



**National Assembly – Mini Plenary Debate**

**03 July 2025**

**Budget Votes**

**Department of Employment and Labour**

**Debate on Votes 31: Employment and Labour**

**Cde B Maneli**

Honourable House Chairperson, Honourable Members and Members of the Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour distinguished guests and All South Africans.

It is with a deep sense of responsibility and unwavering commitment that I stand before you today to deliberate on the Budget Vote for the Department of Employment and Labour for the fiscal year 2025/26. While acknowledging the challenges and shortcomings, especially concerning the CCMA, we must also recognize the significant strides made towards fostering a more equitable, inclusive, and productive labour market that aligns with our national development priorities.

The core national objectives remain clear: to rebuild our economy, promote decent work, and ensure that every worker and unemployed individual has access to sustainable opportunities. Our government's vision for employment and skills development is anchored in a comprehensive strategy emphasizing not just job

creation but also ensuring the quality and sustainability of employment. This strategy is underpinned by two critical pillars: an integrated employment and skills development approach and the strengthening of labour market governance and enforcement. These focus areas aim to address the multifaceted challenges in our labour sector, fostering an environment conducive to growth, fairness, and justice.

In this context House Chair, it is vital that we prioritize skills development that aligns closely with the demands of our rapidly evolving markets. Technological advancements and digital transformation are reshaping industries, compelling us to adapt swiftly to keep our workforce future-ready. Our department's initiatives to leverage technology and digital platforms for trainings are commendable, as they enhance efficiency and improve access, especially in underserved communities. Scaling up initiatives like the Labour Activation Programme to target unemployed youth and vulnerable groups remains a key intervention. Its success hinges on clear, measurable milestones that emphasize lasting skills development and viable career pathways, which are vital for meaningful economic participation, particularly for our youth, women, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities.

Recognizing the importance of a collaborative approach, fostering public-private partnerships (PPPs) has become essential in supplementing government efforts, especially during times of fiscal constraints. These collaborations mobilize additional resources, share expertise, and foster innovative solutions in re-skilling and employment facilitation. Their role is increasingly vital as we navigate fiscal challenges, allowing us to extend our reach and impact beyond traditional government channels. Such partnerships also foster innovative approaches that can accelerate transitions into formal employment sectors, supporting sustainable economic growth and broadening opportunities for those who face barriers to entry in the labour market.

However, amidst these efforts, we cannot ignore the existing shortfalls that threaten the integrity and effectiveness of our labour relations framework. The CCMA remains a cornerstone in mediating disputes and ensuring fair work practices, yet it faces significant resource and capacity constraints particularly on the Essential Services Programme where the entity maintains a flat budget, which may limit its capacity to address disputes in high-risk sectors. These limitations have led to case backlogs, delays in dispute resolution, and ultimately a compromise in workers' rights and

employer confidence. The situation undermines the foundational principles of labour justice, upon which our democratic gains are built. It is therefore imperative that we, as a committee, advocate strongly for the department to revisit budget allocations and resource planning. Our commitment must be to ensure that the department and all its entities are adequately funded, equipped with the latest technologies, and staffed sufficiently to perform its crucial mandate effectively.

Addressing these constraints involves exploring every possible avenue, including legislative measures and budgeting processes, to secure additional funding. It is crucial that we also focus on innovative enforcement strategies, including leveraging technology for compliance monitoring and enforcement. Enhancing capacity in this area allows us to target non-compliant employers more precisely, making enforcement both efficient and fair. Raising awareness among workers regarding their rights through targeted campaigns can further reduce exploitation, fostering a culture of compliance and accountability within the labour sector.

Moreover, the department's strategic focus emphasizes building an inclusive, resilient, and future-ready labour market. This entails aligning our policies with broader national development objectives while responding dynamically to emerging challenges. Hence, the Employment Equity Amendment Act is essential to strengthen enforcement, promote fair employment practices, and address disparities within the labour sector. Ensuring access to sustainable opportunities remains a top priority, especially for vulnerable populations, including youth, women, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities. In this regard, the expansion and continuous improvement of training programs and employment services are critical. Digital platforms play a vital role in enhancing service delivery and access, particularly in remote areas, thereby ensuring that no one is left behind in our efforts to rebuild the economy.

Strong collaboration with various stakeholders, including social partners and the private sector, is fundamental in these endeavours. Engagement with social partners is essential not only for oversight but also for effective policy implementation and reform. Continuous dialogue and partnership enable us to identify gaps, develop tailored interventions, and ensure accountability for results. The department's focus on fostering inclusive growth and promoting decent work aligns with the broader constitutional values of dignity, equality, and social justice. Viewing the budget not

merely as a financial allocation but as a strategic investment reinforces our collective responsibility to utilize resources efficiently for meaningful outcomes. Every rand spent should translate into tangible outcome, decent work, and sustainable livelihoods for our people.

As we look to the future, our commitment must be to work collaboratively towards addressing current challenges and building a resilient, inclusive, and fair labour market. This involves not only strengthening governance and enforcement but also innovating and adapting our policies to meet new realities. By doing so, we reaffirm our support to the strategic objectives of NDR that seek to transform lives, reduce inequality, and promote social justice. The journey ahead is undoubtedly challenging, but with strategic focus, collective resolve, and political will, we can overcome obstacles and create a more equitable economy for all our citizens.

Ultimately, our success relies on partnerships, proactive policy implementation, and rigorous oversight. We must continue engaging with stakeholders at all levels, listening to their concerns, and responding with effective solutions. Our role extends beyond oversight; we are partners in reform, innovation, and the realization of our national aspirations. Let us reaffirm our unwavering dedication to fostering a labour market that upholds the dignity of every worker, promotes inclusive growth, and contributes meaningfully to the social and economic development of our nation thereby creating employment opportunities. With collective resolve and unwavering commitment, we can turn these set goals into concrete realities, ensuring a brighter future for all.

*As the ANC we support this budget.*

*Thank You!!!*