

Tuesday, 26 May 2026]

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PARLIAMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF THE WESTERN CAPE

ANNOUNCEMENTS, TABLINGS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

TUESDAY, 26 MAY 2026

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Service Delivery Cluster Committees on its oversight visit to George and Mossel Bay, from 23 - 24 February 2026, as follows:

Delegation

The delegation consisted of the following members:

Mr D Bryant (DA)
Mr K Brinkhuis (Al Jama-ah)
Mr N Constable (PA)
Mr B Herron (GOOD)
Ms T Lithakong (EFF)
Mr N Masipa (DA) (Coordinating Chairperson and leader of the delegation)
Prof N Mbombo (DA)
Mr B Ngqentsu (ANC)
Ms N Nkondlo (ANC)
Mr B Petrus (PA)
Ms B Stoffel (ANC)
Mr L van Wyk (DA)
Mr D Wessels (DA)

The following staff attended the visit week:

Adams, Z (Procedural Officer)
Jones, S (Procedural Officer)
Mshumpela, N (Committee Assistant)
Niekerk, S (Procedural Officer) (Coordinating Procedural Officer)

Service delivery committees (Cluster B)

The following Committees took part in the visit week:

Standing Committee on Infrastructure; Standing Committee on Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism; Standing Committee on Finance; Standing Committee on Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning; and the Standing Committee on Mobility.

1. Introduction

The Joint Visit Week is a key mechanism established by the Western Cape Provincial Parliament to achieve its constitutional oversight mandate within the province. The visit week is intended to ensure that members of the Provincial Parliament, through its standing committees, continuously keep abreast of development and service delivery issues in the province. It also affords the opportunity to undertake oversight visits and interact with communities and institutions to assess the needs and challenges they experience.

To this end, the Western Cape Provincial Parliament's Cluster B committees undertook oversight visits to George and Mossel Bay to consult and interact with provincial and local government officials and community members as part of its oversight mandate.

This report highlights the delegation's findings and recommendations stemming from the visits.

2. Briefing by the Mossel Bay Municipality: Monday 23 February 2026

2.1 Overview and background

Briefing by the Mossel Bay Municipality on the Seawater Desalination Plant in Mossel Bay that was constructed in 2010 as an emergency intervention during the region's severe drought, when dam levels including Wolwedans dam levels dropped to critically low levels. Built at an approximate cost of R210 million and jointly funded by National Treasury, PetroSA, and the Mossel Bay Municipality, the plant was designed to produce 15 megaliters of potable water per day, supplying both the Municipality and PetroSA's refinery during the crisis.

The Municipality indicated that the plant was always intended for emergency use only and that the decision to place it in standby mode was a strategic decision taken once dam levels recovered and emergency conditions no longer prevailed, rather than being solely cost-driven. The plant was currently maintained under preservation maintenance to ensure it can be commissioned at short notice should emergency conditions arise. Despite limited operational use since commissioning, it remained a critical strategic asset for drought resilience and provided valuable operational experience to inform future desalination initiatives within the province and nationally.

2.2 Key issues discussed

The delegation noted inconsistencies in the agreements between PetroSA and the Mossel Bay Municipality. Concerns were raised regarding the outstanding fees that PetroSA still owes to the Municipality.

The Municipality did not provide alternative water saving strategies to complement the existing desalination plant, which continues to receive substantial financial investment and is positioned as their flagship initiative. While longer-term alternative energy options remained important for municipal planning, the Municipality indicated that the desalination plant was located on PetroSA-owned land and was exempt from load shedding, ensuring uninterrupted electricity supply during periods of emergency operation.

The competencies of the officials operating the desalination plant were not clearly defined, particularly regarding whether the officials' skills and qualifications meet the required

regulatory standards. The potential risk that officials may face limited career opportunities if their current qualifications did not meet recognised industry standards were also highlighted. Concerns were raised regarding the potential environmental impact of brine discharge. However, it was indicated that the plant has not operated for extended periods, limiting the availability of long-term environmental impact data. Inspections conducted during limited test operations did not indicate immediate harm, and it was noted that some environmental impacts associated with brine discharge remain speculative in the absence of sustained operation.

