



MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**BUDGET VOTE SPEECH OF THE MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC
SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION, INKOSI MZAMO BUTHELEZI, 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**

VENUE:

DATE: 19 MAY 2026

Honourable House Chairperson,
Ministers and Deputy Ministers,

Deputy Minister for the Public Service and Administration,
Honourable Chairperson and members of the Portfolio Committee on
Public Service and Administration,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Chairperson and Commissioners of the Public Service Commission,
Chairperson and members of the board of trustees of the Government
Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS),
Accounting Officers and senior officials from the MPSA portfolio of
institutions,
Fellow South Africans

Honourable Chairperson, I am rising to reaffirm a national commitment of building a capable, ethical and developmental state that works for every South African.

This Budget Vote is about the kind of state South Africa intends to become. It is also a statement about whether public institutions can still command trust and whether public authority can still be exercised ethically.

Moreso, this Budget Vote is about restoring confidence in public institutions and protecting professionalism from political influence.

Honourable Chairperson, we table this Budget Vote at a defining moment in the democratic evolution of the public administration in South Africa.

It follows two significant milestones. The President has assented to the Public Service Amendment Act, 2025 (Act No. 9 of 2025) and the Public Administration Management Amendment Act, 2025 (Act No. 7 of 2025).

These amendments represent a structural reform for the architecture of public administration.

Honourable Members

The Public Service Amendment Act of 2025 fundamentally reshapes the accountability architecture of the State.

For the first time in the democratic South Africa, the separation between political authority and administrative authority is being reinforced with legal certainty.

This is because a professional public service cannot exist where political and administrative lines are blurred.

Heads of Departments and officials reporting directly to them are prohibited from holding political office in political parties.

And this is not about excluding or limiting anyone from democratic participation.

When those boundaries collapse, institutions weaken, accountability blurs and citizens end up paying the price through delayed services, poor governance and departmental instability.

The Public Service Amendment Act restores a principle central to constitutional democracy, and that is, administrative authority must rest with professional administrators responsible for operational execution,

while political authority must remain with an elected representatives responsible for strategic oversight and democratic accountability.

This will ensure that accountability follows responsibility because where accountability is blurred, failure survives.

These reforms also reduce political bottlenecks, strengthen decision making and establish clear lines of responsibility and consequence management.

The legislation also strengthens the ability to recover irregular salary overpayments lawfully while protecting constitutional rights.

For years, departments absorbed avoidable financial losses because administrative weaknesses were left unresolved.

Public money cannot continue to leak through institutional indecision while communities face growing demands on limited resources.

Equally important, the amendments strengthen the oversight role of the Public Service Commission in grievance management, ensuring that Public Servants who raise legitimate concerns are treated through fair and transparent processes.

An ethical State cannot demand accountability from employees while failing to protect procedural fairness within its own institutions.

Honourable Members,

The Public Administration Management Amendment Act complements these reforms by advancing a seamless and ethical public administration across all three spheres of government.

South Africans experience government as one state and not as disconnected institutions that are operating in silos.

The Amendment Act strengthens professional skills deployment across the public sector. It also deepens the role of the National School of Government.

These measures are not administrative technicalities, but they are a direct intervention against the culture of corruption that has weakened institutional credibility.

They are also not just abstract governance interventions. They are about building departments that citizens can trust because corruption does not only steal money.

It steals opportunity, dignity and confidence in the democracy.

Together, these reforms bring coherence to a governance model that has been operating unevenly for far too long.

Honourable Chairperson,

Legislation alone does not build a capable State. Institutions do. Leadership does and culture does.

And they are best personified by our 2025 Overall Batho Pele Winner, Dr Naing Soe, who is present in the House today.

As CEO of Mamelodi Regional Hospital, Dr Soe has turned a struggling facility into a state-of-the-art centre of excellence.

His leadership proves that with innovation and an unwavering commitment to service, we can overcome systemic challenges. This Budget honours that standard.

