



**MINISTRY OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES,  
DR PIETER GROENEWALD, MP**

**BUDGET VOTE  
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, CAPE TOWN,  
13 MAY 2026**

Honourable Chairperson

Deputy Minister of Correctional Services

Members of the Portfolio Committee

Honourable Members

National Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services

Inspecting Judge Bozalek

Members of the National Council for Correctional Services

Members of the Parole Boards

We rise today at a moment that tests both the resolve and the resilience of the Department of Correctional Services.

We face a challenging situation marked by tight budgets, the departure of experienced officials, a rising number of offenders serving longer

sentences, and crime levels that have not declined at the pace our society demands.

Although it will be easy to reflect on the many mistakes, shortcomings and difficulties we face, it is imperative that we do not lose sight of the progress we have made. Day by day, we are restoring hope.

## ***BUDGET***

Honourable members,

Over the current Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, the Department must absorb budget reductions amounting to **R683.4 million**. These reductions negatively affect the Department's operational capacity, straining our ability to fill critical posts, maintain optimal staff-to-inmate ratios, and sustain the level of services required for safe custody and effective rehabilitation.

As of 5 May 2026, the inmate **population was recorded at 169,519**, with an **overcrowding rate of 58%**. Of these inmates, **63,194 are remand detainees**—individuals who have not yet received a sentence by our Courts. This situation continues to exert significant pressure on infrastructure, personnel, and resources.

The budget for this financial year is **R30.939 billion** and is projected to grow modestly to **R32.8 billion** in 2028/29. Take into account Compensation of Employees accounting for **over 70.02%** of expenditure, which avails only **29.98% (R9.303 billion)** for operational costs.

Within this allocation, we are making deliberate choices, prioritising critical posts and investing in infrastructure to ensure that we fulfil our mandate.

## ***SELF-SUFFICIENCY***

If there is one area where resilience is most evident, it is in our drive towards self-sufficiency and sustainability.

Faced with rising costs and limited resources, the Department has expanded agricultural production, workshops, and internal manufacturing capabilities. These are not only cost-saving measures but also rehabilitation tools that equip offenders with practical skills and restore a sense of purpose.

After opening bakeries at Standerton and Pietermaritzburg in 2024/25, the initiative expanded into 2025/26 with a new bakery in Durban, bringing the total to twelve (12). This has enabled our Department to save more than **R77.1 million** on bread in the 2025/26 financial year.

The thirteenth bakery at Qalakabusha is nearing completion and will be operational this financial year.

Chairperson, we are steadily moving towards a model of greater self-sufficiency, where each management area is equipped with its own bakery.

From farms producing vegetables, meat, and dairy, to workshops manufacturing uniforms, furniture, and essential goods, the Department is

steadily reducing its reliance on external procurement while enhancing offender development.

During 2025/26, the value of production workshop orders from client departments was **R101.7 thousand**, as at the end of February 2026, which included the Departments of Water and Sanitation, Defence, Public Works and Infrastructure, Justice and Constitutional Development, Office of the Inspecting Judge and the State Information and Technology Agency (SITA).

This is inadequate, and therefore, I am once again formally extending the invitation to other Government Departments to consider fulfilling their furniture and related supply needs through the Department of Correctional Services. We are currently engaging to expand on the MOU with the Department of Basic Education, specifically on the production and repair of school desks.

From April 2025 to February 2026, the Witbank Textile Workshop manufactured **40,869 items for officials' uniforms**, an increase of **13,047** items compared with the previous financial year.

In the 2025/26 financial year, savings of **R125 million** were realised through internally produced agricultural commodities.

## ***DISCIPLINE***

Security forms the core of the Department's functions.

During the last budget debate, I committed to more unannounced visits and raids, and we have met that promise. In the previous Budget Vote, I announced that **466 raids** had been conducted. From then, we have significantly expanded our efforts, increasing the number of raids to **1,406—a 200% increase**. This resulted in the confiscation of more than **37,500 cell phones** and other contraband.

During the December/ January holiday period alone, officials carried out searches across correctional facilities nationwide, confiscating over **8,000 cell phones, R102,700 in cash**, and numerous other illegal items. Remarkably, there were no escapes during Operation Vala.

Some interpret these results as operational failures, but they serve as evidence of a more aggressive security strategy. The large-scale confiscations and frequent raids demonstrate our increased control over internal threats.

Let me be clear: we are effectively purging our prisons of illegal activities. Those involved in smuggling should understand their days are numbered.

Failure to confront those who betray their duties endangers the many honourable officials working in dangerous conditions. Officials committed to integrity, who stand firm against criminal organisations within our facilities, often face threats, intimidation, or violence.

It is essential to act swiftly and decisively against corruption to safeguard these individuals and to reaffirm trust in our institutions.

Therefore, in the coming year, the Department will enforce a strict zero-tolerance policy regarding cell phone use within our facilities. This will involve transitioning to two-way radios for internal communication. The policy will be initially implemented in select locations and expanded to all facilities.

## ***ACCOUNTABILITY***

There is a zero-tolerance approach against officials who undermine the Department's integrity. Discipline, accountability, and ethical conduct are non-negotiable.

A total of **2388 officials** were subjected to disciplinary hearings during the reporting period, of which **2138 cases have been finalised**. This reflects progress in improving the efficiency of disciplinary processes and reinforcing a culture of accountability within the Department.

Of the **2388** cases, **137 officials** were **involved in contraband-related misconduct**.

## ***OFFICIALS - THE BACKBONE OF OUR DEPARTMENT***

At the centre of this system are the men and women who serve in Correctional Services. It is for this reason that we have reintroduced medals for faithful long service of 10, 20, 30, and 40 years within the Department, a significant step towards restoring tradition, honouring excellence, and strengthening our organisational culture.

These medals are awarded to officials who have dedicated years of service to the Department, an extraordinary testament to loyalty, discipline, and commitment.

The Department has already honoured **187 qualifying officials** for 40 years of faithful service across the country. Collectively, this represents an exceptional milestone of more than **7 480 years of service** advancing the Department's mandate.

These achievements reflect not only individual endurance but also the depth of experience and institutional memory that sustain and strengthen our correctional system.

### ***STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONALISM***

Efficient centre-level operations are essential for a credible and effective correctional system. As a result, during the 2025/26 financial year, I engaged directly with all Heads of Centres nationwide, which I recognise as the backbone of Correctional Services.

These interactions went beyond administrative matters; they were a deliberate reaffirmation of the vital leadership role these officials hold within the broader correctional framework.

I further directed the National Commissioner to review the policy on the training of all officials, more specifically, officials in critical positions, such as Heads of Centres, who, among others, will be subject to annual examinations to ensure that our centres and their leadership comply with all legislative requirements.

In affirming its institutional standing, the Department has introduced new insignia for members of the Senior Management Service (SMS), reflecting both leadership authority and its integral role within the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) Cluster.

New insignia for officials at levels 2-12 in the Correctional Services Occupational Specific Dispensation has been approved and will be rolled out.

## ***CONCLUSION***

Our ongoing effort is to fortify the Department, reaffirm our constitutional obligations, and uphold justice throughout South Africa.

Each day presents a fresh opportunity to restore, improve, and create hope for a future that is safe, peaceful, and prosperous.

The challenges before us are undeniable. Our system is under strain. But we will continue to deliver on our mandate as the Department of Correctional Services.

I want to thank the Deputy Minister, my office staff, the National Commissioner and his team, and every official in the Department for their hard work and dedication in contributing to a safer South Africa for all.

**I therefore table Budget Vote 22 for consideration by this House.**

**I thank you.**