Visit to Mossel Bay Seawater Desalination Plant: Monday, 23 February 2026

During the visit, the delegation was able to observe the plant's operations as well as how the facility was managed. The plant was being kept under "preservation maintenance" to ensure it remained ready for commissioning whenever required. The delegation was shown the weekly preservation process, during which the reverse osmosis units were treated with a chemical to protect the integrity of the membranes. They were also shown how the sand filters were washed weekly to keep process personnel familiar with plant operations and to prevent the sand from settling and hardening.

They explained how additional routine maintenance was carried out on rotating equipment to prevent bearing pitting, and the dosing pumps were run once a month to ensure they remain operational. The plant infrastructure had been coated with a three-layer epoxy system to protect against atmospheric corrosion and to extend its remaining useful life. The delegation was informed that all statutory 36-month inspections on pressure vessels were also kept up to date.

2.3 Information requested

The delegation REQUESTED that the Mossel Bay Municipality provide the delegation with a report on:

- 2.3.1 Agreements between the Municipality and PetroSA, as the delegation remains concerned about inconsistencies within these agreements and the outstanding fees owed to the Municipality.
- 2.3.2 The climate research, forecasting, and long-term planning that informed the project at its inception. This is to ascertain the extent of research conducted before the plant began operating. The plant desalination was initiated in 2010, when climate change was already a significant global issue. The project did not account for the substantial rainfall the Western Cape received soon thereafter and in subsequent years, resulting in the plant being used minimally over its 16-year lifespan.
- 2.3.3 Additional water saving measures under consideration, investigate the feasibility of integrating alternative energy sources such as solar power, submit a cost benefit analysis comparing conventional electricity with renewable options, and outline a comprehensive long-term plan that diversifies both water saving and energy sourcing methods.
- 2.3.4 All funding streams associated with the desalination plant project, specifically indicating whether the financing is derived solely from municipal funds or whether there is any contribution from the provincial government.
- 2.3.5 The current annual expenditure associated with the maintenance and operation of the plant, including costs incurred during periods of inactivity and during emergency activation. The report must indicate, for each financial year since the plant's establishment, the number of times the plant has been activated and the corresponding operational costs. Additionally, the Municipality is requested to specify who is responsible for covering these expenses and to identify the precise budget vote or departmental allocation from which these costs are being funded.
- 2.3.6 The qualifications, certifications, and relevant unit standards of all process controllers operating the desalination plant, given the concern regarding potential gaps in required certification and the fact that desalination is not currently included in existing standards

frameworks. This information is necessary to determine whether the skills of these officials align with regulatory expectations and to assess any risks to their professional mobility should they seek employment elsewhere. The report will further enable the Delegation to consider whether the matter should be referred to the relevant education or training authorities for the possible development or alignment of standards.

- 2.3.7 The environmental effects associated with the desalination plant's operations, specifically regarding the extraction of seawater from its current offshore distance and the discharge of brine back into the marine environment. The report should outline their assessment of any actual or potential negative impacts of brine disposal on the receiving marine area, together with any mitigation measures applied or recommended. This information is required to enable the Delegation to fully understand the environmental implications of the plant's operations

2.4 Resolutions/Actions

The delegation RESOLVED to conduct a follow-up meeting to consider matters relating to desalination plants, particularly in view of the province's recent return to drought conditions and the City of Cape Town's renewed desalination initiatives following earlier commissioning and decommissioning cycles. The Delegation will further explore the possibility of inviting the Department of Local Government, together with municipalities that have practical experience in establishing or operating desalination facilities, to provide insights and share lessons learned. This engagement will support the Delegation in developing a good understanding of the feasibility, operational challenges, and resource requirements associated with desalination projects, including the identification of appropriate complementary water augmentation measures that should accompany any future desalination strategy.

3. Briefing by the Department of Local Government, at the Mossel Bay Joint Operations Centre: Monday 23 February 2026

3.1 Overview and background

Briefing by the Department of Local Government, the Garden Route District Municipality and Mossel Bay Municipality on the causes and impact of the recent wildfires in the province, the status of the wildfires and the funding challenges in respect of fire management. The delegation was also briefed on the extent of the impact of the wildfires, the response measures implemented and the recovery considerations.

In 2023, the Western Cape received a significant amount of rainfall with four declared flood disasters, which resulted in a massive increase in vegetation development during that period. The province also experienced major growth of alien vegetation during that time. This was accompanied by recent higher temperatures ranging between 30°C and 35°C and elevated wind patterns, which then resulted in the recent intense wildfires and rapid spread of the fires in October 2025 to early 2026. There were also potential arson or malicious ignition factors that could have caused the wildfire.

