

Gauteng Care Crisis Committee

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

7 March 2024

****Gauteng Department of Social Development Under Fire for Slashing Budgets to Services for Vulnerable Persons****

The Gauteng Department of Social Development (GDSD) has cut R223 million from its 2024/25 budget for services to vulnerable persons. The facts of the cut were discovered by non-profit organisations (NPO) earlier this week following the announcement by Gauteng Treasury of the budget for the province. With less than a month to go before the start of the new financial year, the GDSD has yet to inform the NPO sector where the axe will fall.

“We reject the cuts and condemn the GDSD for failing to communicate its decisions to NPOs”, said the Gauteng Care Crisis Committee (GCCC), a network comprising over 50 organizations in the province.

“The cuts reflect a shocking disregard for vulnerable persons’ right to social care services. The way they are being made also demonstrates no ethic of care. Because the GDSD has failed to communicate which NPOs’ services will be reduced or terminated, it has been impossible to plan responsible processes to ensure that children, women who have experienced gender-based violence, older persons, and people with disabilities continue to receive services after 1 April. NPO staff live with uncertainty daily, not knowing if they will still be employed when March ends”, the GCCC continued.

The GCCC has been attempting to obtain information about the future of NPO services since June 2023. Letters seeking clarification on these budget cuts have been repeatedly ignored by the Head of Department, Matilda Gasela. With their most recent letters of November 2023 and January 2024 also receiving no reply, the GCCC turned to Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Social Development, Mbali Hlophe. On 6 March they wrote asking for information on an urgent basis. But as has become the norm, no response was received.

This latest development mirrors the crisis of 2023/24 when the DSD initially attempted to slash R417.6 million from the budget earmarked for social care services, inciting widespread protests from NPOs across the province. Although the Premier subsequently announced a reversal of the decision on 2 May 2023, funding was not restored in full; R172 million was still cut from NPO funding in 2023/24. What this means, taking this year’s cuts into account, is that vulnerable persons have lost R395 million worth of services between 2023/24 and 2024/25.

Analysis of funding databases submitted by the GDSD to the Portfolio Committee for Social Development substantiates these losses further. In 2022/23, 1 778 NPO services were funded by GDSD. In 2023/24, only 1 340 services were funded – a loss of 338 services that also translates into unemployment across the social care sector. This destruction of jobs in the NPO sector comes at a time when the GDSD lists creating employment as one of its priorities.

The GCCC rejects the budget cuts to vulnerable people's services and demands that the GDSD immediately start communicating the outcomes of their decisions on NPO business plans.

"We will fight to uphold people's rights to services. And we will insist on our rights to fair decision-making practices and processes" the GCCC concluded.

**All copies of correspondence with the GDSD are available on request from Lisa Vetten (0828226725).*

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End of Press Release