



**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES,
DR PIETER GROENEWALD, MP
ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
BUDGET VOTE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, CAPE TOWN,
15 JULY 2024**

Geagte Huisvoorsitter,

Deputy Minister of Correctional Services,

Members of the Portfolio Committee,

Honourable Members,

National Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services,

Inspecting Judge, Justice Edwin Cameron,

Members of the National Council for Correctional Services,

Members of the Parole Boards,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are in exciting new times with an abundance of possibilities but also complexities and challenges. The success of the new administration is dependent on our commitment. We have been afforded the opportunity to bring about real change to the lives of ordinary South Africans. We have been afforded the opportunity to restore and

build; to fix what is broken; and to render hope for a safe, peaceful and prosperous future.

On Thursday, 18th July, the world will commemorate Nelson Mandela International Day. President Mandela said: “Crime must be brought under control... Freedom without civility, freedom without the ability to live in peace, is not true freedom at all.”

Alle gemeenskappe in Suid-Afrika kry tans swaar weens buitensporige hoë geweldsmisdaad. Ons howe is onderbefonds, onderbeman en ons tronke is oorvol. Misdaad is buite beheer en die mees weerloses in ons samelewing – vroue en kinders – ly die meeste as gevolg van ‘n gebrek aan effektiewe beskerming en bekamping van geslagsgeweld.

The Department of Correctional Services is paramount in our fight against crime and realising a South Africa of peace and prosperity for all. The Department has the important task to safeguard communities against convicted criminals whilst providing rehabilitation of offenders in order to ensure safe reintegration into society.

Our country is ushering in the seventh administration through a Government of National Unity. As the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan period comes to an end, it is imperative to realise initiatives aimed at improving the lives of our people. DCS must play a leading role.

To achieve this, we need strategic investments, innovative programmes and a commitment to justice and humanity. During the current financial year, our main task is to build on interventions of making correctional facilities safe and secure.

We need to identify and acknowledge the challenges and problems facing correctional services. We need to prioritize addressing the areas of inefficiency in the department, root out corruption, ill-discipline, and restore effective service delivery to create a system that not only corrects but heals, educates, reintegrates and contributes to the eradication of crime.

These challenges include overcrowding, dilapidated facilities, ever-increasing remand detainees, deteriorating infrastructure, staff shortages, crime syndicates and gangs

operating in our facilities, and new forms of crime patterns challenging our rehabilitation programmes.

The total budget allocation for the Department over the 2025 MTEF period, amounts to R87.1 billion. The Department's expenditure is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 4.5%, from R26,6 billion in 2023/24 to R30.3 billion in 2026/27.

South Africa is experiencing insufficient economic growth, a budget deficit and an unsustainable government debt burden. This necessitated budget cuts which includes the DCS baseline being cut by R2.525 billion.

The impact of these cuts is severe. The provision of security equipment is compromised; capital investment in skills developments were cut; the budget for nutritional services had to be cut; capital works projects will be on hold; and the monitoring of parolees could be negatively impacted.

We will and have to do more with less. This will require innovation, discipline and commitment.

Die behoeftes is baie, maar die begroting onvoldoende. Dit is egter nie onmoontlik om onder hierdie omstandighede en realiteite wel verbetering en uitnemendheid teweeg te bring nie.

Agbare voorsitter, "oom Pieter" sal nie alleen sukses kan bereik nie. Ons sal moet saamwerk. I look forward to working with the Deputy Minister, the National Commissioner, his executive and each and every DCS official in ensuring quality service delivery and a safer South Africa.

Two of the priorities that will receive urgent attention are effective contract management and the reduction of outsourcing. We must ensure value for money. It is also important to build a capable workforce and to ensure that the skills and expertise of our officials are utilised rather than outsourcing tasks and services.

Ons moet ook daarop fokus om die fasiliteite en infrastruktuur wat ons het effektief binne die beperkte begroting instand te hou.