3.2 Key issues discussed

- 3.2.1 The Western Cape has been called a "fire ecology", which meant that most of the fynbos and biodiversity found in the province relied on fire for survival or reproduction. The typical/peak wildfire season usually began in early November and would run through until about April; however, the province experienced an earlier start to its wildfire season in 2025, with activity and concerns already emerging in early October 2025. By early November the wildfire activity was already widespread. The Department of Local Government anticipated that the wildfire season would extend into winter (May/June

- 2026). The Western Cape was also entering another drier cycle, thereby exacerbating the fire risk.
- 3.2.2 There were 632 vegetation fires in one week (10 to 17 November 2025) within the City of Cape Town. Other recorded fires included a major wildfire in the Overberg region, Cape Winelands, McGregor, Witzenberg and Matroosberg.
 - 3.2.3 The Western Cape experienced wildfire season during summer while provinces in the north of South Africa experienced wildfire season during winter. The fire support resources were shared between these provinces; therefore, the longer a fire season lasted, the riskier it became because there was a possibility that these resources would no longer be available for the province.
 - 3.2.4 In terms of wildfire prevention and readiness, the Department of Local Government relied on research and technology to monitor fire-prone areas, past fire damaged areas, weather conditions and infrastructure locations. This allowed the Department of Local Government to plan its recourse in respect of tackling potential wildfires. The Department also used satellite images to identify where the fire outbreaks were and where the fires were spreading to.
 - 3.2.5 There were a total of 23 aircrafts on contract to the Western Cape Government, placed at Porterville, Stellenbosch, Bredasdorp, George and Newlands, and 36 runways available throughout the province to provide logistical support to these aircrafts.
 - 3.2.6 In addition to the aerial support, the Western Cape had a total of 1 550 municipal firefighters, who were supported by 1 020 seasonal firefighters and 31 contracted teams comprising of 830 firefighters and contracted specialized crews.
 - 3.2.7 A national disaster classification was issued for drought and water security in February 2026, which would impact on the wildfire containment measures. At the time, the Department of Local Government had also requested a classification for a national disaster for the wildfires as it was expected that the wildfire season would surpass the month of March. This would allow for the province to receive additional funding and resources if the wildfires continued. The Department of Local Government was also in the process of managing the foot and mouth disease outbreak from their centre in Cape Town which added pressure to their already limited resources.
 - 3.2.8 A Fire Data Index (FDI) warning had been issued 24 out of the 31 days in December 2025, which was unprecedented. Historically, 2015 was the busiest fire season with 133 000 hectares of land that had been destroyed by fire. Since November 2025, 222 000 hectares of land had already burned in the Western Cape, and a total of 45 structures (mostly in the garden route region) had been destroyed by the fires. Regarding aerial resources, a total of 68 missions were undertaken at a cost of R20 million, which is twice the expenditure incurred in the previous financial year.
 - 3.2.9 The University of Stellenbosch was in the process of conducting a study on the impact of wind. The research has not been released yet, but the indication so far was that the 2025/2026 windy season was the windiest season recorded in the Western Cape to date. This was the biggest issue when it came to wildfires. The fire was driven by wind speeds that reached over 70 kilometres per hour.
 - 3.2.10 The wildfires resulted in a significant loss to livestock and game. The wildfires have displaced residents and farmers, and destroyed vast stretches of veld, which has left farmers with the additional challenge of feeding their animals. The agriculture sector was the hardest hit sector. The wine sector was also heavily impacted and there were long term concerns for this industry because of extent of the damage in some areas. The wildfires also occurred during the peak tourism season, which negatively affected the tourism and hospitality sector. There were also concerns about the damage to the fynbos ecosystem, long term habitat loss, beekeeping and hive losses, and the rapidly mounting costs to contain wildfires.
 - 3.2.11 The 2025/26 fire season was the most severe fire season since 2015, and a prolonged fire risk was expected for the Southern Cape due to a relatively dry winter season and limited rainfall expectations until March 2026. The Department of Local Government

noted the need for a reprioritization of the budget to assist with the remainder of the prolonged fire season. Aircraft alone cannot contain wildfire; ground resources are also necessary.

