



MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**BUDGET VOTE SPEECH OF THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC
SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION**

MS PINKY KEKANA, MP

“Transformative Change in Building a State That Works for Everyone”

DEBATE ON VOTES 7, 11 AND 12:

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION, NATIONAL
SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

DATE: 19 MAY 2026

Honourable House Chairperson,
Minister for the Public Service and Administration, Inkosi Mzamo Buthelezi,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Chairpersons and leadership of our Portfolio entities,
Fellow South Africans

A state is not measured by the elegance of its plans.

It is measured by whether its people experience dignity and delivery at the point of interaction.

It's whether water flows from a tap, continuously and consistently.

Whether a clinic opens on time, every time.

Whether a pensioner receives assistance without humiliation.

Whether a young graduate can access opportunity without navigating broken systems.

Whether a municipality responds when a community needs delivery.

That is how citizens experience the state.

It's through government working in our people's everyday lives.

And that is why this Budget Vote matters.

Votes 7, 11 and 12 are not merely administrative appropriations.

They are investments in the capability of the South African state itself.

They determine whether government has the professionalism, systems, ethics and institutional strength required to fulfil its constitutional mandate.

Honourable Members,

This year marks thirty years since the adoption of our democratic Constitution, three decades since the establishment of the Department of Public Service and Administration, because our Constitution did more than establish a democratic order.

Through Chapter 10, it set an exacting standard for public administration:

- a standard of professional ethics,
- efficient use of resources,
- impartiality,
- accountability,
- and development-oriented service to the people.

These principles remain our compass.

Three months ago, the President assented to amendments to the Public Service Act and the Public Administration Management Act.

These amendments mark one of the most significant reforms in the administration of our democratic state.

They strengthen accountability.

They clarify the relationship between Heads of Department and Executive Authorities.

They reinforce merit-based administration.

And they give legislative force to the professionalisation of the Public Service envisaged in the National Development Plan 2030.

A capable state does not emerge automatically and accidentally.

It is built deliberately.

Through law.

Through institutions.

Through ethical leadership.

And, through a Public Service committed to excellence.

Honourable Members,

We debate this Budget Vote in the year in which South Africa commemorates seventy years since the historic Women's March of 1956.

The women who marched to the Union Buildings did not march for symbolism.

They marched for dignity.

They marched for justice.

They marched for inclusion.

They understood that democracy without equality is incomplete.

Seventy years later, women continue to carry much of the weight of our democracy.

Women constitute 51.1 per cent of South Africa's population and 63 per cent of the Public Service workforce, excluding Defence and the State Security Agency.

Yet they remain underrepresented where many of the most important decisions are made.

Women account for only 48 per cent of middle management and 46 per cent of senior management positions.

In local government, women comprise only 42 per cent of employees.

Presence without power is not transformation.

That contradiction cannot be accepted, nor should it be normalised.

The Women in Leadership Programme, launched in August 2024, is one of our deliberate interventions to change this reality, and I have the distinct privilege of serving as its Champion.

To date, 433 women have completed the programme, strengthening their capabilities in power and influence, digital transformation, gender inclusivity and strategic leadership.

These are women positioned to lead.

Women positioned to decide.

Women positioned to shape the future of governance in South Africa.

Honourable Chairperson,

The Minister has outlined the legislative and institutional architecture of a capable state.

My responsibility is to account for the human and operational foundations that enable Public Servants to serve effectively:

- housing,
- innovation and digital transformation,
- and Gender equity.

Because behind every functioning institution is a Public Servant carrying immense responsibility under increasingly difficult conditions.

They are the nurses working long hours in overcrowded clinics, mainly women.

They are the teachers shaping the future of our children, many of them young teachers.

They are the social workers supporting vulnerable families.

They are the municipal officials restoring water and electricity after midnight.

These Public Servants carry the weight of our democracy every single day.

They deserve a state that carries them too.

Honourable Members,

The Government Employees Housing Scheme remains one of the most practical and transformative interventions in supporting Public Servants.

When I addressed Parliament in 2024, I reported that 800 872 Public Servants had accessed housing as homeowners.

As at 31 March 2026, more than 844 000 employees are receiving the Housing Allowance as homeowners, and a further 149 716 are supported as tenants.

The Housing Allowance currently stands at R1 973 per month and increases annually.

Yet 176 163 eligible employees are still not receiving this benefit.

That is why the Government Employees Housing Scheme has partnered with the Government Pensions Administration Agency and the National Housing

Finance Corporation to conduct outreach and educational campaigns across all provinces.

These partnerships are helping employees access both the Housing Allowance and First Home Finance subsidies.

I ask Members of this House to help us spread this message in your constituencies - it belongs to them.

