



MEDIA STATEMENT

28 May 2026

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES RESPONDS TO AMABHUNGANE ARTICLE ON PAROLE ABSCONDERS AND COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS

The Department of Correctional Services (DCS) has noted the amaBhungane article on parole absconders, community corrections and offender monitoring. While the Department acknowledges public interest in parole supervision and public safety, these matters must be approached with balance, context and factual accuracy.

Several cases referenced in the article had already been publicly addressed through media engagements, operational updates and criminal justice processes involving law enforcement agencies. Suggestions that the Department has abandoned the tracing of absconders are therefore incorrect. Community Corrections, responsible for supervising parolees and probationers, has a staff complement of 1 764 officials, supported by managers across the Department.

DCS maintains active tracking and tracing capabilities in all regions and no longer uses “archived absconders” as an inactive category. Dedicated regional teams continue to strengthen monitoring and re-apprehension efforts. Therefore, any suggestion that the Department has abandoned efforts to trace absconders is incorrect.

Parolees and probationers are subjected to various forms of supervision, including office reporting, home visits, employment verification and rehabilitation interventions based on individual risk profiles. Community Corrections also conducts daily lock-up functions to account for offenders under supervision, with any discrepancies immediately escalated and investigated.

To strengthen accountability, the Department shares details of parolees and probationers, together with release conditions, with nearest police stations and traditional councils. Contact details of monitoring officials are also shared with families and relevant stakeholders to support early detection of non-compliance or unlawful behaviour.

Absconding remains a criminal offence and every absconder is immediately reported to the South African Police Service (SAPS) to support tracing and investigation processes. DCS also maintains photographic records captured upon admission into the correctional system for offender identification and monitoring purposes.

The Department is concerned by reliance on anonymous allegations and unverified claims regarding recidivism and operational matters. Many figures presented lack context and fail to distinguish between technical violations, new offences, returns to custody or successful reintegration outcomes. South Africa’s parole system remains an important component of offender rehabilitation, reintegration and overcrowding reduction. The inmate population currently stands at 168 795, comprising 106 280 sentenced inmates, 62 092 remand detainees and 423 state patients, against

approved bed space of 107 067, resulting in overcrowding of 58%. In addition, 52 772 parolees and probationers are under Community Corrections supervision.

As part of efforts to strengthen the parole system, DCS convened the National Parole Review Summit on 22–23 September 2025, bringing together criminal justice stakeholders, academics, community organisations, parolees and victims’ representatives. The summit examined challenges within the parole dispensation and proposed reforms to strengthen rehabilitation, monitoring systems, community corrections and public confidence. Some measures arising from the summit are already being implemented.

The Department has also conducted special compliance operations in areas including Inanda, Umlazi, Mamelodi and the Cape Flats. These operations, led by National Commissioner Mr Makgothi Samuel Thobakgale together with senior management and Community Corrections officials, demonstrate the Department’s commitment to compliance, public safety and offender accountability. No area is regarded as a “no-go zone”.

Critical to highlight, other efficiency operations by Community Corrections involve key stakeholders, such as, SAPS and the Departments of Social Development, Health and Home Affairs, enabling immediate intervention where necessary. Hence “thumb-sucked” recidivism rates cited without empirical basis remain a serious concern. DCS measures reoffending based on parolees who commit offences during their parole period before expiry of sentence. Over the past two years, 5 760 parolees reoffended, representing a recidivism rate of 10.98%.

The Department acknowledges operational challenges within Community Corrections, including budget cuts over the years, resource limitations, difficult terrain, security risks in high-crime areas and increasing caseloads. These challenges continue to be addressed through operational reviews, budget reprioritisation and collaboration with security stakeholders.

Operational oversight remains ongoing through established structures, including the National Operations Committee, chaired by the National Commissioner, which meets every Monday to receive reports from all regions on operational matters, including Community Corrections and offender monitoring. To strengthen operational capacity, the KwaZulu-Natal Region received an additional 48 vehicles on 15 May 2026 to support operations on the ground.

DCS rejects suggestions that parolees are left unmonitored or that systems do not exist to address absconding. Community Corrections officials continue to perform supervision duties under difficult and often dangerous conditions to ensure compliance with parole conditions and protect communities. The electronic monitoring matter remains before the courts. As the matter is sub judice, the Department is limited in what it can publicly discuss at this stage.

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