- 3.2.12 The objective of the request for wildfires to be declared a national disaster was also to ensure that there were post-disaster recovery support and rehabilitation, additional special arrangements for the prolonged fire season, to accelerate and streamline funding allocations, and to improve inter-departmental and cross-functional coordination. In terms of national process, a national disaster is classified first, then declared. The wildfire outbreak in the province was classified as a national disaster, but at that point it had not yet been declared. A classification allowed for the identification of the sphere of government that was responsible for the disaster, while a declaration allowed for additional powers to be assigned to tackle the disaster.
- 3.2.13 Limited compliance with the National Veld and Forest Fire Act, 1998 (Act 101 of 1998) was a challenge. Chapter 4, Section 12 of the Act mandated that every owner of land should prepare and maintain firebreaks on their property, specifically on boundary sides where fires could start or spread to adjacent land. This was a preventative measure to reduce fire hazards. There was also an obligation to curb the growth and spread of alien vegetation as it reduced the effectiveness of firebreaks. Landowners were encouraged to create and maintain firebreaks on their properties. A major challenge was that some landowners lived abroad and neglected their duties in respect of the Act. The municipality was unable to take on the cost of these fire prevention strategies for the landowners; however, they played an active role in educating and encouraging them to implement fire reduction precautions. The incident rate has since reduced. Educating the community and landowners appeared to be more efficient than taking the legal route, which was often a prolonged approach.
- 3.2.14 In terms of the wildfires experienced in the Mossel Bay area, the Department of Local Government, Mossel Bay Municipality and the Garden Route District Municipality coordinated efforts to contain the fires, which destroyed several homes and displaced several Mossel Bay residents. The wind played a major role in escalating the situation, with the fire bolting through wind tunnels in the region. The air quality was also compromised, which added to the chaos. The team released media statements to keep residents aware of the situation and to dispel some of the “fake news” that was making the rounds in the area.
- 3.2.15 For the Mossel Bay wildfire, the team received assistance from various stakeholders, the community and neighbouring firefighting crews; however, there were constraints within the municipalities to tackle these disasters such as lack of funding, the time it took to redirect essential resources, and limited human resource capacity (vacant posts). There were approximately 70 vacant posts within the Mossel Bay Municipality’s fire service that had to be funded, but this depended on the budget. When budgets were cut, posts could not be filled. There were also constraints in respect of the response from the Garden Route District Municipality, which was based in George, approximately 54 kilometres away from Mossel Bay.
- 3.2.16 There was a concern that there was limited assistance with fire outbreaks in informal settlements. The Garden Route District Municipality explained that they were not primarily responsible for fire outbreaks in informal settlements; however, they assisted regularly when they were called upon to assist. The Mossel Bay Municipality was the only municipality in the country that sent its firefighting crews to shebeens to educate the local community members about fire safety. The crews also visit various communities within the Mossel Bay area once a month to educate them about fire prevention. The Mossel Bay Municipality also created a fire alarm project where they have installed fire alarms in homes in informal settlements. Illegal electrical connections were a major challenge due to livewire hazards; however, this issue was being tackled with buy-in from communities.

3.3 Resolutions/Actions

3.3.1 The delegation REQUESTED the following from the Department of Local Government:

- 3.3.1.1 A breakdown of what the insurance on the three helicopters belonging to the Joint Operations Centre covered;
- 3.3.1.2 A report explaining how funding worked for the aerial resources;
- 3.3.1.3 A report on the lessons learnt from the 2025/26 fire season, their advice to municipalities in respect of fire preventative measures and vegetation clearance, and the resources that should be made available to effectively combat fires;
- 3.3.1.4 A report on whether a submission was made to the budget for fire services, in respect of the 2026/2027 budget, and the response to this submission;
- 3.3.1.5 A report on the 70 unfunded posts, the measures taken to resolve this matter, and the reasons these posts have not been filled; and
- 3.3.1.6 A report listing the municipalities that received smoke alarms and the areas within these municipalities that received smoke alarms.

4. Public Meeting Management on the management of backyard dwellers in the George area: Monday 23 February 2025

4.1 Overview and background

The George Municipality briefed the delegation on the escalating growth of backyard dwellings in the municipal area. They also outlined the shift toward a structured, legally compliant strategy aimed at improving safety, dignity, and living conditions for thousands of households. The presentation outlined the adoption of the Strategic Framework for Backyard Accommodation, zoning reforms, upgraded service-delivery policies, and the introduction of individual prepaid electricity meters. It further explained actions across human settlement planning, emergency housing support, social housing development, and building compliance processes, while emphasising that demolition was used only as a last resort. The presentation also clarified the indigent policy, stressing that although backyard dwellers were assessed independently, their eligibility still depended on the main household qualifying for indigent status, ensuring targeted subsidy allocation while supporting sustainable, incremental upgrading.

