

Nxesi opts to focus on school sport

SPORTS Minister Thulas Nxesi, delivering his maiden Budget Vote speech in his new portfolio at the National Assembly yesterday, has announced his department's plans to strengthen school sport in the year ahead.

According to a government report, the minister said the department organises annual national school competitions across 16 prioritised sport codes.

While the system works well from a district up to provincial and national levels, the Minister said the challenge has been participation rates at circuit and school level.

Approximately 6 000 of 25 000 schools are participating.

"Our plans to strengthen the School Sport Programme include ... to review and fully implement the Memorandum of Agreement that exists with the Department of Basic Education to ensure that access to physical education and sport is expanded across the school system. This process is already under way," he said.

The Minister also said that his department will liaise with the Department of Social Development to coordinate the Expanded Public Works Programme to train early childhood development practitioners by providing trainers and material so that children in this phase can be trained in fine motor skills, which are critical to physical and sports development as they grow older.

The Minister said the department will co-operate with the Department of Higher Education on the pilot of the delivery of training courses for physical education teachers and coaches through the TVET colleges.

"We are also working with Sascoc, representing the national federations, so that we both align with the Long Term Player Development strategy to build a unified and expanded skills pipeline across the schooling system," he said.

At a community sports level, the Minister said his department was seeking to cooperate with the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and municipalities for the sharing of sports and recreational facilities.

Last year, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs agreed to ringfence a percentage of the Municipal Infrastructure Grant to build community sports facilities.

"I am also pleased to announce that the Rural Sports Development Programme is already under way across all provinces.

"This is based on a partnership with traditional authorities, as well as farming communities in the Western Cape.

"The early knockout rounds have taken place in all provinces, with national championships scheduled for mid-year," he said. —

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