We are investing in a new era of Public Service and administration - one that is professional, ethical, and entirely dedicated to the people of South Africa.

Honourable Chairperson

The Minister of Finance reminded this House that South Africa's growth strategy rests on four pillars – which are macro-economic stability, structural reform, infrastructure investment and building state capability.

This Portfolio carries responsibility for that fourth pillar as custodians of the systems, standards and institutions that determine whether the state can execute its constitutional mandate effectively.

And at the centre of that responsibility is public trust.

Public trust is not built through slogans or branding campaigns but is built when a nurse arrives at work in a functional hospital.

Trust that is built when a pensioner receives dignified service at a government office. Trust that is built when a young intern entering the Public Service believes advancement will depend on merit rather than connection.

Trust that is built when a Director-General understands that authority carries consequence and ethical obligation.

Honourable Chairperson,

This Budget Vote therefore speaks not only to Parliament, but to every public servant across South Africa.

We are speaking about a cleaner who opens a government building before sunrise.

We are speaking about an intern entering the public service for the first time, a social worker at a local clinic, the police official, the municipal manager and even the Director-General at the highest office.

The developmental state is built through all of them and when they succeed, the country also succeeds.

This Budget Vote therefore recognises that dignity, professionalism, accountability and ethical conduct must exist across every level of the Public Service.

A capable state is not built by legislation alone. It is built by the people who carry the Constitution into daily practice.

Honourable Members,

This Budget Vote accounts for five institutions that form the engine room of public administration in South Africa – the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), the National School of Government (NSG), the Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI), the Public Service Commission (PSC), and the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS).

Although serving different mandates, they have one mission, and that is building a state that works.

Honourable Members,

The Department of Public Service and Administration remains the engine room of governance reform.

Its responsibility is not abstract policymaking. It is the construction of the standards, systems and accountability mechanisms upon which the entire Public Service depends.

The Professionalisation Framework remains central to this work. Merit-based appointments are not an administrative preference. They are a constitutional necessity.

When appointments are made without regard to competence, it is not only institutions that suffer. Communities suffer. Projects fail. Resources are wasted and services collapse.

Government will therefore intensify oversight of senior appointments across departments. Leadership positions in the Public Service must be occupied by individuals capable of managing complex institutions in difficult conditions.

At the same time, professionalisation cannot become a narrow technocratic exercise that is detached from ethics.

A technically skilled official without integrity can damage institutions as profoundly as an unqualified one.

Government will therefore intensify lifestyle audits and strengthen consequence management systems across the Public Service.

The establishment of an Integrity and Interference Log across departments represents an important shift from reactive governance to preventative governance.

Corruption rarely begins with a single criminal act. It often begins with interference, manipulation and compromised decision-making that institutions fail to confront early enough.

By institutionalising the monitoring of integrity risks, government strengthens its ability to identify governance failures before they become systemic crises.

The Central Register for disciplinary cases will now operate across all spheres of government. For too long, officials that have been dismissed for misconduct were able to move between departments and other spheres of government without consequences. That era and culture must end.

Accountability remains central to this portfolio.

Government will also implement the Public Service Skills Audit Framework to identify capability gaps across departments.

A developmental State must understand the strengths and weaknesses of its own workforce. Recruitment, training and workforce planning must be informed by evidence rather than assumption.

Honourable Chairperson,

A capable State in the 21st century must also be a digitally capable State.

Digital transformation is no longer optional administrative modernisation. It is fundamental to service delivery, institutional integrity and economic inclusion.

Deputy Minister, Ms Pinky Kekana will expand to that including the Government Employees Housing Scheme.

However, the objective is straightforward. Government services must increasingly reach citizens efficiently, securely and accessibly.

However, digital transformation is not simply about technology procurement. It is about institutional capability.

And this transformation is not about replacing people with technology. It is about restoring dignity through efficiency.