The presentation by the Department of Infrastructure outlined the Department's efforts to improve living conditions for backyard dwellers by addressing challenges such as insufficient housing budgets, lack of basic services, safety hazards, exploitation through shared services, and tenure insecurity, while highlighting that 14% of the national population lived in informal housing, including backyard units. It detailed province wide housing demand database verification drives, noting that only one in three backyarders were registered, and showed how integrated human settlement programmes rather than backyarder specific ones were used to deliver housing opportunities in areas with high numbers of backyard households. The presentation further explained the funding mechanisms that supported these efforts, reported on the 2024/25 housing-delivery performance and the planned outputs for 2025/26, and showcased the City of Cape Town's Backyarder Services Programme, which improved services through infrastructure such as prepaid meters, water points, and toilets. It concluded with recommendations to expand verification drives, scale services beyond metros, strengthen policy frameworks, and enhance tenure security and infrastructure investment.

4.2 Oral submissions

Oral submissions were made by ten individuals who participated in the public engagement. The submissions were summarised as follows:

- 4.2.1 Ms Emelda Cupido, noted that most community members did not qualify for home loans. She explained that although systems were put in place to enable community members to access housing opportunities, the units were ultimately sold to private-sector buyers at a cost of R1,6 million.
- 4.2.2 A community member from George questioned why residents were now required to obtain permits for constructing wheelchair ramps. He explained that the process of securing a building plan was difficult, especially since he was already on the housing waiting list yet was still required to apply for a permit. He asked why building plans were necessary at this stage.
- 4.2.3 Edmund Boesak questioned why the land at Crocodile Farm was not being utilised for Social Housing. He further recommended that developers be educated and empowered to construct housing within their own communities.
- 4.2.4 Jacobus Gertse noted that there were approximately 24 000 people on the George housing waiting list. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that communities were properly informed of public engagements so that residents could speak for themselves. He further expressed concern that newcomers to George appeared to receive more opportunities than long standing members of the local community.
- 4.2.5 Chantal Kidd from the GOOD Party informed the delegation that the housing need in the George area was severe, with most residents living as backyard dwellers. She stressed that a person's dignity should not be determined by where they live. She also reported that community members residing in backyard structures were being asked to provide building plans. Furthermore, she highlighted that the demand for housing far exceeded the Municipality's delivery capacity. She reiterated that there were no alternative housing options available to adequately meet the needs of the community.
- 4.2.6 Chief van Staden stated that he had been on the housing waiting list for 30 years. He alleged that his sister's house had been allocated to someone else. He questioned why he had to apply so many times for a housing opportunity, noting that he had repeatedly been informed that his details did not appear on the system and that he needed to reapply. He reiterated that he wanted answers regarding the status of his application. He further expressed disbelief that his details could simply disappear from the system and called for a full investigation into the matter.
- 4.2.7 A representative of the Patriotic Alliance informed the delegation that the George Municipality was requiring community members to submit building plans, which he viewed as a punitive measure. He further alleged that other groups were being prioritised over the coloured community. He questioned the need for the electrical boxes that the Municipality intended to install in backyard dwellings, noting that residents were already struggling financially. He questioned how community members could be expected to afford the cost of building plans as well as the additional expenses associated with the newly installed electricity boxes. He further alleged that the Municipality intended to impose additional charges specifically related to backyard dwellings.
- 4.2.8 A community member reported that he had been on the housing waiting list for 20 years. He stated that his 2007 application in Pacaltsdorp had gone missing. He explained that he has three children and has repeatedly been sent from pillar to post, continually re-registering on the Housing Demand Database. He demanded answers as to why his details repeatedly disappeared from the system.
- 4.2.9 Graham Mooi sought clarity on how housing allocations were being made. He called for an investigation into the George Municipality's housing-allocation processes. He alleged that individuals who own luxury vehicles and earn above the income thresholds set out in the regulations were occupying Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses. He further claimed that some individuals had received more than one

opportunity to obtain an RDP house. He stressed that these were serious issues that required urgent attention.

