



Wes-Kaapse Provinsiale Parlement
Western Cape Provincial Parliament
IPalamente yePhondo leNtshona Koloni

WCPP 11/4/7

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Standing Committee on Community Safety, Cultural Affairs and Sport on its oversight visit to the Robben Island Museum on 17 October 2022

The Standing Committee on Community Safety, Cultural Affairs and Sport having conducted an oversight visit to the Robben Island Museum on 17 October 2022, reports as follows:

The delegation

The delegation of the Standing Committee on Community Safety, Cultural Affairs and Sport included the following Members:

Democratic Alliance

Bosman, G (Chairperson)

Baartman, DM

Fry, C

African National Congress

Bans, AP

Windvogel, R

Freedom Front Plus

Marais, PJ

Al Jama-ah

Brinkhuis, K

1. Introduction

The Standing Committee on Community Safety, Cultural Affairs and Sport conducted an oversight visit to the Robben Island Museum (RIM). The visit was preceded by a brief introductory meeting with the RIM Executive Council, led by Dr S Cooper. The RIM Chief Executive Officer, Ms A Thulare, was also in attendance, along with Mr S Tsanyane, representing the Office of the Director General of the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture (DSAC). Other senior officials of the RIM's key directorates were also in attendance.

2. Tour of Robben Island

After the introductions, the delegation proceeded to Robben Island via a ferry from the Nelson Mandela Gateway. The guided tour included the visitor's centre. There the delegation saw the spaces and facilities availed to prisoners and their visitors. Audio-visual displays provide recordings of interactions between prisoners, announcements made by prison officials, as well as interviews with various persons who experienced these visitor interactions.

Other displays included the artillery storerooms, the recreational areas where prisoners were allowed to gather, the various work and living areas. The delegation viewed several original and/or replica items on display, be it prisoner clothing or utensils. The delegation also visited the residence allocated to the Late Robert Sobukwe. There the delegation perused copies of his handwritten letters sent to, and/or received from, his family.

Throughout the tour the delegation engaged with the rich and historic exhibitions. All of which provide insight into the many histories linked to the Island, its former prisoners, its officials, and related matters.

The delegation also viewed other facilities such as the different holding cells for individual prisoners, as well as those grouped into a single larger area. Dr Cooper, himself a former struggle stalwart and prisoner, also showed the delegation his old prison cell, and that of the Late former president, Mr N Mandela.

The tour of the Island concluded at approximately 12h00. The delegation thereafter returned to the Nelson Mandela Gateway via ferry, for further interaction with the RIM Executive Council.

3. Key items from the discussion

Dr Cooper and Ms Thulare led proceedings and where needed; senior officials presented per directorate. The presentation focused on the RIM's relationships with various spheres of government, strategies to increase visitor interest post national lockdown restrictions and during the peak tourist peak times, the public outreach, and educational initiatives. Also addressed were matters concerning the preservation of the history of the Island, its former prisoners and prison staff, as well as any legacy aspects. The Island, as tourist attraction and national and international heritage site, requires infrastructural maintenance. In addition to being a beacon of history, it must also be equipped to move with global green economy trends. These items were also discussed, along with stakeholder strategies.

- 3.1. The RIM comprises of five main sites, namely, Robben Island, Nelson Mandela Gateway, Mayibuye Archives based at the University of the Western Cape, Jetty 1 and Quay 501.
- 3.2. The RIM has three key programmes that includes business development, public engagement, and administration.
- 3.3. The RIM is in the process of re-evaluating its relationship with its multi-stakeholder partnerships, particularly in the Western Cape. Several national departments are key stakeholders, and these include DSAC, the Department of Basic Education (DBE), There are ongoing negotiations with the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport with more engagements planned for 2023/24. The Heritage Western Cape council was also consulted for the initial studies regarding exposed human remains near the Island's Maximum-Security Prison. Both Cape Nature and the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB) are integral partners to ensure the preservation of the Island's biodiversity.

On a local government level, the City of Cape Town (CoCT) is another major stakeholder. The CoCT has been consulted on matters related to the management of Stikland Memorial Site.

