-revenue water and water losses. They observed that severe water losses across municipalities—often exceeding 50 percent—pose an existential threat to South Africa's water security. Members stressed that even the best-performing Water Boards cannot deliver reliable services if municipal systems leak, break down, or collapse.

Members also engaged extensively on the limitations of Section 63 interventions of the Water services Act, 1997. They noted that while the Department has attempted to intervene in failing municipalities, Section 63 is legally dependent on Section 139 of the Constitution relating to provincial interventions in local government, which are often delayed or not invoked at all. This creates a governance vacuum in which failing municipalities continue to deteriorate without meaningful oversight and intervention.

Another recurring concern was the fiscal sustainability of Water Boards, particularly rural ones, such as Amatola, Lepelle, Overberg and Magalies. Members remarked that the current PFMA-driven self-funding model disadvantages Water Boards operating in indigent dominated or rural areas, where municipal affordability is low and revenue collection is poor. They observed that the equitable share, which is intended to subsidise free basic services, is often misused by municipalities and does not reach water departments within these municipalities. As a result, Water Boards face increased financial pressure, particularly where they serve predominantly indigent communities.

Members commended the water boards for collectively achieving 86% of their planned targets, while cautioning that this performance must translate into tangible impacts and outcomes on the ground.

7. Recommendations

The Committee, having considered the briefing by the Department and the Water Boards, recommends to the Minister as follows:

7.1. That Rand Water, uMgeni-uThukela, Overberg, Vaal Central, Amatola and Magalies water boards should submit, within 14 days, a detailed report on its irregular expenditure including how much of it is for prior years, the nature of the irregular expenditure that is under dispute (where applicable), the nature of non-compliance, whether contracts or projects are affected, and whether any officials were held accountable for this irregular expenditure.

7.2. That the Department through the water boards should support municipalities in developing NRW reduction plans with annual measurable targets and collaborate with National Treasury to structure blended-finance NRW programmes under the BFI/Infrastructure Fund frameworks. A consolidated NRW progress report should be submitted to the Committee quarterly starting from third quarter 2026/27.

7.3. That the Department should submit a comprehensive legal brief clarifying its powers and limitations under Section 63 of the Water Services Act, 1997, its relationship with Section

139 of the Constitution, and available partial intervention tools such as SPVs and implementing agent models, including a list of municipalities that are currently under Section 63 and their respective progress.

7.4. That the Department should provide details on the municipalities whose equitable share allocations were withheld to pay for water debts, such as the amount paid from March 2025 – December 2025 per municipality and water board.

7.5. That all water boards with the exception of the Overberg, should submit within 14 days corrective action plans to address audit opinion findings.

Report to be considered.

4. REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON WATER AND SANITATION ON THE PARLIAMENTARY WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE CAUCUS, DATED 28 APRIL 2026

1. BACKGROUND

The Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation convened a special meeting on 25 February 2026 to engage with Members of Parliament (MPs) and sector experts from Zambia, Uganda, Liberia and the United States, as well as civil society organisations working across the water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) sector. The intent of this engagement was to deepen the Committee's understanding of global best practices in parliamentary leadership on WaSH, and to reflect on whether South Africa would benefit from establishing its own Parliamentary WaSH Caucus. The Committee recognised that such a caucus could serve as a mechanism for strengthening oversight, enabling collaboration across political parties, improving coordination with civil society, and sustaining focus on WaSH challenges that continue to affect communities across the country. The meeting was therefore designed both as a learning exchange and as an exploratory step toward potentially establishing a similar structure in the South African Parliament.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE STATE OF WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE IN SOUTH AFRICA

During the opening briefing, the Committee reflected on the persistent state of strain in South Africa's water and sanitation systems. It was emphasised that water and sanitation services remain uneven across the country, with rural communities still facing significant access gaps, deteriorating infrastructure and ongoing service failures. Poor water quality, inadequate sanitation facilities and slow progress on maintenance and upgrades have compounded health risks and undermined the dignity of many households.

The Committee highlighted that South Africa faces growing pressures from climate change, ageing infrastructure and widespread capacity weaknesses in many municipalities. These challenges have made it increasingly difficult to meet both national expectations and global commitments under targets such as Sustainable Development Goal 6. The Committee therefore acknowledged the need for stronger parliamentary oversight, more coherent leadership, improved budgeting practices and enhanced monitoring of service delivery. It was suggested that a dedicated WaSH Caucus could provide sustained attention to these issues and strengthen Parliament's ability to advocate for strategic, long-term improvements in the sector.

3. OVERVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE CAUCUS IN ZAMBIA, UGANDA, LIBERIA AND THE USA

The Committee received detailed presentations from legislators representing Zambia (Hon. Twaambo Mutinta), Uganda (Hon. Silas Aogon) and Liberia (Hon. Thomas Goshua), each explaining how their countries had developed parliamentary WaSH caucuses and how these structures contribute to improved governance and accountability. The Zambian delegation explained that their caucus was formally recognised within the National Assembly and had quickly grown to more than one hundred members. Their model emphasises non-partisan cooperation, capacity building for MPs, and close collaboration with civil society organisations that provide research, evidence and technical guidance. Zambia highlighted how the caucus has become a unifying force across parties and constituencies, enabling MPs to respond more effectively to the urgent water and sanitation challenges in their communities.

Uganda shared its experience of establishing a Parliamentary Forum on WaSH in 2012, initially informally and later formalised as its relevance and activities expanded. The Ugandan forum is firmly anchored on the four constitutional roles of MPs: legislation, representation, oversight and budget appropriation. Ugandan MPs described how the forum has successfully influenced sanitation policies, strengthened the protection of WaSH budgets, improved menstrual hygiene support in schools and convened regular national dialogues bringing together stakeholders from across government and civil society. They described WaSH as a “non-partisan human right” that transcends political divisions.

Liberia's delegation described a caucus established in 2016 that has become instrumental in increasing national budget allocations for WaSH institutions and in strengthening legislative oversight of the sector. Despite Liberia's heavy dependence on donor support, the caucus has helped Parliament assume greater ownership of WaSH priorities and has successfully advocated for increased domestic financing. Liberia has recently formalised a standing committee on WaSH to work alongside the caucus as part of a broader effort to improve sector governance.

The United States (Mr John Oldfied) presentation highlighted a different model, where the Congressional Global Water Security Caucus focuses largely on global water and sanitation issues rather than domestic delivery. The caucus, based in the House of Representatives, works across party lines to protect WaSH funding in foreign assistance budgets and engages closely with federal departments. The presenter noted that the United States is increasingly considering the need for a domestic water security caucus of its own, drawing inspiration from African countries that have already made significant progress in this area.

4. OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATIONS BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Civil society organisations (CSOs) played an important role in the engagement, offering insight into how non-governmental actors can strengthen parliamentary work on water and sanitation. CSO presenters explained that their involvement in WaSH caucuses in other countries is guided by principles of support rather than control. Their primary function is to provide technical expertise, accurate data, research findings and evidence-based policy analysis. They also serve as a bridge between Parliament and communities, ensuring that the needs and experiences of women, girls, persons with disabilities and rural communities reach decision-makers.

The organisations described how they often play a coordinating role, helping to manage meetings, support communication among MPs and ensure consistency in the caucus's work as parliamentary terms change. They provide oversight support by tracking commitments, monitoring budgets and identifying gaps in service delivery. They also help build the capacity of MPs to understand complex technical issues such as sanitation system management, sludge treatment and the underlying causes of infrastructure failures. Zambian civil society organisations in particular described how they had worked closely with their Parliament to formalise the caucus and had helped provide training and constituency insights that strengthened MPs' advocacy efforts.

5. QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Members of the Committee posed several questions during the discussion session, focusing on practical, operational and accountability aspects of establishing a WaSH caucus. One of the main questions concerned the potential overlap between a WaSH caucus and the Portfolio Committee itself. Presenters clarified that caucuses are intended to complement rather than duplicate formal oversight structures. Unlike portfolio committees, caucuses operate informally, allowing for more flexible engagement and the ability to bring together MPs from multiple committees and political parties. This flexibility enables more rapid response to emerging issues and creates space for broader collaboration.

Another major line of questioning concerned funding and sustainability. Presenters explained that caucuses generally operate at low cost, relying on modest member contributions, parliamentary staff support and technical assistance from civil society. They emphasised that caucuses are not meant to assume operational responsibilities or compete with government departments, but rather to enhance political leadership and accountability.

Members also asked how representation across rural and urban communities could be ensured. Presenters responded that caucuses are generally open to all MPs, making it possible to incorporate diverse voices and ensure that remote and marginalised communities are reflected in discussions and advocacy.

A further question concerned the potential for political manipulation of the caucus's work. Delegates stressed that clear terms of reference, multi-party leadership, transparency and strong non-partisan norms act as safeguards against such risks. Several presenters also described how WaSH, by its nature, tends to be a unifying issue because communities across all political constituencies face similar water and sanitation challenges.

The Committee also explored whether members of the Portfolio Committee should serve in leadership roles within the caucus. Presenters advised that while portfolio committee members should be free to participate, it is sometimes preferable for caucus leadership to come from outside the committee to avoid perceptions of conflict and to broaden collective ownership of the caucus.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

After considering the presentations and the discussions, the Committee concluded that there is significant value in exploring the establishment of a South African Parliamentary WaSH Caucus and makes the following recommendations:

6.1. The Committee recommends initiating a formal process to develop terms of reference for this structure, drawing on the models presented by Zambia, Uganda, and Liberia. These terms of reference should clearly define the caucus's scope, affirm its voluntary and non-partisan nature, outline its relationship with portfolio committees, and specify the role of civil society organisations in supporting its activities. Implementation will proceed in line with all required parliamentary approvals.

6.2. The Committee further recommends that the Secretariat prepare a comprehensive report to be submitted to the House Chairperson (Committees, Oversight & Public Participation) and to the Speaker of the National Assembly, seeking approval to begin formal consultations on the establishment of a multi-party parliamentary water caucus.

6.3. The Committee recommends that any future caucus prioritise capacity-building for MPs, regular engagement with civil society and sector experts, and strategic oversight of WaSH budgets and service delivery.

6.4. The Committee recommends strengthening regional cooperation and peer learning with caucuses in other African countries, and with international partners which is pivotal to South Africa's efforts on water and sanitation governance. In this regard, the Committee welcomes the invitation by the Uganda and Zambian Parliamentary Water Caucus and recommends that it should be included in the international cooperation and capacity building programme of the Committee.

Report to be considered.

5. REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONAL SERVICES ON ITS STUDY TOUR TO UNITED KINGDOM FROM 21 – 28 MARCH 2026, DATED 24 APRIL 2026.

The Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services (the committee), having undertaken a study tour to United Kingdom from 21 – 28 March2026, reports as follows:

1. INTRODUCTION

As part of its resolution taken at its Strategic Planning Session in September 2025, the committee resolved to undertake an international study tour to empower its members in order to effectively conduct oversight over the Department of Correctional Services (the Department). The purpose of the study tour included amongst others, engaging with the Parliamentary Committees of the UK which carry a similar mandate as the Committee. The Committee study tour was envisaged to be a benchmarking exercise with the aim of drawing lessons and strengthening Parliament's role in oversight. The Committee planned to engage with relevant Departments and Institutions within the Criminal Justice System.

2. OBJECTIVES AND KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR THE STUDY TOUR

Independence of the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services:

- The Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services (JICS) informed the Committee that it would be tabling a Bill dealing with the independence of the JICS later in 2026. The JICS has since been converted as a Government Component since April 2024.
- The Committee will, amongst others, look at the structure, functioning and the independence of similar structures in the UK such as the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO). In addition, to look at how such bodies are financed and their relationship with the Prison Services Department in the UK.

Overcrowding:

- The Department of Correctional Services is experiencing severe overcrowding, exceeding 50%, and the Committee aimed to identify best practices to reduce overcrowding in Correctional facilities.

Innovation:

- The Committee was interested to learn more about innovative devices such as electronic monitoring for remand detainees and stab-proof vests to ensure the safety of officials in correctional facilities.
- The Committee was also interested in the Secure Video-Call System implemented in UK prisons for inmates to call their families while in prison.

Parole and Probation:

- The Committee was interested to learn about the UK's parole and probation system which can significantly contributes to the reduction of prison population. The introduction and implementation of Halfway houses was another area of interest for the Committee.

Self-sufficiency Programmes:

- The Committee was interested to learn more about the UK's self-sufficiency programs through prison labour.

3. DELEGATION

The multi-party delegation of the committee comprised the following members:

Ms KA Ramolobeng: Chairperson/Leader of the Delegation (ANC).

Mr MM Sokopo (ANC).

Mr J Eengelbrecth (DA)

Mr MM Gasa (MKP).

Ms N Nolutshungu (EFF)

Support staff:

Mr S Mthonjeni: Committee Secretary.

Monday – 23 March 2026

4. SUMMARY OF THE VISITS

Day 1: The South African High Commission was the first site that the committee visited and interacted with during the study tour situated in London. The High Commission facilitates collaborations between the Republic of South Africa and the United Kingdom.

Mr Mamabolo the High Commissioner of south Africa based in London welcomed the multi-party delegation of the committee at the South African High Commission. In his welcoming remarks, he gave a brief overview of United Kingdom's Political and governance system. The UK is the founder of the five nations commonwealth countries. South Africa is positioned as a key gateway for business into Africa and remains a highly regarded partner on the continent. As a member of the G20, the country is pursuing development partnerships and is expected to play an active role in upcoming summit commitments. The relationship with the UK is particularly strong, reflected in significant foreign direct investment, robust trade levels, and the UK being a leading source of tourism to South Africa. Cooperation also extends to skills development and higher education, with ongoing discussions focused on expanding scholarship opportunities and strengthening partnerships between universities in both countries.

- In relation to South Africa and United Kingdom Bilateral Forum, the high Commissioner highlighted the following: The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (United Kingdom) are South Africa's most important bilateral partners, particularly in the areas of trade, investment, skills development, science, innovation, the Just Energy Transition, and tourism. These areas directly support South Africa's strategic priorities of promoting sustainable economic growth, alleviating poverty and the high cost of living, and building an ethical, capable developmental.

  South Africa's bilateral relationship with the United Kingdom is managed through the Bilateral Forum, which meets annually at Ministerial level. The upcoming edition will be held in the UK from 13 – 15 July 2026. The Deputy President last visited the United

Kingdom in 2024. While the Secretary of State for Foreign Commonwealth and Development Affairs visited South Africa in November 2024.

- *In relation to the political landscape,* the High Commissioner highlighted the following: In January 2026, British politics was defined by revelations of a significant collapse in support for the governing Labour Party, the continued rise of Reform of UK as a leading electoral force, and preparations for critical local and devolved elections in May 2026.

  The May 2026 local and regional elections are going to prove to be very trying for Labour. Labour faced a significant defeat in the Gorton and Denton by-election (26 February 2026). The contest — following the resignation of Andrew Gwynne, and the blocked-candidacy bid of Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham — saw the Green Party win their first Parliamentary seat and defeated Labour in what was always considered to be a safe seat. The contest has been described as a de facto referendum on the popularity of the Prime Minister.

- *With regard to Foreign policy on trade,* the UK faced a significant diplomatic challenge when it had to respond to US President Trump's January 17 announcement of a 10% tariff on the UK and six other European nations, following their castigation of his announcement of plans to seize Greenland. The Tariff question was further blurred when the 10% UK tariff negotiated with the United States of America became a 15% tariff after the US Supreme Court struck down the original imposition of tariffs by President Trump. The US President subsequently retaliated against the decision of the Court by re-enacting tariffs under a second piece of legislation and at a blanket rate of 15%. UK producers are unsure how this relates to the agreed 10% tariff of 2025.