- 4.2.10 Letta September informed the delegation that seven households had been displaced after their homes were destroyed by flooding. She alleged that, despite these households reporting the matter to the George Municipality, no assistance was provided. She further stated that several community members who qualified for housing opportunities were being overlooked. She explained that she had advocated for five years on behalf of a woman and her children to obtain a housing opportunity, and that only after persistent effort was the matter eventually resolved. She urged the George Municipality to visit communities directly to witness the living conditions faced by residents.

4.3 Resolutions/Actions

The delegation RESOLVED that the Standing Committee on Infrastructure would review the concerns raised by community members and determine the appropriate course of action based on the outcomes of the engagement.

5. Pre SOPA outreach briefing: Pacaltsdorp and Thembaletu: Go George Beach Panther Transfer Location Launch and the Go George Tabata Street and Ngcakani Street project: Tuesday 24 February 2026

5.1 Overview and background

The delegation accompanied the Minister of Mobility, Mr I Sileku, to the launch of the Go George Beach Panther Transfer Location site in Pacaltsdorp and the Thabata Street and Ngcakani Street rehabilitation project in Thembaletu.

The delegation witnessed the launch of both projects for the Go George bus service and engaged community members on these upgrades.

5.2 Key issues discussed: Go George Beach Panther Transfer Location in Pacaltsdorp

- 5.2.1 The Go George bus service's Beach Panther Transfer Location received an upgrade in respect of rightsizing of the intersection, the construction of Non-Motorised Transport (NMT) infrastructure in terms of Universal Access (UA) sidewalks, bus stops, bus shelters, electrical works, road medians, retaining walls, the widening of indented bays, lighting, paved walkways and the creation of a cycle lane.
- 5.2.2 The total value of the project, which took eight months (April to November 2025), was R17,6 million and resulted in the creation of 30 job opportunities. This was seen as a critical project as transfer stations were considered vital support infrastructure for improving route connectivity and enabling commuters to transfer safely and efficiently between routes.
- 5.2.3 The upgrade was necessitated by the development of the Rosedale area of Pacaltsdorp. The previous intersection did not allow commuters from Rosedale to safely cross the road, which led to a discussion with the Department of Infrastructure, who agreed that there should be a rightsizing of the intersection. The walking distance to the bus stop was also not ideal for children, the elderly and people with disabilities. A median was then created in the centre of the intersection to create refuge for struggling pedestrians who were attempting to cross the road.
- 5.2.4 Part of the upgrade also included the installation of Artificial Intelligence cameras above the traffic signals, which monitored heavy vehicles, light motor vehicles, cyclists etc. These cameras were also able to collect data that could be used by George Municipality for research purposes.

- 5.2.5 The Minister noted that the upgrade was also intended to encourage the safety of commuters and pedestrians, as the 2025/26 festive season data showed that George Municipality had seen an increase in pedestrian fatalities. The upgrade was also intended to encourage the use of public transport to reduce the number of vehicles on the road. It was important that commuters were able to use public transport in a safe and dignified manner.
- 5.2.6 In terms of safety, the Go George buses were monitored daily. There was also collaboration with the police in George to monitor the activities inside the buses. This was evident by the low rate of crime that took place in the Go George buses. The Western Cape Mobility Department also worked with George Municipality to develop a safety plan for public transport.
- 5.3 Key issues discussed: Go George Tabata Street and Ngcakani Street project in Thembalethu
- 5.3.1 The Tabata Street and Ngcakani Street upgrades formed part of a R505 million grant-funded project. For both upgrades, the Public Transport Network Grant funding was primarily used, with a 5% contribution from the George Municipality for road upgrades.
- 5.3.2 For Tabata Street, the R65,1 million project included the upgrading of the road, the construction of NMT infrastructure, UA sidewalks, bus stops and the relocation of existing services. The project, which commenced in September 2024, created 50 labour opportunities and was expected to be completed in April 2026.
- 5.3.3 For Ngcakani Street, the R68,5 million project also included the upgrading of the road, the construction of NMT infrastructure, UA sidewalks, bus stops and the relocation of existing services. The project, which commenced in August 2024, created 77 labour opportunities and was expected to be completed at the end of February 2026.
- 5.3.4 One of the major challenges was that some of the sidewalks were incomplete. This was due to encroachments into the road. The Western Cape Mobility Department was working with Council and consulting residents to resolve the matter; however, the challenge of permanent brick walls encroaching on sidewalks remained a challenge.
- 5.3.5 The Minister reiterated that all communities were considered when doing any mobility-related work. The goal was to see a positive impact from the funding and service provided to the affected communities. The intention was to create safe, life-changing and dignified public transport for the Thembalethu community.
- 5.3.6 It was noted that the Thembalethu and Pacaltsdorp ward councillors were not present at the launches of both projects. The Western Cape Mobility Department indicated that they had extended invitations to the George Council but had not received any responses. It was noted later that the ward councillors were not aware of the launches, which could have been a result of a communication error.
- 5.3.7 There was a concern that there were no dedicated lanes for the Go George buses so they could move freely through the Thembalethu community. The Western Cape Mobility Department indicated that the roads were previously not designed to withstand the load of heavy buses, so this was a complete upgrade of the bus route until the road infrastructure was able to handle the load of the buses.
- 5.3.8 A community member raised a concern that they had not benefitted from the project as the Department had brought in their own workers instead of using community members. The Western Cape Mobility Department responded that there were 55 local opportunities presented for the Thembalethu community. Every time there was a Thembalethu project, a certain percentage of opportunities was reserved for the local community. The Western Cape Mobility Department also indicated that they worked with the community when designing the route. Engagements were held with the local community on the types of upgrades that were needed in the area.

- 5.3.9 A community member indicated that while they appreciated the upgrades in the area, they were concerned about some of the damage that was created by the construction to the road, such as cars getting stuck in the road and drainage issues.
- 5.3.10 A community member noted that with the addition of Go George buses in the community, there was an increase in traffic in the area. If a Go George bus stopped at a bus stop, it meant that all the cars behind the bus had to wait until the bus decided to move again.

5.4 Resolutions/Actions

5.4.1 The delegation requested the following from the Western Cape Mobility Department:

- 5.4.1.1 A report detailing the invitation that was extended to the ward councillors to attend the Pacaltsdorp and Thembaletu Go George launches, who the invitation was extended to, where the invitation was sent and what transpired that resulted in the non-attendance of the ward councillors;
- 5.4.1.2 A detailed list of the 55 local jobs that were created in Thembaletu from the Go George projects and what they entailed;
- 5.4.1.3 A report on whether a study was conducted to assess the impact of the buses on traffic in Thembaletu, the measures taken to resolve the traffic issues in Thembaletu caused by the Go George buses, and the future of the houses next to the road given the construction issues that were raised as well as drainage issues; and
- 5.4.1.4 A report clarifying the use of the Integrated Urban Development Grant for road infrastructure.

5.4.2 The delegation RECOMMENDED that the Western Cape Mobility Department investigates traffic-related issues in general, and a partnership with the Western Cape Department of Education to encourage online learning to reduce congestion on the road.

6. Briefing by the Garden Route District Municipality and municipalities within the district on Tourism Strategies: Tuesday 24 February 2026

6.1 Overview and background

At a meeting of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism that took place on 5 August 2025, the Committee was briefed by Wesgro on the work that they have completed across all districts in the province. The Committee then resolved that it would undertake oversight visits to the Western Cape District Municipalities to assess their respective tourism strategies, priorities, and current programmes; key challenges and constraints impacting tourism development within their districts; and how tourism is positioned within their broader municipal planning frameworks.

The Committee further resolved that it would Invite Wesgro to attend the district municipality oversight visits for the Committee to assess alignment between district-level tourism initiatives and Wesgro's provincial strategy, and to ensure a better understanding of localised tourism development needs and opportunities.

The purpose of the visit to the Garden Route District Municipality was therefore to assess the Garden Route District Municipality's tourism strategies, priorities, and programmes; identify key challenges and opportunities affecting tourism development; evaluate how tourism is integrated into broader municipal planning frameworks; and strengthen alignment between district-level initiatives and Wesgro's provincial strategy.

The Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Wesgro, the Garden Route District Municipalities as well as municipalities within the district were present at the engagement.