The RIM has identified a need for a sports programme on the Island and has already explored a partnership with the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture.

- 3.4. In addition to the governmental partnerships, the RIM also engages with other structures such as the roleplayers in the national and local tourism industry, WESGRO, South African Airways, and Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa. Further partnerships with Standard Bank and First National Bank (FNB), are also being pursued, to enhance ticket sales. These partnerships seek to enhance the experience and accessibility of both local and international tourists.

- 3.5. In terms of legacy programmes, the Mayibuye Archive is the core component promoting and maintaining the heritage legacy programme. The Archives centre is also more accessible to university students and staff, school learners, as well as the broader public. There is also a programme based at the Mayibuye Archives, to digitise records.
- 3.6. The Ex-Political Prisoners (EPPs) project is underway. The project is undertaken nationally and seeks to document the life histories of EPPs. Research assistants/ambassadors from the Western Cape, are employed to assist on the project. A similar process used to record the accounts from the prison warders who were employed on Robben Island (during the struggle years).
- 3.7. The RIM has an educational outreach programme, a Spring School, nation youth building camps, a seminar programme, and an internship programme. The outreach programme targets 23 000 learners and educators, for school visits annually. The purpose of this programme is to encourage critical and holistic understanding of the Island. Classified as a World Heritage Site, the Island has deep rooted and layered histories, both socio-political and in terms of human rights, as well as valued biodiverse environment, requiring careful and progressive maintenance. The Spring School is a weeklong residency programme, themed Isivivane Solwazi, a Nguni term referring to a place of memories, incidents, and experiences, of a diverse group of people spanning different timelines. The nation youth building camps promote a sense of citizenship amongst the youth with a focus on the promotion of human rights. The seminar programme functions similar to the education outreach programme, in that it seeks critical engagement on the many histories of the Island. The last component of the educational arm is that of an internship programme to empower graduates through the transfer of valuable heritage and museum industry skills and experiences.
- 3.8. Robben Island is equipped with engineering and marine systems and services, such as system plants, marine installations and roads. There are 479 buildings, and several historic sites. The horticultural environment requires maintenance, as well as overall landscaping of the Island.
- 3.9. Some of the major successes include the published Built Environment Conservation Manual to monitor and evaluate the built environment. This is to ensure compliance to the various legislative requirements and best practice standards. The RIM also developed an Asbestos Management Plan and a Waste Management Plan.
- 3.10. Several major infrastructure and maintenance projects include the installation of a new floating jetty at Murrays Bay Harbour, the restoration of both the Bluestone quarry and Maximum - Security Prison Cells. The Visitors' Centre is earmarked for upgrade and restoration. The RIM reported repair and maintenance work of houses in the village precinct and sports facilities.
- 3.11. To improve sustainable water and power supply, interventions such as the implementation of an Integrated Resource Management Plan, the construction of a new desalination plant and the upgrade of the Photovoltaic (PV) Plant's battery capacity, are being planned. These upgrades will continue and improve the green projects, as part of a wholesome strategy to be more environmentally efficient. The development of five-year Asbestos Management Plan will seek to safely eradicate asbestos materials. There will be an assessment and replacement of the water reticulation system as the current system is deteriorating. An adaptive re-use programme will seek to re-purpose existing buildings and facilities. Some of these facilities are also deteriorating.

- 3.12. The Committee noted that current management model for Robben Island, with multiple government stakeholders having responsibilities for funding different aspects of infrastructural maintenance of the Island, has negatively affected the maintenance standards.
- 3.13. The Committee looks forward to engaging with the RIM to get an update on how it will incorporate the histories of other political prisoners. The Committee is especially interested in how the RIM frames the histories of political prisoners from the Western Cape.
- 3.14. The Committee will invite the RIM, Heritage Western Cape, the Western Cape Cultural Commission, the City of Cape Town's Heritage Unit, the Western Cape Provincial Archives and Records, and the District Six Museum, to share some of the work that they are doing to showcase and bring to prominence the contribution of all forgotten heroes of the struggle.



MR G BOSMAN, MPP

**CHAIRPERSON: STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SAFETY, CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND SPORT
WESTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT**