



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

Ref: WCPP 11/6/8

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Standing Committee on Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning on the Annual Reports of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning and CapeNature for the 2023/24 financial year.

The Standing Committee on Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning having deliberated on the Annual Reports of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning and CapeNature for the 2023/24 financial year, reports as follows:

1. Introduction

The Annual Reports of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning and CapeNature for the financial year ended 31 March 2024 was tabled on 30 September 2024 in accordance with section 65(1)(a) of the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 1 of 1999), as amended.

As part of its oversight function, the Standing Committee on Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (the Committee) deliberated on the Annual Reports of the Department and CapeNature on 14 October 2024. 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. In addition, hereto, it accounts for the success of each programme that was implemented.

Standing Rule 111(1)(a) of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament provides standing committees with the mandate to consider departmental annual reports submitted in accordance with the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 1 of 1999).

The Annual Report Programme for the 2023/243 financial year was advertised in newspapers to invite stakeholders and members of the public to attend and participate in the discussions.

The Committee deliberated on Part A: General Information, Part B: Performance Information and Part D: Human Resource Management, after which the Chairperson afforded an opportunity to the public to ask questions to the Department.

The Committee proceeded to engage with the Department by asking questions on Parts A, B and D of the Annual Report. All questions were satisfactorily answered and the Committee was satisfied that the Department achieved its predetermined objectives for the 2023/24 financial year and that it was accurately reported on.

2. Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning

Overview

The world is facing unprecedented environmental pressures and grappling with the risks of climate change. The 2023 World Economic Forum's Global Risk Report identifies the top four global risks for the next decade as failure to mitigate climate change, failure to adapt to climate change, natural disasters and extreme weather and biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse.

In the Western Cape, these risks have manifested in significant events:

- **Infrastructure Damage:** R3,5bn worth of infrastructure was destroyed in two flooding events in June and September 2023.
- **Coastal Damage:** Extensive damages along the coastline due to storm surges.
- **Fire Season:** An extremely busy fire season in 2023-2024, with over 135,000 hectares of veld burned, stretching firefighting resources to their limits.

Climate change is a pressing reality for South Africa and the Western Cape, with predictions indicating a hotter, drier province, and more extreme droughts and floods. The Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning addresses long-term environmental dynamics and future development planning. Effective planning and enforcement of environmental laws are crucial to prevent escalating natural disasters

and protect remaining biodiversity. Without ecologically sensitive development, the region risks continuous natural disasters.

Under the leadership of Minister Bredell and the Senior and Middle Management team, the Department successfully continued its services and achieved its targets in 2023/24 despite significant challenges. The focus was on key enablers of the Western Cape Government's Growth for Jobs Strategy and the One Health approach, addressing Wellbeing and Safety priorities.

Despite budget cuts impacting operational efficiencies, the Department strategically aligned with the Growth for Jobs (G4J) and One Health initiatives to maintain efficiency. Continuous improvement processes ensured the Department's ability to meet its mandates and strategic priorities, with highly competent public servants delivering services directly to citizens.

Efforts to enhance productive efficiencies included leveraging Communication and Information Technology improvements for cost-effective service delivery. The progress made in various programmes and strategies during 2023/24 has established a strong foundation for advancing the Growth for Jobs Strategy and other Provincial recovery plan priorities.

These strategies aim to sustain the Department's ability to meet its mandates and deliver on strategic priorities effectively. The Department achieved over 90% of its targets for the year.

3. CapeNature

The year under review marks the fourth year of the five-year strategic cycle. As with the previous two years, CapeNature achieved all targets outlined in the Annual Performance Plan. These targets encompass activities relevant to our biodiversity conservation mandate and the creation of opportunities for the people of the Western Cape.

In fulfilling our primary conservation responsibilities, CapeNature provide employment opportunities and contribute to the economy, particularly in remote areas with limited economic prospects. Revenue generated through ecotourism and nature-based experiences is crucial for our sustainability. Tourism income was increased by 7% year-on-year, driven by a rise in day and overnight visitors to its nature reserves.

CapeNature is constitutionally mandated to conserve the biodiversity of the Western Cape, which includes diverse habitats such as parts of the Karoo, protected marine and coastal reserves, numerous islands, rivers, estuaries, and the Cape Floral Kingdom.

CapeNature's conservation efforts, as prescribed by the Constitution, include:

- **Conserving Biodiversity:** It includes the Cape Floral Kingdom. This smallest plant kingdom in the world, covering only 0.04% of the Earth's landmass, boasts around 9,000 to 10,000 species, many of which are found nowhere else.
- **Sustainable Biodiversity Economy:** This involves developing a sustainable biodiversity economy so that everyone can derive benefits from our natural heritage.
- **Climate Change and Water Resilience:** Addressing climate change and water resilience is crucial to mitigate water shortages by managing catchment areas, often infested with alien vegetation. Effective catchment management also aids in fire management, a significant issue in the Cape.

CapeNature managed to spend 97% of their total budget on an accrual basis and 97% on a cash basis. The slow economic growth and resultant reductions to the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) allocations required them to utilize savings from generated income to ensure that service delivery was not impacted. CapeNature's work is critical for both current and future generations.

4. Resolutions

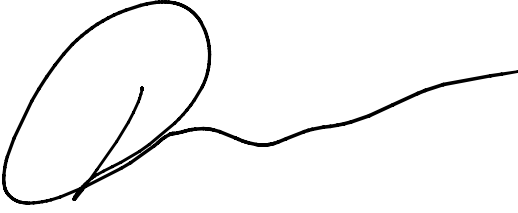
The Committee RESOLVED:

- 4.1 That the Department and CapeNature consider increasing their collaboration with the Expanded Public Works Programme to create job opportunities and alleviate poverty, particularly in rural and remote areas of the Western Cape; and
- 4.2 That the Procedural Officer gather information on whether a briefing was conducted on the Environmental Commissioner and to provide an update on the status.

4. Conclusion

The Committee commended the Department for their performance during the 2023/24 financial year. The Department received an unqualified audit opinion and successfully achieved over 90% of their planned targets.

The Chairperson thanked the Members of the Committee, the Minister, the Head of Department and all the officials of the Department for their preparation and responses to the questions raised by the Committee.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' followed by a series of connected loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

MR D BRYANT, MPP

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