6.2 Key issues discussed

- 6.2.1 The delegation noted that the Garden Route remained one of the top tourism destinations globally, offering diverse attractions including vineyards, adventure tourism, natural landscapes and coastal destinations. The District also indicated that several catalytic tourism projects were being explored, including the proposed Garden Route Convention Centre, for which a feasibility study was currently underway.
- 6.2.2 Concerns were raised regarding the fragmentation of tourism governance and marketing structures within the district. The delegation noted confusion regarding the roles of Wesgro, the Department of Economic Development and Tourism and local tourism offices. It was emphasised that improved coordination was required to ensure integrated destination management and to maximise the economic benefits of tourism across the district.
- 6.2.3 The delegation also raised concerns regarding the inclusivity of tourism development, particularly the limited visibility of township tourism products and the participation of historically disadvantaged communities in the tourism value chain. Questions were raised about enterprise development, township tourism opportunities and support for small businesses.
- 6.2.4 The delegation further discussed issues relating to skills shortages in the tourism sector following the COVID-19 pandemic, the nature of employment within the sector, and the use of Extended Public Works Programmes (EPWP). Concerns were expressed that EPWP placements should lead to sustainable employment opportunities.
- 6.2.5 Safety and compliance challenges were also discussed, including illegal tour guides and the impact of crime on tourism activities. It was noted that while crime remained a concern, incidents affecting tourists in the Garden Route were often related to drownings and road accidents.
- 6.2.6 The delegation also raised questions regarding air access, international marketing and the potential revival of the film industry, including opportunities linked to international productions.
- 6.2.7 Data availability was identified as a challenge for tourism planning and decision-making.
- 6.2.8 Circular 131 referred to the Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (Act 56 of 2003), was issued by National Treasury of South Africa in March 2025. It provided guidance to municipalities on how they may transfer funds to organisations outside government, especially Non-Profit Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations and tourism associations. It clarified that municipalities may not simply provide grants or sponsorships to external organisations, such as tourism associations. Instead, where municipalities allocated funding to such organisations, the funding must generally be regarded as payment for services rendered and must comply with applicable procurement and supply chain management processes. This limited municipal funding of private organisations. The delegation noted that the circular created uncertainty around the funding of Local Tourism Offices and tourism marketing organisations.

6.3 Resolutions/Actions

6.3.1 The delegation REQUESTED that:

- 6.3.1.1 Wesgro submits a formal report detailing township tourism initiatives within the Garden Route District, including the areas supported, the allocation of funding, and the outcomes of the programmes;

- 6.3.1.2 The Department of Economic Development and Tourism and Wesgro provides it with the coordination framework governing tourism roles and responsibilities between the Province, Wesgro, the District Municipality and local municipalities; and
- 6.3.1.3 The Garden Route District Municipality provides it with a breakdown of its tourism infrastructure budget for the current and previous financial years; the details of tourism infrastructure funding proposals that have been submitted to the Department of Economic Development and Tourism; and its Tourism Infrastructure Plan, including catalytic tourism projects and associated implementation timelines.

6.3.2 The delegation RECOMMENDED that the:

- 6.3.2.1 Garden Route District Municipality and the Department of Economic Development and Tourism hold an urgent follow-up meeting to address the areas of misalignment and communication challenges raised during the engagement, and to resolve outstanding matters through direct consultation rather than in an open forum;
 - 6.3.2.2 Garden Route District Municipality develops a framework for inclusive tourism development that promotes township tourism, community-based tourism and the participation of small, medium and micro enterprises;
 - 6.3.2.3 Department of Economic Development and Tourism considers hosting future investment engagements or summits within the Garden Route District to increase exposure for the region and to attract investment, and that opportunities to develop agri-tourism hubs within the district be explored, particularly in areas such as Oudtshoorn and surrounding agricultural communities; and
 - 6.3.2.4 Garden Route District Municipality provides it with a breakdown of its tourism infrastructure budget for the current and previous financial years; the details of tourism infrastructure funding proposals that have been submitted to the Department of Economic Development and Tourism; and its Tourism Infrastructure Plan, including catalytic tourism projects and associated implementation timelines.
- 6.3.3 The delegation RESOLVED that, through the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism, it would invite the Department of Economic Development and Tourism to brief it on the formal guidelines currently being developed for the management of regional and local tourism; and on the historical and current funding of non-profit organisations involved in local tourism destination marketing, including a breakdown of funding provided to non-profit organisations compared to municipal tourism structures, as well as an explanation of how the Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (Act 56 of 2003) Circular 131 is being implemented.

7. Acknowledgements

The delegation thanked the various councilors, managers, officials, individuals and institutions for their willingness to meet with the delegation and to share information.