

RESPONSE TO DA PRESS RELEASE STATEMENT

29 May 2017

The institution of Traditional leadership is at the centre of local governance in rural areas. Chapter 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa recognizes the Institution of Traditional Leadership, its status and the role in terms of customary law.

In the context of the above, government passed in 2003 the Traditional Leadership Governance and Framework Act to provide for the minimum tools of trade for traditional leadership and institutions. Flowing from this framework, Limpopo Traditional Leadership and Institutions Act No. 6 of 2005 and the Limpopo Houses of Traditional Leaders Act No. 5 of 2005 were enacted to enable the Department to support 185 Traditional Councils throughout the province. The support the Department gives to the institution covers as well the operations of two Kingships and one Queenship in the province

Given the fact that 82% of people in Limpopo province live in areas under the jurisdiction of Traditional authorities, it therefore follows that government ought to strengthen the institution as it remains an authority closest to the people. Unlike in urban areas, it is in Traditional Council offices where rural communities experience the most basic of services from government. It is for this reason why the Department took the decision to construct and refurbish Traditional council offices as a centre of gravity and a pivotal point for rendering service delivery in rural communities which often do not have easy access to government and municipal service points.

To support local governance and the integration of government services in traditional communities, the department has set aside an amount of R22 million for the refurbishment of Traditional councils offices. Currently, nineteen (19) Traditional councils have been identified for refurbishment against the backlog of (30) offices. We have further allocated an amount of R10 million towards the procurement of furniture for the Traditional council offices as many of these offices do not have furniture.

An additional R70m for refurbishment, furniture and construction of new offices has been allocated during this financial year. Of this amount R20m will be allocated to infrastructure for Kingships/Queenship. The remaining R50m will be utilized for construction, refurbishment and purchasing of furniture for the Traditional councils. In order to comply with national and provincial legislation the Department is expected to reconstitute all 185 Traditional councils in the province during this financial year. An amount of R42 million has been set aside for this purpose

Therefore 20% increase in the budget of the Traditional Affairs programme is a drop in the ocean considering that there are more needs for the institution that are still to be met that we have not as yet addressed as the department. Thus, we must view allocations to the programme of Traditional Affairs against the functions that need to be performed by the institution of Traditional leadership and the backlog inherited since 2011.

Cognizance must also be taken of the important role which Traditional Leaders continuously play in advising government on rural development matters. The involvement of Traditional leaders in the promotion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and matters relating to disaster management. Over and above this they administer the affairs of their own communities and also assist government on social cohesion matters. Traditional leaders often work closely with municipalities in identifying the needs of rural communities and contribute to our system of cooperative governance.

It is on this basis that we find the statement issued by the Democratic Alliance (DA) misleading and at best irrational as it is not backed up by facts. As the department, we will continue to equip and support the Institution of Traditional leadership to live up to the expectation of both the Constitution of our country and the national and provincial legislation.

**Issued by the Departmental Spokesperson
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