



National Assembly – Mini Plenary Debate

Economic Transformation Cluster

Department of Employment and Labour

Budget Votes

Debate on Votes 31: Employment and Labour

19 May 2026

Cde M Nontsele

Honourable House Chairperson,

Honourable Minister

Honourable Deputy Ministers

Honourable Members of the Portfolio Committee of Employment and Labour

Esteemed Members of Parliament, colleagues, and guests,

Today, I rise to lend my unwavering support to Budget Vote 31: Employment and Labour, a budget vote that epitomizes our collective commitment as the African National Congress to confront and overcome the scourge of unemployment that continues to afflict our beloved South Africa. This budget is not merely an allocation of

resources but a decisive strategic intervention in our mission to reshape the labour market, empower workers, and promote inclusive economic growth.

At the heart of this effort lie two pivotal institutions: the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation, and Arbitration (CCMA) and the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac). These entities are cornerstones in the ANC's vision for a stable and just labour market, a vision informed by the values of our freedom struggle and the practical needs of economic transformation.

Honourable House Chair, the CCMA's significance cannot be overstated. It serves as the frontline of labour relations, providing an impartial and accessible forum for dispute resolution between employers and employees. Its role extends beyond dispute resolution; it fosters industrial peace, a prerequisite for economic productivity and job retention. The allocation in this budget aimed at enhancing the CCMA's digital transformation is a milestone. By leveraging modern technology, the CCMA will increase its efficiency, reduce the time taken to resolve labour disputes, and extend accessibility to all workers, especially those in vulnerable and underserved communities. Digitalisation paves the way for a responsive, transparent, and user-friendly service that is critical to maintaining labour market stability in an era defined by rapid economic and technological change.

Moreover, expanding the CCMA's capacity by building more conciliators is vital. Case backlogs not only delay justice but breed industrial tensions that threaten economic continuity and worker livelihoods. This budget enables the CCMA to address these bottlenecks decisively, reducing conflict and fostering an environment where employers and workers can collaborate productively.

Honourable House Chair, the CCMA also plays a proactive role in shaping the labour landscape through collective bargaining and social justice initiatives. These interventions are essential in addressing inequality and vulnerability in our workplaces, ensuring that the labour market becomes a tool for social transformation aligned with the ANC policy imperatives towards fairness and dignity for all workers as reflected in our 2026 January 8 Statement.

Complementing this is the indispensable role of Nedlac, the tripartite platform where government, labour, business and community converge to negotiate and build consensus on socio-economic policies. Nedlac embodies the spirit of social

partnership, a mechanism through which diverse interests find common ground and shared purpose. This is particularly important in our country, where historical divisions and socio-economic disparities necessitate dialogue that is both inclusive and robust.

“The ANC is committed to an inclusive and people-led National Dialogue that reflects the hopes, frustrations and aspirations of the South African people. The National Dialogue should produce a widely inclusive Social Compact with broad support to guide the country forward and inform future National Development Plans.” ANC 2026 January 8 Statement.

Honourable House Chair, the budget provides for strengthening Nedlac’s capacity to fulfil this mandate effectively. Targeted capacity-building for social partners ensures that all voices, especially of labour and community formations historically marginalized—are heard and meaningfully participate in policy discourse. Nedlac’s role in integrating climate change and just transition policies within its dialogue framework, in collaboration with the Presidential Climate Commission, is a forward-looking alignment with global imperatives that safeguard sustainable development and decent work.

Effective governance and budget oversight at Nedlac guarantee that this inclusive dialogue translates not only into discussions but into actionable socio-economic policies that drive growth, create jobs, and reduce poverty *in line with our 2024 Manifesto priorities especially Priority 2: Build our industries for an inclusive economy, by implementing a cross-cutting industrial strategy that drives growth and creates opportunities for youth and other unemployed persons.* Nedlac’s work promotes social cohesion by building trust amongst partners and mitigating labour market conflicts before they escalate, fostering a stable environment conducive to investment and employment.

Honourable House Chair, DEL supported by this budget, is poised to launch a direct, multi-dimensional fight against the skyrocketing unemployment crisis that afflicts our people. This crisis demands interventions that are strategic, institutionally supported, and socially inclusive.

In strengthening the CCMA, we are fortifying labour market stability by ensuring that workplace disputes are resolved efficiently, allowing businesses to operate uninterrupted and workers to secure their livelihoods. In empowering Nedlac, we

deepen social dialogue that informs policy imperatives reflective of shared national interests, fostering consensus that balances economic growth with worker protections.

Addressing legacy institutional challenges within these bodies remains critical, we must modernize, professionalize, and streamline processes to meet the demands of a dynamic and often volatile labour market. This budget is therefore a critical enabler of transformation within these institutions, ensuring that they better serve the workers, employers, and communities they represent.

Honourable House Chair, unemployment in South Africa is not merely a statistic—it is a human tragedy and an economic barrier. It undermines social cohesion and threatens the gains of our democratic order. Our commitment through this budget is to empower institutions that can deliver tangible results such as reduction in labour market conflicts, creation of sustainable jobs, improved worker protection, and inclusive social partnerships.

It is an ANC policy imperative to build an economy that works for all South Africans by fostering a labour market that is fair, inclusive, and conducive to growth. Budget vote 31 provides the necessary resources to propel this promise into concrete action.

I therefore urge this Assembly to support the proposed budget as an investment in the country's future, in the dignity of work, and in the social dialogue mechanisms that underpin a stable and prosperous South Africa.

Together, through CCMA and Nedlac, through firm government leadership and collaborative partnerships, we shall overcome the challenge of unemployment and build a society reflective of our shared aspirations for freedom, justice, and economic emancipation.

As the ANC we support this budget allocation

I thank you.