

**RESPONSES TO GROUNDUP FROM THEMBA GADEBE, SPOKESPERSON FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT MEC MBALI HLOPHE - 20/6/2024**

19. Was there any form of competitive bidding before Open Water was appointed? We understand Open Water is part of a National Treasury panel, but was there any selection process to choose Open Water and not any of the other members of the panel?

*From the information provided to the MEC by the Department, the Department reports that it requested to participate in the National Treasury panel, and was duly authorised. Following this, an appointment of Open Water was made, which is not inline with Treasury regulations; as a competitive process was to follow as part of the selection process for appointment of a qualifying service provider.*

20. The total cost of more than R8-million seems high for an investigation only for one small programme. What necessitated this high cost?

*The high costs forms part of the reasons why the MEC informed the Department to restart the process, and adhere to Treasury Regulations as it was evident that not only was a competitive process abandoned, the selection was equally questionable as there were lower bidders.*

21. Were the conditions of the PFMA instruction note met in the procurement of Open Water's services, as listed in question 16?

*Question 16 refers to deviations, this process is not classified as a deviation but an irregular appointment.*

22. Open Water has a sketchy track record, dating from when it investigated the Free State housing scandal and other conflicted investigations. It has been accused of furthering the interests of Ace Magashule. Did the department consider this before appointing Open Water?

23. Was the appointment of Open Water at all influenced by the department's MEC Mbali Hlophe and then HOD Matilda Gasela's past positions close to Ace Magashule?

*MEC Hlophe is on record (written and verbal) in her guidance for the Department to follow due process, and restart the appointment of a forensic firm to embark on the school uniform investigation. It's therefore odd to suggest that a person who has been firm in her disapproval of this irregular appointment, be accused of influencing that which she is on record to be against.*

24. The owner of Clinix Health Group, with whom GDSD has partnered with in the launch of Clinix Foundation's rehabilitation facility, is Peter Matseke, whose wife has also been implicated in Magashule's corrupt dealings in the Free State. Was the appointment of Matseke's company at all influenced by the MEC and former HOD's past positions close to Magashule?

*- Clinix Health Group together with the South African Defence Force were presented by the Department as partners the Department would increase on its substance abuse work with. Through the Department utilising the facilities of Clinix for additional bed space required for inpatients. And further with Defence; our partnership would entail both the programmatic aspects as well as renovation and usage of some of the facilities they would allocate for the substance abuse treatment program.*

*- Inline with the approval memo the Clinix facility was recommended and supported by the Director and Chief Director responsible, the CFO and ultimately the HOD. It's unclear why GroundUp persists on trying to entangle the MEC in Administrative work, when we have consistently indicated that there is a clear line between work embarked on by the Department as Administration, and that of the MECs or Executive Authorities.*

*- Clinix Health Group already works in the province with the Department of Health, and has been for many years. Additionally both the Department of Health and Social Development work together on substance abuse.*

*- It's therefore odd to attach the opposition leader of ACT into Gauteng Departmental work when the individual is not in government, nor is ACT as a political organisation voted in Gauteng.*

*Lastly, it's truly unfortunate that GroundUp or those who feed it with misinformation, evidently have a targeted agenda against the youngest MEC in the province, geared at tarnishing and destroying her prospects of growth. This is displayed by the attempts to connect her to wrong doing despite her being the only Executive to act on investigations which date as far back as 2016, to questioning of the good performance in both Departments under her tenure, to now attempting to link her to an opposition leader of a political party she does not belong too; simply because she once worked at Luthuli House for less than 2 years in the office of both the late ANC DSG Jesse Duarte and the former ANC SG Ace Magashula, who is no longer a member of the political organisation she has remained in.*

*These attempts are unfortunate and noted, but as the idiom goes "lies have short legs", it remains a fact; that upon the MEC learning of the irregularities pertaining to the appointment of Open Water, she immediately informed the Department to follow due process inline with Treasury Regulations. Additionally, informed by the designation of duties allocated to Executive Authorities, the MEC is not involved in Administrative work and plays an oversight role as prescribed.*

*The attempt therefore to create a web of corruption between her and the former HOD with Mr Magashule is odd, as MECs don't appoint HODs unless GroundUp suggests the Premier is equally involved in this adventurism cooked up.*