Systems fail when people are not trained to operate them ethically, effectively and securely. That is why the work of the National School of Government becomes indispensable.

The National School of Government is not merely a training institution. It is the institutional bridge between policy ambition and administrative capability.

Since its establishment, it has trained more than 600 000 individuals across government and beyond. That scale reflects an important truth, that a capable State is built one competent official at a time.

Also, professionalisation requires continuous learning and that is why government continues expanding compulsory training programmes across all levels of the Public Service.

The extension of Nyukela programmes, compulsory courses in financial management, execution discipline, digital transformation and cybersecurity, and the strengthening of municipal training all reflect a broader principle – and that is, governance capability cannot remain voluntary.

The NSG's transition towards accredited qualifications and structured learning pathways marks a significant institutional evolution.

Public administration must increasingly be treated as a profession grounded in competence, ethics and continuous development.

Equally important is the NSG's work in embedding constitutional values and ethics across broader educational pathways.

A state that is serious about integrity cannot wait until misconduct occurs before discussing ethics.

And ethical leadership must be cultivated long before appointment into public office.

I confirm the formalisation of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on curriculum development and quality assurance, comprising 12 local and international experts.

It is also my pleasure to announce that Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the former Deputy President of South Africa, former Executive Director of UN Women, and current Chancellor of the University of Johannesburg, has been appointed as Chairperson

Honourable Members,

Innovation must also become a permanent feature of governance culture. This is the role of the Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI).

The State cannot govern modern societies using outdated administrative methods while citizens face increasingly complex social and economic realities.

Innovation in public administration is not about invention as well as practical, scalable solutions that improve the quality, speed and accessibility of services.

The CPSI therefore occupies an increasingly strategic role within the Portfolio. It enables departments to test new delivery models, digital tools and citizen-centred innovations that strengthen institutional responsiveness.

In many respects, it serves as the laboratory of the capable state.

So, innovation must remain anchored in ethical governance and measurable outcomes as citizens do not measure innovation through pilot projects and presentations but by whether government becomes easier to access, is reliable and responsive to their lived realities.

Honourable Chairperson,

A State that expects ethical and capable service from its employees must also recognise its responsibility toward their wellbeing.

That responsibility is expressed most directly through the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS).

This year GEMS marks twenty years it became operational. From its inception, the Scheme represented a social compact between the democratic State and the public servants who carry its constitutional obligations.

Today the scheme serves nearly 900 000 principal members and more than 2.4 million beneficiaries.

Honourable Members,

I wish to address directly the matter of contribution increases because public servants across the country are under severe financial pressure.

The initially proposed increase of 9.5% would have placed additional strain on workers already managing rising living costs.

Following sustained engagement between government, organised labour and GEMS leadership, an agreement was reached to reduce the increase to 7.5%.

That intervention mattered a lot as it demonstrated that social dialogue remains essential in balancing institutional sustainability with the dignity of public servants.

The adjustment also provided meaningful relief to public servants while also protecting the long-term sustainability of the scheme.

Sustainability in a sense that while institutions remain financially viable, but they must also remain humane.

Even the continued protection of lower-income employees through subsidised options remains essential.

As South Africa continues discussions on Universal Health Coverage and National Health Insurance, GEMS provides important evidence that equitable healthcare access at scale is achievable when governance, discipline and operational capability are aligned.

Honourable Members,

No reform agenda can succeed without independent oversight.

Throughout this address, there is a common thread and that is the independent oversight as a fundamental to constitutional democracy.

And that is why the Public Service Commission remains central to the accountability architecture of the state and as a constitutional safeguard for ethical governance and professional public administration.

In periods when institutional integrity across government faces severe pressure, the Commission maintains its independence.

That independence requires stronger enforcement authority. The PSC Bill currently before the NCOP therefore represents one of the most consequential governance reforms since the democratic transition.

Binding recommendation powers will fundamentally strengthen the accountability architecture of government.

