



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

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Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning on the 2022/23 Annual Reports of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, and its Entity CapeNature, for the year ended 31 March 2023.

The Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, having deliberated on the Annual Reports of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning and its Entity, CapeNature, for the year ended 31 March 2023, referred to it, reports as follows:

1. Introduction

Section 113(3)(b) of the Constitution requires that “Members of the Executive Council of a province must provide the legislature with full and regular reports concerning matters under their control.” Section 65 of the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 1 of 1999) requires the Minister of each Department and public entity to table an annual report in the legislature within six months of the end of each financial year.

As part of its oversight function, the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (the Committee) deliberated on the Annual Reports of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (the Department) and its Entity, CapeNature, on 17 October 2023.

Annual reports are the key instruments for departments to report on performance measured against their performance targets and budgets as outlined in their Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans.

The Annual Report Programme for the 2022/23 financial year was advertised in various newspapers, inviting stakeholders and members of the public to participate in the discussions.

The Committee deliberated on Part A: General Information, Part B: Performance Information and Part D: Human Resource Management of the respective Annual Reports.

2. Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning

2.1 Overview

The year under review was a challenging year due to the lingering impact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of loadshedding. This resulted in an increasing number of service delivery pressures which was exacerbated by limited fiscal resources. However, the Department ensured the continuation of its services and the achievement of its targets as set out in its Annual Performance Plan. The Department ensured that Environmental and Spatial Resilience, together

with Climate Change Responses and Water Resilience, were included as part of the Priority Focus Areas of the Growth for Jobs Strategy.

The budget constraints had a particular impact on the Air Quality Management Directorate as it had to decommission the air quality stations in Hout Bay and Oudtshoorn. This was aggravated by the high levels of loadshedding.

Key highlights for the year under review included the Department being recognised as the leading provincial department in administering and managing Environmental Impact Assessment projects in South Africa by the Environmental Assessment Practitioners Association of South Africa. These authorisations were often one of the first legislative requirements for new developments, and as such, played a critical role in the speed with which projects could be completed.

Waste minimisation to landfills was a focus point for the Department where it worked closely with municipalities. Through the Waste Management Directorate, the Department had set ambitious targets to reduce the volumes of waste that reach landfill sites. Recycling, composting and several awareness community initiatives were designed and will continue to be emphasised. There was also an ongoing focus on organic waste management and its diversion.

The Western Cape Biodiversity Act, 2023 (Act 6 of 2021), was assented to by the Premier on 14 December 2021, and was being implemented in a phased process during the year under review.

The Green Scorpions were honoured during the Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Lekgotla Awards of Excellence Event in 2023 for the Best Enforcer (Administrative Enforcement) and for Best Compliance Team (COVID-19 Blitz Operations). The Unit was also recognised with Environmental Management Information Long Service Awards, which reflected well on the Department's institutional knowledge and continuity within the unit.

During 2022/23 the Department worked closely with the Western Cape Department of Local Government on the development of the 15-Year Western Cape Integrated Drought and Water Response Plan and also participated in the internal and external Water Indabas which were coordinated by the Department of Local Government during the year.

The Department managed to maintain its clean audit outcome.

3. CapeNature

3.1 Overview

The core mandate of CapeNature was the conservation of biodiversity in the Western Cape. It was clear to the Committee that it was becoming increasingly more difficult to execute this task because of the poor economic climate. Other factors hampering the execution of CapeNature's core mandate included climate change, resulting in extreme weather conditions, droughts, floods and fires. The huge increase in biodiversity crime, and increasing urbanisation also impacted on the ability of Cape Nature to do the work that they were meant to do.

Despite these challenges, CapeNature continued to strengthen good governance and achieved good results in the past financial year. This resulted in another unqualified audit for the eighth consecutive year. The Entity's performance indicators that were distributed throughout its programmes were aligned to that of the Western Cape Government and 100% of all

predetermined objectives were achieved and performance in some of the objectives were exceeded.

Highlights for the year under review included the generation of 608 full time equivalent employment contracts against a target of 450, and the creation of 1 105 work opportunities through the Small and Medium Enterprise Contractors in the reserves.

While the Entity had to reduce their conservation estate slightly by the de-proclamation of the Driftsands Nature Reserve, the protected area estate expanded by 9 905 hectares.

Eco-tourism was a key source of income for the Entity. The Entity's tourism income performance exceeded expectations and totaled R51 million in the 2021/22 financial year. In the year under review the Entity managed to generated R61 million in tourism revenue demonstrating that it had not only recovered from the effects of the pandemic, but also outperformed pre-pandemic tourism income performance.

4. Resolutions/Actions

The Committee REQUESTED that the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning provides it with:

- 4.1 A written response on how the Capital Expenditure Framework will be amended in light of the looming budget cuts;
- 4.2 A summary of the 14 Regional Socio-Economic Projects with specific reference to the type of project and what it aims to achieve, who stands to benefit, and how and why these projects were selected;
- 4.3 A copy of the latest Integrated Coastal Management Plan; and
- 4.4 The status of the phased implementation approach of certain sections of the Western Cape Biodiversity Act, 2021 (Act 6 of 2021) by outlining the sections that have already been implemented and providing a draft timeline for the sections still to be implemented.

5. Conclusion

The Committee congratulated the Department and CapeNature on sterling work and was satisfied that the predetermined objectives for the 2022/23 financial year were adequately achieved and that it was accurately reported.

The Committee noted its appreciation for the responses of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning and CapeNature to the scrutiny of the Annual Reports and thanked the Minister, Head of Department, Board Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of CapeNature, as well as the officials for their contributions and efforts in this regard.

A special word of thanks was extended to the Chief Executive Officer, Dr Razeena Omar, for her dedicated service and leadership as she prepared to retire at the end of December 2023.



MR AP VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, MPP

**CHAIRPERSON: STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND
DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**

DATE: 21 November 2023