  The March 2026 political landscape has been further complicated by the global instability caused by the United States' and Israel's attacks on Iran and the consequent retaliatory attacks by Iran on Gulf States as well as the Iranian closure of the Straits of Hormuz. The Prime Minster has retained control of the narrative surrounding the UK position forcing agreement for not entering the war with the USA, from the Conservatives and Reform UK. However, the longer the conflict goes on, the greater the economic impact will be on the United Kingdom and this will in turn still place great pressure on the Labour Party in the upcoming May elections.

- *In relation to electoral predictions,* the high Commissioner highlighted the following: Support for Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government continued to fall drastically throughout early 2026, with the January 2026 national voting intention polls for the next general election showing that Labour had slid 3% to just 17%, trailing both Reform UK and the Conservatives at 26% and 19% respectively, while the Liberal Democrats are at 16% and the Green Party at 15%.

  The loss of support for Labour has also translated into a loss of confidence in Party leader, Keir Starmer, within his organisation. A January 2026 poll found that 54% of Labour members believe a new leader must be in place before the 2029 general election. The poll shows that the Prime Minister's net approval has plummeted to the mid-40% range, matching historic lows for British Prime Ministers. Meanwhile, half of all voters now believe Starmer will be replaced as Prime Minister by the end of 2026.

  Reform UK has consistently led recent polls and is projected to win a potential parliamentary majority if an election were held in January 2026. The party is targeting significant breakthroughs in the upcoming May 2026 English local government and Welsh Senedd elections. March 2026 polls, however, show a luke-warm support in Scottish constituencies for Reform UK.

  The Conservatives on the other hand, under Kemi Badenoch, have shown signs of stabilising but remain in a fragile position as they compete with Reform UK for right-leaning voters. Meanwhile, the Green Party has surged among younger voters (18–24), reaching 38% support in that demographic.

- *In relation to foreign policy,* the high commissioner highlighted the following: with the attacks on Iran by the United States of America and Israel on 28 February 2026, there were concerns that US-UK relations were souring after the Prime Minister refused to allow the US to use UK bases for initial strikes against Iran and later pointed remarks to illustrate President Trump's displeasure with the UK. While President Trump had severely criticised all NATO states for not joining offensive action, a special place was reserved for the United Kingdom whereby President Trump regularly singled out both the United Kingdom and the Prime Minister, Sir Kier Starmer, for not joining the campaign in an offensive manner. This has led to calls for King Charles' state visit to the United States to be cancelled. This became even more apparent when President Trump had requested NATO members to join a campaign of escorting shipping through the Straits of Hormuz. The Prime Minister made it clear that this was not something the United Kingdom would entertain. Interesting developments have stemmed from this period on the domestic political front. The Prime Minister's Government came under heavy attack from both the Conservatives and Reform UK. Both parties immediately criticised the Labour Government for not joining the war against Iran. Within two weeks both the Conservatives and Reform UK had reversed their positions to mirror the approach taken by the Labour Government. The full impact of the Middle East conflict on domestic politics will increase in severity the longer it goes on undoing the economic progress which had begun to show positive signs

- In relation to Affrica the High Commissioner Highlighted the following: the Foreign Secretary, Yevette Cooper, has been focussing on a new model to tackle illegal migration from Horn of Africa during a February 2026 visit to Ethiopia. She argues that the UK must increase international partnerships with source and transit countries to tackle the drivers of migration and accelerate returns while including job creation partnerships backed by UK investment to tackle the economic drivers of illegal migration as well as stronger partnerships to tackle criminal smuggler gangs in the Horn of Africa and speeding up returns. Partnerships are at the heart of the UK's new Africa Approach, unlocking growth, investment, and opportunities on both sides.

5. Day 2: The Committee visited the United Kingdom Parliament

5.1 The formation of the UK Parliament is a bicameral structure consisting of the Monarch, the House of Commons, and the House of Lords. It functions as the supreme legislative body, responsible for passing laws, authorizing taxes, and scrutinizing government policy.

5.2 Components of the UK Parliament:

- **The Monarch:** Acts as the symbolic head of state. The King's role includes the State Opening of Parliament and providing Royal Assent to bills, though he holds no active political power.

- **House of Commons**: The lower but more powerful house, consisting of 650 elected Members of Parliament (MPs). Each MP represents a specific constituency. This is where the majority of legislative work occurs, and the party with a majority (326 seats) typically forms the government.

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5.3. The Committee's focus was on the prison system in the United Kingdom

There are 126 prisons in United Kingdom, with 109 managed by Government and 17 by Private Contractors. The UK calls this a mic system.

The UK has the highest imprisonment rate in the Western Europe, and it is only increasing. There are over 87,000. people in prisons in England and Wales. This is almost double the prison population in 1993. The prison population is expected to exceed 100,000 by 2029.

It is reported that 80% of the offending population is due to reoffending. The economic and social cost of reoffending is estimated to be around 18 Billion Euros a year and it is a major contributor to the size of the prison population.

The UK prisons are said to be currently operating in a state of crisis. They are overcrowded, often in bad and unsatisfactory conditions and they face issues such as a shortage of funds, gang operating with impunity, drones undermining security and alarming availability of drugs and overstretched, demoralized staff.

Access to purposeful and productive activities makes prisons safer and reduces reoffending on release. However, the current situation in the UK prisons hinders the provision of these activities, preventing prisoners from seeking support with mental health problems and addictions, or securing training and education opportunities that can prepare them for life outside.

There is an urgent need for wider prison reform, not least to reduce reoffending. The government is addressing some of the most urgent problems and other parliamentary committees scrutinizing these actions, they have focused on the leadership, governance and staffing of prisons.

The government must give a clear lead to ensure that prisons fulfill their primary purpose of preparing offenders for their release. In the hope that they will be able to lead stable and meaningful lives in future and not reoffend.

5.4 The Committee met with Ashly Fox a member of the opposition for the conservative party: Serving in the Select Committee on Justice (including Prisons)

The Portfolio Committee engaged with Ashley Fox, a member of the United Kingdom Justice Select Committee, who is a member of the conservative party to exchange insights on parliamentary oversight of justice systems. The discussion focused on prisons, probation, rehabilitation, and broader Correctional administration in both the United Kingdom and South Africa. The engagement aimed to identify best practices and shared challenges, particularly in relation to overcrowding, recidivism, and correctional oversight.

The UK Justice Select Committee is responsible for overseeing the Ministry of Justice and its associated entities, including Courts and legal services; Correctional facilities (prisons) and Probation services.

The Committee's primary role is to scrutinise government policy and administration. It does not have decision-making powers but may: conduct inquiries, call witnesses (including ministers) and independent inspectors and produce reports with recommendations. The Government departments are required to respond to Committee reports, indicating whether recommendations are accepted, partially accepted, or rejected this is similar to the South African Jurisdiction.

Mr Fox held a view that strong government majorities may limit the effectiveness of parliamentary oversight. In the UK context, the ruling party often dominates committee proceedings, which may reduce focus on systemic failures. He further mentioned that, as opposition members, they utilise committee platforms to challenge government performance, often by posing unscripted questions to ministers and officials during Committee meetings.

They have observed that there is limited public engagement on prison-related issues despite the fact he received about a 1000 emails a week as a member of Parliament. Prison conditions and rehabilitation rarely feature in public concerns. This lack of public pressure may contribute to limited political urgency in addressing correctional system deficiencies.

It was noted that both jurisdictions (South Africa and the UK) face significant challenges relating to overcrowded correctional facilities and high rates of reoffending. The engagement also highlighted that correctional systems often fail to rehabilitate offenders effectively, resulting in repeated cycles of incarceration.

Both jurisdictions are facing similar challenges concerning the smuggling of contraband. The traditional methods of contraband smuggling, including collusion with prison officials remain prevalent in both jurisdictions. However, a growing concern in the UK is the use of drones to deliver illegal items into correctional facilities. People fly drones into the open courtyard areas and drop of drugs to the inmates. The court yards are covered with nets made out of plastic material. The inmates often by-passes these nets by sending a first drone with flammable materials to burn the nets and then fly the second drone through the burnt holes. The increase sophistication and payload capacity of drones the UK is facing a limitation in counter measures such as signal blocking, due to interference with civilian medical devices. The drones are using a signal that is being used by medical equipment such as heart monitors and kidney dialyses. If their signal is blocked, the signal jammer also blocks all medical equipment within its range. This creates a serious challenge to surrounding communities. The criminal networks are very adaptive to new technologies as well as making it very difficult for the UK Government to deal with drones.

The Committee noted that similar threats may emerge in South Africa and require proactive mitigation strategies.

Many prisons in the UK are outdated, with some dating back to the Victorian era. While infrastructure remains a concern, it was emphasised that effective leadership plays a critical role in determining facility performance.

They UK Government is facing similar challenges like its South African counter parts which include difficulty in attracting and retaining skilled personnel for their prisons; Limited accountability mechanisms for underperforming officials and lack of consequence managements and also resource constraints impacting safety measures, including protective equipment.

Electronic monitoring (tagging) is utilised in the UK as part of offender management. The UK has introduced a range of minimum sentencing regimes recently to deal with overcrowding in their prisons. They have ensured that all offenders who committed low profile offence receive non-custodial sentences. These may include community service; rehabilitation activity requirement (substance abuse treatment, anger management, behavioural change interventions) curfew requirement; and probation supervision. While the tagging has potential benefits, concerns were raised regarding ineffective enforcement of compliance, weak oversight by private contractors and insufficient consequences for violations. The effectiveness of electronic monitoring is closely linked to the capacity of probation services, which are responsible for supervising prisoners post-release.

The UK has also introduced reintegration and release policies. A notable policy intervention in the UK is the prohibition of prisoner releases on Fridays. This measure addresses the challenge of released individuals being unable to access essential services over weekends as Government offices closes at 4pm on Friday's which often leads to homelessness and reoffending due to lack of support.

The policy ensures that released individuals can access government support services promptly and immediate and as such reliance by offenders on criminal networks is reduced.

The Committee noted this as a cost-effective intervention that could be considered in the South African context.

The UK has a mixed model of public and private correctional prisons, with companies such as G4S involved in prison management and prisoner transport. The UK also employs private companies to transport inmates to and from court. At times the offenders get to court late when transported by the private company leading to them missing their court appearances.

Performance across private facilities is reported to be inconsistent. There is ongoing debate regarding the role of private sector participation, with current political leadership showing a preference for increased public sector control as opposed to the conservative party which yields more on private sector.

Prison visits form an important part of parliamentary oversight work. However, operational constraints in the UK require advance notice, which may limit the ability to observe actual conditions within facilities. This has a potential of the prison management being prepared for members of parliament and end up cleaning.

The engagement highlighted the value of minimising advance notice where possible for meaningful oversight to occur. Both jurisdictions agreed that officials often prefer to show members of parliament the properly ran facilities within a prison as opposed to an unannounced visit where members get to get first hand information. The engagement encouraged facilitating direct engagement with inmates and officials during oversight visit as opposed to receiving briefings in a meeting style.

The member raised concerns regarding declining access to legal representation in the UK due to stagnant legal aid funding. This has resulted in fewer legal practitioners willing to undertake publicly funded cases, particularly in family and criminal law.

In summary the engagement provided valuable insights into the operation of the UK justice oversight system and highlighted shared challenges between the two countries. Addressing issues such as overcrowding, recidivism, and rehabilitation requires a coordinated approach involving effective oversight, adequate resourcing, and innovative policy interventions.

The Committee will consider these insights in its ongoing oversight of the Department of Correctional Services and related entities.

The engagement highlighted several key lessons:

- The importance of strengthening oversight mechanisms despite political dynamics
- The need for proactive responses to emerging technological threats
- The value of low-cost administrative reforms in improving reintegration outcomes
- The critical role of probation services in reducing recidivism.

5.5. The Committee together with Portfolio Committee on Social Development members from South Africa held a short joint engagement with members of the Home Affairs Committee from the UK Parliament.

In the UK, Prison oversight involves members organising regular visits to prisons to assess conditions, including inmate-to-official ratios and levels of overcrowding. Access to prisons can present challenges, particularly in high-security facilities where they house their category A-prisoners which are the most dangerous inmates and where they found issues such as staff involvement in smuggling contraband.

Overcrowding is largely driven by high rates of reoffending, highlighting gaps in rehabilitation efforts. In contrast, a Member of the UK Parliament indicated that countries like the Netherlands have successfully reduced incarceration rates, even closing several prisons due to effective rehabilitation strategies.

Social reintegration remains a significant challenge, as ex-offenders face stigma linked to criminal records, raising questions about employment opportunities post-release. To address contraband, strict search procedures for staff are implemented, alongside rehabilitation programmes aimed at reducing reoffending. Some inmates reportedly value these programmes to the extent that they prefer remaining within the system. Additional measures include efforts to phase out smoking in prisons, restrictions on vaping products (such as removing flavours), and limiting cannabis use strictly to medicinal purposes in the UK.

5.6. The Committee also had an opportunity to observe a committee meeting in action in one of the Committee Rooms at the UK Parliament during its visit.

The Committee observed the Justice Committee which was dealing with the subject matter: Rehabilitation and Settlement: ending the cycle of re offending. The following presenters were giving oral presentations to the Committee:

- Ms Nicole Davies (Regional Probation Director for Wales at His Majesty Prison and Probation Services)
- Mr Chris Edward (Regional Probation Director for Greater Manchester at His Majesty Prison and Probation Services)
- Mr Martin Jones (His Majesty Chief inspectorate at HM Inspectorate of Probation)

There are notable similarities in how UK Parliamentary Committees conduct their business, particularly in allowing members to pose questions while presenters respond under the direction of the Chairperson. However, a key observation is the strict adherence to time management, with committees ensuring that discussions do not exceed the allocated time for each agenda item.

6. Day 3: The Committee visited the UK Parliament and met with the House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee Members.

6.1. During the Engagement, the Committee received a report of the Select Committee on Justice in the House of Lords which highlighted the following regarding the UK Prison System:

- The UK Parliamentary Committee did an enquiry of the prions system in the UK and found the following:
  - A Lack of clarity about the Purpose of Prisons;
  - Lack of Public understanding about prisons;
  - Limited autonomy for prison governors;
  - A wholly inadequate prison staff requirement procedure;
  - Poor staff assessments and training arrangements;
  - Siloed working, with a lack of effective cross-agency collaboration within His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and with external partners;
  - Insufficient Purposeful Activity designed to reduce re-offending;
  - A sense of complacency and inadequate accountability arrangements through the prison services.
- In relation to the purpose of prisons, the Committee recognises that prisons serve multiple purposes including punishment, public protection, reducing reoffending, and rehabilitation but notes a lack of clarity on prioritisation in this regard. It emphasises that imprisonment itself is the punishment (deprivation of liberty), and that the primary focus thereafter should be on reducing reoffending. Prisoners should be treated with dignity and supported to rebuild their lives. The Committee recommended that the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) should clearly define and communicate the purpose of prisons, placing rehabilitation at the centre, and work with the Home Office to strengthen public understanding of how reducing reoffending contributes to public safety.
- In relation to prison governors, the Committee is of the view that governors are responsible for setting the vision, culture, and overall management of prisons, including safety, security, and daily operations. Effective leadership is essential for maintaining authority and fostering respect. However, governors are constrained by complex management structures, excessive bureaucracy, limited autonomy, inadequate support and development, and frequent transfers between prisons that disrupt continuity and the sharing of best practices. The committee argued that the MoJ should strike a better

balance between the governor autonomy and centralised control ensuring that governors have the necessary authority to lead effectively.