The Commission's expanded role in professionalisation, recruitment oversight, ethics investigations and anti-corruption work will deepen the state's ability to defend constitutional governance standards.

Particularly significant is the PSC's growing focus on consequence management within supply chain management and frontline administration, where governance failures often first emerge.

Corruption does not only occur at senior levels. It embeds itself within routine administrative processes when institutions fail to enforce standards consistently.

The PSC's provincial work also deserves recognition because accountability must reach communities directly.

Citizens do not encounter the state in theory. They encounter it in clinics, schools, municipal offices and service delivery points.

Oversight must therefore be grounded in lived realities and not be confined to reports and boardrooms.

Finally, I acknowledge the former Director-General of the Office of the Public Service Commission, Adv. Dinkie Dube, appointed by the President as Deputy Public Protector of South Africa.

Her career is itself a demonstration of what this portfolio builds: a public servant of integrity, promoted on merit, whose capability now serves the broader accountability architecture of our democracy. We are proud of her.

Honourable Chairperson

There is a common thread across this entire Portfolio. The **DPSA** establishes governance standards. The **NSG** builds capability. The **CPSI** drives innovation while **GEMS** protects the wellbeing of public servants. And there is the **PSC** safeguarding accountability and integrity.

Together, these entities form the internal architecture of the capable State. They also shape whether public institutions remain ethical, professional and responsive.

South Africa's governance challenge has never been the absence of policy ambition. It has been the uneven implementation of the very ambition.

Government institutions are weakened not because the Constitution failed, but because governance standards were inconsistently enforced.

Accountability became dependent on personalities rather than systems. Capability became vulnerable to instability and ethics became negotiable.

Honourable Chairperson, this Budget Vote seeks to reverse that trajectory through institutional discipline and through enforceable standards.

A capable State is not built in moments of convenience. It is built through sustained ethical leadership, professional administration and institutional consistency.

Indeed, there will be resistance to reform but a state that fears reform ultimately loses legitimacy with its own citizens.

And South Africa can no longer afford a public service that is politically contested, administratively weak and ethically uncertain while facing deep social and economic pressures.

This Budget Vote therefore advances a simple but substantial proposition that the constitutional promise of a capable, ethical and developmental state must now move from aspiration to reality.

Honourable Chairperson,

Thirty years ago, democratic South Africa adopted a constitution founded on dignity, accountability, responsiveness and openness.

That vision remains an unfinished work.

It lives in every ethical Public Servant who chooses integrity over convenience. It lives in every young intern who enters government believing service still matters.

It lives in every official who understands that public office is not entitlement, but responsibility. And it lives in institutions that continue to defend professionalism despite pressure and adversity.

As former statesman, Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi once reminded this nation that, "Public office is a public trust." Those words remain profoundly relevant today.

The legitimacy of the democratic state rests not on authority alone, but on whether that authority is exercised with humility, discipline and service to the people.

Even ubuntu teaches us that human dignity is realised through our responsibility to one another. The same principle applies to public administration.

A state derives legitimacy from how it treats its people while citizens derive confidence from the integrity of the institutions that serve them.

This Portfolio is therefore not only responsible for administration. It is also responsible for the conditions under which democratic trust can survive.

To every public servant listening today, this Budget Vote recognises your responsibility and your sacrifice.

Most public servants continue to serve with professionalism under demanding conditions. The future of the South African State depends on strengthening that professionalism, protecting that integrity and restoring pride within public service.

To the people of South Africa, you do not experience government through policy documents or strategic plans. You experience it through a clinic, a school, a police station, a Home Affairs office or a municipality.

Every standard we enforce, every capable leader appointed, every corrupt official held accountable and every skilled public servant developed through this portfolio either strengthens or weakens that daily experience.

This is the work before us. Not the construction of a perfect state, but the disciplined construction of a capable, ethical and developmental one.

And this is the work of transformative change in building a state that works for everyone.

I thank you.