Heinous crimes committed by a minority of parolees does affect our core business as it hampers the reintegration of former inmates into society. The impact on victims, our communities, families and individuals within the system is profound. It is imperative that we address these issues with urgency.

This brings us to the emotive issue of parole. It is a subject that has generated a lot of interest and mixed reaction from the public. Parole is a mechanism that allows for the conditional release of inmates to continue serving their sentences in society to better facilitate their reintegration. The debate on it is receiving necessary attention. I say this because the Department is working on reviewing the parole system. The time has come for DCS to finalise this matter, as reforming our parole system is not just a policy issue but a moral imperative.

People have been asking for a system of fairness and transparency. The current criteria seem not to be appreciated. Although victims of crime are allowed to participate in the parole process, how far do their voices go? This calls for a relook in the review and oversight mechanisms. It is critical that this Administration finalise this review in the interest of all.

Honourable Members, legislative reforms are a necessity as we explore new ways of conducting our business, but, most importantly, there have been several judgements that have pushed us to duly align our legal mandates and policies.

As such the Correctional Services Act (CSA) is further being reviewed taking into consideration developments in the correctional system, international and regional obligations, the Nelson Mandela Rules and judgements impacting on the interpretation of the CSA. This work started in the sixth administration, and our resolve is to see it being concluded without any delay.

On Nelson Mandela Day, the Department of Correctional Services will join the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in calling for the universal application of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners – the Nelson Mandela Rules.

The cardinal factor in the success of Correctional Services is its correctional officials being fit for purpose. We shall be paying more attention to the type of investment made in training and development of staff members. It is vital that they are equipped with the skills and the necessary equipment to perform their functions effectively. A well-trained and motivated staff is essential for creating a rehabilitative environment and ridding crime from our correctional facilities.

As part of the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) Cluster, we should not compromise on enforcing discipline. Our Code Enforcement Unit will continue to play its crucial role with action already taken against 66 officials for theft, fraud, corruption and maladministration. The Departmental Investigation Unit has finalised 77% of investigations (334/432).

The Correctional Services Youth Programme aims to place young people in suitable positions within the Department through the normal recruitment processes, learnerships, internships as well as experiential learning. The DCS Learnership Programme is one of DCS' foremost programmes for the alleviation of poverty and unemployment among the youth.

The Department will further direct its efforts in promoting equality at all levels in the Department whilst ensuring fit for purpose appointments.

We must pay attention to overcrowding which has become an established phenomenon in our correctional centres. Some have defined it as a 'wicked problem'. A wicked problem is one that is social or cultural in character and is difficult or impossible to address owing to its complexity and interconnection. Overcrowding is the consequence of the rampant crime rate. Overcrowded correctional facilities have a negative impact on all conditions of incarceration resulting in a restricted living space and such is associated with loss of human dignity. Overcrowding also results in a reduction of general services to be provided in a correctional facility to comply with the demands for medical treatment, sanitary equipment and educational, training and rehabilitative programmes.

Societal issues such as poverty, lack of education or employment opportunities, drug or alcohol abuse, exposure to others involved in criminal activity and mental illness do

impact the crime rate and subsequent inmate population. These complex societal issues cannot be addressed by a single state agency nor solely by the criminal justice system.

For the financial year 2022/23 the inmate population increased by 13 833 from 143 223 to 157 056 inmates constituting a 9.7% upward movement in one year. Unsented inmates – that is remand detention – comprises 59 574 of these inmates.

An Overcrowding Reduction Strategy is being implemented, yet for it to succeed calls for all entities in the criminal justice system to work in unison. The Department cannot refuse to admit any person referred by the court regardless of its occupancy level.

Despite all the challenges, we shall not throw in the towel. Our job is to find solutions and create working systems. Working teams with other criminal justice agencies will be strengthened to address the causes of delays in criminal justice process to ensure case backlogs can be approached in a systematic manner and pressure on correctional facilities relieved by joint action. The long-term solution requires Departments and agencies within the JCPS Cluster to develop comprehensive and evidence-based criminal justice reform strategies that address overcrowding in an effective and sustainable manner. Structures involving Judge Presidents in various provinces and visits by the judiciary to our correctional centres assist in sharing knowledge.