- The Committee highlights a severe staffing crisis in the prison system, marked by high turnover, low morale, and insufficiently experienced staff. Noting shortcomings such as the lack of face-to-face interviews to properly assess candidates' suitability. The Committee recommends greater involvement of governors in recruitment processes. It further finds that current training is inadequate and fails to prepare officers for complex challenges, including managing high-risk prisoners and mental health issues. In-service training is also lacking. In contrast to more comprehensive models like Norway's two-year training programme, the Committee called on the MoJ to introduce more frequent, role-specific training and to review and extend training for staff working with women and children.
- The Committee found that many prisoners lack access to meaningful work and education, with participation often limited and part-time. This contributes to boredom, self-harm, frustration, and increased violence. While basic literacy and numeracy are prioritised, access to higher-level education and credible training is limited, and many programmes are seen as ineffective "tick-box" exercises. The Committee emphasises that purposeful activity is not a nice-to have but is central to the prison service's purpose of preparing prisoners for life outside the criminal justice system and reducing reoffending. The Committee recommended expanding access to diverse educational opportunities and adopting a strategic approach to prison labour by aligning skills training with labour market needs and providing transferable, employment-linked skills.
- The Committee finds that prison accountability mechanisms are weak, with poor-quality performance data and limited impact of oversight. While HMPPS plays an important independent role, its recommendations are often not implemented. Other bodies, such as Independent Monitoring Boards, have also seen their effectiveness decline. The Committee recommended strengthening the powers of the Inspectorate, including the ability to place failing prisons into special measures and require formal reporting on progress. It also called for closer, formalised collaboration between prison services and probation inspectorates.

- Overall, the Committee attributes the shortcomings to sustained leadership failures within the MoJ and oversight bodies, and stresses the need for urgent, externally supported reform driven by stronger leadership and accountability.
- Alongside measures to reduce overcrowding including through the prison building program and implementation of sentencing review, the Committee urged the following:
  - A clear and well communicated statement of purpose of prison with reducing reoffending as central;
  - Greater autonomy for prison governors;
  - A major overhaul of measures to recruit, assess and train prison officers; and
  - enhance accountability for both prisons and HMPPS.

6.2. The Committee had an engagement with The Rt Hon. the Lord Foster of Bath who Chairs the Justice and Home Affairs Committee responsible for oversight of prisons, border control, policing, and immigration matters. He highlighted the following:

- In relation to border control and use of technology in the UK: the Committee has recently looked into work on border management systems. Particular attention has been given to the increasing use of advanced technologies by law enforcement, including live facial recognition to trace suspects by using cameras on the streets and in roads. It was noted with concern that, despite its growing use, there is currently no comprehensive regulatory framework governing this technology, raising issues related to privacy, accountability, and potential misuse by local authorities. There is a serious need to develop legislation to regulate the space to avoid litigation against the government.
- A major inquiry into the state of UK prisons is underway. This includes an assessment of conditions, capacity challenges, and broader systemic reforms required to improve their prison system. The inquiry is also linked to wider discussions on immigration policy, particularly where detention and correctional services intersect.
- A significant government initiative aimed at youth employment was highlighted. The programme seeks to address high levels of youth unemployment through targeted interventions, although further details on implementation and outcomes are still under review.
- His committee noted a difference between child and youth care centres (which cater for individuals up to the age of 18) and adult correctional institutions. While youth facilities appear to be relatively better structured and resourced, adult institutions are

significantly lagging. This gap points to systemic inconsistencies and highlights the need for reforms to ensure continuity of care and rehabilitation beyond the age of 18.

6.3. The Committee also had an opportunity to observe a question-and-answer session to the Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer (Labour Party) in the House of Commons on 25 March 2026.

The Committee observed the house sitting of Prime Minister Keir Starmer who appeared before the House of Commons for Prime Minister's Questions, where he responded to questions on national security, global conflicts, and energy resilience.

Members of Parliament raised concerns regarding the United Kingdom's preparedness for a potential prolonged conflict in the Middle East, particularly in light of escalating regional instability. Questions focused on the government's strategic readiness, including defence capabilities, intelligence coordination, and contingency planning for wider geopolitical spillovers. The Prime Minister was pressed to clarify the extent to which the UK is positioned to respond to sustained military or humanitarian developments in the region.

Energy security emerged as another critical theme, with MPs highlighting the vulnerability of global energy markets to geopolitical tensions. Questions centred on the UK's ability to safeguard domestic energy supply, manage price volatility, and reduce dependence on external sources. The Prime Minister outlined the government's approach to strengthening energy resilience, including diversification of supply, investment in domestic energy production, and accelerating the transition to renewable energy sources.

Overall, the session illustrated the centrality of PMQs as a mechanism for scrutinising the executive on complex and interrelated global challenges, while compelling the Prime Minister to provide clear and immediate accountability on matters of national and international importance.

There are notable similarities on how UK Parliamentary and the Southa African Parliament conduct their business, particularly in allowing members of the official opposition to pose questions first uninterrupted while the Prime Minister respond under the direction of the Speaker. However, a key observation is the strict adherence to time management.

