

City's new EPWP policy ends ANC patronage

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MAYOR Solly Msimanga's administration has described the new Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) recruitment policy as the end of "nepotism and patronage which became synonymous with the initiative under the ANC's watch".

However, the ANC - which launched the programme when in government in 2012 - claimed the new policy would see some 5 000 people losing their jobs.

The City's official opposition fought a losing battle in the council on Thursday night against the passing of the new policy.

The party first failed to stop the tabling of the policy by the DA-led coalition government, with the support of the EFF, and later slated new changes to the EPWP.

ANC regional spokesperson Teboho Joala said: "The DA-EFF-led government indicated its desire to end job opportunities for thousands of EPWP workers in its current format and replaced it with party

volunteers and cronies. Over 5 000 beneficiaries face a bleak future."

The City's EPWP, known as Vat Alles, was launched in Hammanskraal in 2012 by former ANC mayor Kgositso Ramokgopa with a budget of R60 million.

Ramokgopa said at the time the programme, in its initial phase, would create more than 3 000 job opportunities in Ga-Rankuwa, Mabopane, Atteridgeville, Mamelodi, Centurion, Soshanguve, Melsvlei, Hammanskraal, Winterveldt and the inner city.

Its beneficiaries performed general work such as maintenance of cemeteries, shopping centres and open spaces, the clearance of illegal dumping and picking up litter.

But Msimanga's spokesperson Samkelo Mgobozi said the new policy ended the system of "insiders and outsiders" that marred EPWP job opportunities in the past.

The DA-led administration believed the EPWP reforms would win back the trust of communities lost by the previous city government's handling of job opportu-

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Samkelo Mgobozi

ities. "Our reforms will ensure that all loopholes inherent to the EPWP are closed. This new recruitment policy framework will ensure that these opportunities are distributed in a fair and transparent manner and not on the basis of party political affiliation," Mgobozi said.

Part of the new policy would be to eliminate the role of municipal officials and councillors in influencing the recruitment process to avoid the programme being abused for political purposes, Mgobozi said. But the ANC likened the move to

what the DA in the City of Joburg under mayor Herman Mashaba did with the scrapping of Jozi@Work.

In that metro, the ANC also cried foul that thousands of workers would be rendered unemployed, labelling the move "anti-poor". Mashaba stuck to his guns, saying the stance would stop ANC patronage.

Joala claimed: "Since the DA-EFF took office they have been determined to terminate employment for vulnerable employees. This coalition has been working hard to create a platform for their patronage at the expense of hard-working residents."

The policy was never subjected to public scrutiny, he said. "MMC (Councillors) Brink bragged that they've dismantled the ANC election machinery. The coalition literally celebrated dismissing 5 000 employees, most of them breadwinners," Joala said.

The ANC would call public meetings and stakeholders engagement sessions to communicate the "DA-EFF politricks", he said.

But Mgobozi said the policy was in line with the City's intention to create 23 000 EPWP job opportu-

ities. "It is this administration's aim to create 23 000 EPWP job opportunities within this financial year and alleviate the burden of poverty carried by so many of our citizens."

According to Joala, the promise to create 23 000 job opportunities was a pipe dream because the City didn't have the budget to deliver them.

"We have also noted Msimanga's claim that 23 000 new employees will be employed by the City; we reject these claims as pure lies and hollow political promises because we know the City has no financial capacity to do so."

The reformed Vat Alles programme will see eligible EPWP beneficiaries registered on a central database. Applicants may only register in the wards where they live.

The policy further stipulates that the recruitment would be done through a random lottery system carried out by designated officials in full view of the public.

Mgobozi said it clearly outlined the roles of structures involved in the recruitment and appointment of beneficiaries.