Offender rehabilitation defines our standing as the Department of Correctional Services. In line with stipulations of the White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (2005), the Department has adopted an offender needs-based approach that is specifically aimed at eliminating offending behaviour. The benefits of rehabilitating offenders are the reduction in costs of managing correctional facilities, the transformation of offenders into productive members of society and the promotion of labour-intensive community-based development projects which promotes self sufficiency and sustainability.

Key to rehabilitation, is empowering offenders to function effectively upon their release but, equally important, is to ensure that offenders are involved in productive activities whilst incarcerated. The Department is committed to ensuring that offenders gain

skills, education and experiences that will reduce reoffending and in turn make safer communities. Offenders are engaged in work which provides meaningful, structured days and opportunities to learn skills and responsibilities.

The Department is implementing its Strategic Framework on Self-Sufficiency and Sustainability to increase self-sufficiency through agricultural productivity, vegetable production, fruit production, milk production, chicken-broilers, chicken-layers, red meat abattoirs, white meat abattoirs and piggeries that take place at correctional centre farms.

The Department is also armed with production workshops, which include bakeries, wood workshops, steel workshops, textile workshops, a shoe factory and a lock and key manufacturing workshop.

We will prioritise efficient security at these facilities and will also address the current short comings at some of these farms involving animal health standards.

I will also engage with my counterpart in public works and infrastructure as I believe goods such as furniture produced by inmates at these workshops could be procured by public works and other government departments, providing a sustainable market for these products and contributing to effective cost containment throughout government departments.

Honourable members, the two Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Correctional Centres are being monitored closely by the Department as there are challenges being addressed. A court application on the Mangaung Correctional Centre by the Bloemfontein Correctional Contracts (BCC) interdicting DCS from proceeding with the contract termination was heard on 16 and 17 April 2024. The court ruled against G4S as it applied to be one of the parties in the case. G4S has since appealed the court judgement, indicating that this case is likely to be a drawn-out process. After all documents are filed, the judge will allocate a date for oral argument of the application for leave to appeal. Should their application for leave to appeal fail, they have made it clear that they will institute a petition for leave to appeal to the Constitutional Court. It is clear that the matter will take some time before it is finalized.

Repairs at Kutama Sinthumule Correctional facility are near completion as the Yellow and Green centres, housing a total of 1 872 inmates, have been completed and inmates admitted. Only the Green centre, with a bed capacity of 1 152, is receiving finishing touches, and should be back into full operation by 1 August 2024. Let me remind members, this facility was gutted down by fire in August 2023.

In conclusion, globally, what defines a successful correctional system is to have an environment where individuals can rebuild their lives, develop new skills and contribute positively to society upon release. Our vision is to provide the best correctional services for a safer South Africa.

Honourable Members, transparency and accountability are crucial for the success of this Department. We need robust oversight mechanisms to ensure that our facilities are meeting the highest standards of care and rehabilitation. Regular audits, independent inspections and community involvement in oversight can help maintain the integrity of our correctional system.

Hierdie is ongekende tye – ‘n veelparty regering van nasionale eenheid. Ons moet nou hande vat en saam werk om ons land te bou tot die voordeel van almal. Daar is hoop vir ‘n beter toekoms.

We have started this journey, and, one thing is certain, there will be turbulence, but I am optimistic that we shall overcome. We are here to serve and create hope for a better future.

By instilling discipline; fostering mutual respect; rooting out fraud and corruption; ensuring that there is consequence management; investing in rehabilitation, education and restorative justice, we can create a system that not only corrects but heals.

Saam kan ons ‘n veilige Suid-Afrika bou en die nodige goeie waardes bevorder. Waardes wat nodig is om misdaad te bekamp, armoede uit te roei en gelyke geleenthede vir almal te bevorder.

EK DANK U.