7. On Day 4: Meeting with the UK Minister of Justice

- The Committee visited the UK Parliament and met the Jake Richards MP who is the Labour Member of Parliament for Rother Valley, He serves in the UK Government as a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Justice and as an Assistant Whip in the House of Commons. The Ministry highlighted the following: They have a serious challenge with contraband in their prisons; they have introduced a mandatory body armour in all maximum prisons; they make use of electronic monitoring for offenders released on probation.
- Ms KA Ramolobeng, the Chairperson of the Committee explained the purpose of the visit of the Portfolio Committee; the Committee had intended to visit at least one prison facility in the UK and also to see the electronic monitoring devices the UK Prisons uses for offenders who are on probation. The Chairperson emphasised on the role that the committee played in trying to secure the visit only to be told it is not possible. The request was not adhered to citing a short notice from the Committee side.
- The Ministry indicated that it was the first time it heard of the request. However, the Minister made an undertaking to secure at least one visit in a less security prison which is what the UK Government referred to as an open prison with prisoners who are almost done with their sentences therefore lesser security risk to the public.
- The Ministry also suggested that we hold virtual meetings with officials from government who are managing prisons for the Committee to understand better the prison system of the UK.
- The Committee thanked the Minister for meeting especially on a short notice given his busy schedule. The Committee awaited the Minister’s endeavour to secure a prison visit while the Committee was still in the UK.
- In summary, the prison visit did not materialise, and the Committee had to return to South Africa and will pursue other avenues to receive the required information.

8. COMMITTEE OBSERVATIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS

The Portfolio Committee, having undertaken the study tour to United Kingdom, made the following key findings and observations in line with the objectives of the study tour:

- **On Contraband:** The Committee noted that there is a technological threat due to the use of drones to smuggle contraband into facilities around the UK. A similar threat may emerge in South Africa and require proactive mitigation strategies. DCS should adopt proactive and technology-driven approaches to address contraband smuggling, including emerging threats such as drones. The Committee recommends that the Department should conduct a national risk assessment on drone-related threats to correctional facilities; Pilot anti-drone technologies (e.g., detection systems, controlled interception methods) where feasible. Strengthen perimeter security through and also establish a specialised contraband interdiction unit within DCS. With the sophistication of criminal syndicates, the DCS may also work together with the Intelligence agencies available within the criminal justice cluster.

- **Overcrowding:** The UK has introduced a range of minimum sentencing regimes recently to deal with overcrowding in their prisons. They have ensured that all offenders who committed low minor and non-violent offence receive non-custodial sentences. DCS, in collaboration with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, should intensify efforts to reduce overcrowding through alternative sentencing and improved case flow management. This can be done by expanding the use of non-custodial sentences for minor and non-violent offences (e.g. community service, fines, restorative justice programmes)
- **Reintergration Support:** The UK has introduced reintegration and release policies. A notable policy intervention in the UK is the prohibition of prisoner releases on Fridays. DCS should strengthen post-release support systems to ensure successful reintegration into society. This Can be done by increasing the number and geographic spread of halfway houses for parolees without family support. The Department also need to Establish partnerships with NGOs and community organisations to provide employment placement support.
- **Enhancing Electronic Monitoring Systems:** Electronic monitoring (tagging) is utilised in the UK as part of offender management as opposed to minimum sentencing of offenders into custody. DCS should investigate the effectiveness and credibility of electronic monitoring (EM) as an alternative to incarceration. The Committee recommends that the Department should, before the end the 7th Parliament, come up with a watertight proposal for the Committee to consider in this regard.
- **Human Resource Capacity and Staff Safety:** The Committee also noted that the UK faces similar challenges when it comes to inadequate prison staff requirement procedure and poor staff assessments and training arrangements. DCS should strengthen staffing capacity and improve working conditions for correctional officials. Review and

implement optimal staff-to-inmate ratios based on security classifications of facilities and provide protective equipment to officials, prioritising high-risk facilities and also improve recruitment and retention strategies.

- **Expanding and Strengthening Probation Services (Community Corrections):** DCS, together with relevant departments, should expand probation services to support non-custodial sentencing and post-release monitoring. This could be done by increasing the number of probation (parolee supervision) officers and social workers; Introduction of community-based monitoring programmes to support compliance and strengthen interdepartmental coordination with: Department of Social Development, South African Police Services and local municipalities.
- **Improving Access to Justice**: The Committee also noted that the UK shares the same challenge regarding declining access to legal representation for offenders due to stagnant legal aid funding. Government should address systemic barriers to legal representation, particularly for indigent accused persons. This can be done through expanding awareness programmes to ensure that inmates understand their legal rights and options and promoting partnerships with legal NGOs and university law clinics.
- **Dealing with Drugs:** The UK Government was looking on way to reduce drugs in their prisons by introducing additional measures including efforts to phase out smoking in prisons, restrictions on vaping products (such as removing flavours), and limiting cannabis use strictly to medicinal purposes in the UK. The Committee recommends that the DCS also look into adopting the approach to curb the use of drugs in our facilities.
- The Committee also noted the importance of strengthening oversight mechanisms despite political dynamics and regardless of which political organisation is in government at the time. This can be applied in South Africa to ensure proper oversight over Government Departments despite political differences.
- Countries like the Netherlands have successfully reduced incarceration rates, even closing several prisons due to effective rehabilitation strategies. The Committee should try and do an analysis on strategies used by the Netherlands in reducing their prison population and learn from it. It might also be good for the Committee's next study tour to focus on the Netherlands.
- The UK shares the same view with regards to their inspectorate bodies not having enough powers in terms of their recommendations to government departments. The Committee recommended strengthening the powers of the Inspectorate, including the

ability to place failing prisons into special measures and require formal reporting on progress.

- The Committee was unable to visit UK prisons due to miscommunication between South African Department of International Relations and Co-operation (DIRCO) and UK authorities due to understaffing at the South African High Commission in London, rather than an explicit refusal by the UK Government. The Committee will raise the matter with the DIRCO for better co-ordination of international Study Tours going forward.

Report to be considered.