



## correctional services

Department:  
Correctional Services  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### MEDIA STATEMENT

10 May 2017  
For immediate use

#### **OVERCROWDING IN POLLSMOOR REDUCED BY 90%**

Correctional Services informed members of the Portfolio Committee of Justice and Correctional Services in Parliament on 9 May 2017 that overcrowding in Pollsmoor has been reduced by 90%. This was in response to a Cape Town High Court Order which compelled the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) to reduce overcrowding in Pollsmoor Remand Detention by at least 150%. Constructed in 1975 to accommodate 1619 offenders, Pollsmoor had 4066 (251%) inmates by 6 December 2016. DCS came up with an action plan which has halved the inmate population by a staggering 161,09%, (2570) as of 8 May 2017.

The issue of overcrowding in correctional facilities, particularly in Pollsmoor, was brought to the court by Sonke Gender Justice, making reference to a number of challenges as cited by Judge Edwin Cameron's Report of 2015. Although the case was brought against the Government of South Africa and listed Correctional Services as one of the respondents, it is important for DCS to speedily expedite the matter and reduce overcrowding.

Pollsmoor Remand Detention Centre was designed to accommodate only 1 619 offenders. However, the past 42 years has seen new courts being built in the Cape Metro thus significantly increasing the offender population in this centre. As a result, a number of services were compromised and these were highlighted greatly by the Cameron's Report.

In order to create more bed space in the Cape Metro, Pollsmoor, Goodwood and Malmesbury correctional facilities have been earmarked to largely accommodate Remand Detainees. As a result, sentenced offenders have been diverted to other centres in the province and the Northern Cape and Free State.

DCS' action plan has been multipronged. The position of the Head of Centre, has been filled. The Management of the centre has also been strengthened and staff shortages addressed. Critically, all security vacancies have been filled, with 20 additional members appointed to bring stability. This has seen the vacancy rate reduced to just five (5) percent. Plans to appoint an additional doctor, strictly to service remand detainees, is currently underway. Rather than focusing on the Court Order's directives, the Department has used this as an opportunity to close some of the gaps in administration, such as, proper record keeping and completion of registers in order to ensure that there is proper reliable records.

Members of the Portfolio Committee appreciated the progress made in terms of physical exercise, adequate beds, hygiene and assaults. Frequency of exercise activities for remand detainees has been increased from two days to four days a week, and those in the hospital section are able to exercise on daily basis. In addition, the number of pharmacists has been increased to two, plus a pharmacist assistant. This move has tremendously reduced the turnaround time in terms of issuing medication from 48 hours to 24 hours. The opening of a pharmacy in Goodwood Correctional Centre has also decrease the workload for the Pollsmoor pharmacy facility.

The case of filthy blankets has been resolved as the Department of Public Works has managed to repair the laundry equipment, such as, washing machines. However, a lasting solution is still needed as these machines were bought in 1975 and have reached the end of lifespan. Pollsmoor management decided to augment this ailing equipment by purchasing eight (8) additional washing machines to be distributed throughout the centre.

This is all done in order to ensure that all those incarcerated are kept in a safe, and humane environment. Due to the movement of sentenced offenders to other centres, some of the single cells have been converted into informal libraries, as they are being used as distribution point. This is to encourage the culture of reading. Hence a post of librarian has been created in order to manage and oversee this process.

The portfolio committee urged the department to work closely with the justice cluster in order to find lasting solutions to the challenges of overcrowding as this is not only a DCS problem.

Ends.

Issued by the Department of Correctional Services.

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