For many lower-income employees, the Government Employees Housing Scheme is the difference between renting indefinitely and building an asset that creates long-term financial security.

This is not simply about housing.

It is about dignity.

It is about stability.

It is about a better life for our public servants.

Through the Individual-Linked Savings Facility, Public Servants have collectively saved R33 billion towards homeownership between 2015 and January 2026, averaging R300 million every month.

Employees who resign or are dismissed may now access their full savings, reversing a provision that resulted in more than R700 million being forfeited.

Retirees who were never enrolled may now access their accumulated savings, and beneficiaries of deceased employees may also claim these funds.

This is visible transformation.

Honourable Chairperson,

The Centre for Public Service Innovation exists to answer a simple but powerful question:

How do we solve old problems in new ways?

The Centre identifies, tests and scales homegrown innovations that improve service delivery across government.

One example is the Smart Agriculture Box, developed in Mpumalanga.

A total of 147 units were donated to the Department of Correctional Services to support food security and offender rehabilitation.

In the Free State, 45 units were deployed in Nketoana Municipality to strengthen local food production and support indigent households.

The award-winning Broselow Emergency Reference Tape, developed in the Western Cape, is reducing paediatric emergency errors and saving lives in facilities across the Western Cape, Gauteng and the City of Tshwane.

The Centre has facilitated the transfer of the Eastern Cape's in-house eRecruitment system to Mpumalanga, reducing reliance on external consultants.

The Northern Cape and Western Cape have co-developed a Citizen Portal to improve access to government services.

For 2026/27, the Centre for Public Service Innovation has been allocated R53.5 million to deepen intergovernmental collaboration and leverage frontier technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics and the Internet of Things.

A developmental state cannot permanently outsource its own institutional intelligence - we must build capability from within government itself, and empower Public Servants not only to administer systems, but to improve them.

Honourable Members,

The capable state of the future cannot be built on outdated systems.

We cannot expect citizens living in an increasingly digital world to engage with a public administration that remains fragmented, paper-based and inefficient.

Digital transformation is therefore no longer a technical matter.

It is a governance imperative.

Cabinet has approved the Roadmap for Digital Transformation of Government.

This year, we will revise the Government-Wide Enterprise Architecture Framework to improve efficiency, productivity and ease of doing business across sixteen priority departments.

In response to the Auditor-General's repeated findings that more than 60 per cent of departments have low IT governance maturity, we will develop and publish a Public Service Cybersecurity Awareness Strategy.

The DPSA is partnering with PSETA, NEMISA, Microsoft and other private sector partners to provide free digital skills training to Public Servants across the country.

More than 400 Public Servants are currently completing cybersecurity awareness training.

Through Microsoft's Equity Equivalent Investment Programme, unemployed ICT graduates are being trained and placed in institutions such as SARS, Statistics South Africa and DIRCO.

The DPSA and the Centre for Public Service Innovation have also partnered with Meta on an artificial intelligence accelerator programme.

This collaboration will introduce a chatbot on the DPSA website using Meta's open-source Llama model to make public information more accessible to Public Servants and citizens alike.

Technology alone will not transform the state.

Technology without accountability merely digitises inefficiency.

Real digital transformation must improve the lived experience of citizens.

It must make government easier to access.

More transparent.

More responsive.

And more effective.

Honourable Chairperson,

At the centre of all these reforms is one principle above all others:

Accountability.

South Africans are not asking for perfection from government.

They are asking to be taken seriously.

They are asking for ethical leadership.

They are asking for professionalism.

They are asking for measurable delivery.

And they are right to do so.

Public trust is not created through slogans.

It's through Public Servants who act with integrity.

Through a state that delivers through institutions that function.

Most importantly, through leaders who are accountable.

The capable state is not an abstract concept.

It lives in those nurses, teachers, social workers and municipal officers who serve our people.

These are the people who carry South Africa.

Our duty is to build a state worthy of their commitment.

On that note, I wish to pay tribute to Mme Lydia Sebokedi, who led the Centre for Public Service Innovation with distinction for the past six years until her retirement on 1 April 2026.

Her leadership, quiet determination and commitment to meaningful innovation have left a lasting legacy across the public sector and in communities throughout our country.

Honourable Members,

This Budget Vote is not a matter of bureaucracy.

It is an investment in rebuilding the capability, professionalism and humanity of the South African state.

An investment in ethical leadership.

In professional administration.

In housing security.

In innovation.

In digital transformation.

In Gender equity.

In accountability.

And ultimately, in restoring trust between citizens and government.

As Charlotte Maxeke reminded us:

"This work is not for yourselves. Kill that spirit of self and do not live above your people but live with them, and if you can rise, take someone with you."

Let us rise.

And let us take South Africa forward.

I thank you.