

DA heads into major indaba

● *Elective conference its biggest yet with 2,000 delegates likely to attend*

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Political Editor

A raft of policy proposals, ranging from the populist to conservative, as well as a heated debate on diversity are on the cards for the DA as it holds its largest national elective congress to date over the weekend.

The official opposition is set to re-elect incumbent leader Mmusi Maimane, but the contest between federal chairman Athol Trollip and Tshwane mayor Solly Msimanga is expected to raise temperatures at the congress. About 2,000 delegates from across the country are set to participate at the congress to be held in Tshwane.

A constitutional amendment on “diversity” has led to heated debate in the party and is set to be a divisive matter between conservatives and reformists at the congress.

Maimane said at a media briefing on Thursday that the debate centred on fears in the party that quotas could be introduced to effect diversity. However, he said, the DA was focusing more on “input” – in terms of diverse talent recruited into the party – rather than “output”, which referred to numbers represented in government.

Maimane on Thursday told journalists that the DA would vote on over 50 resolutions in the coming days, which it would offer to South Africans should they elect the party to govern in the 2019 election.

But the DA continued to battle with differing internal views on its election strategy and, in effect, how to grow beyond its traditional constituency.

Maimane said that the DA now governed more than 16-million people in three metros and a number of municipalities in the Western Cape – a feat largely made possible during the 2016 local elections through co-operation and coalition agreements with smaller parties.

The DA’s policy offerings were centred on the economy, and particularly on creating employment.

At the same time, it wanted to raise child-care grants. Responding to questions on where the state would get the money to fund this, Maimane said the party could not be limited by a state currently configured by the ANC.

He said reducing ministries alone could add some R5bn to the fiscus. Freezing the increases of public servants and privatising certain state-owned companies could also widen fiscal room.

The DA also sought to do away with the ANC’s value-added tax (VAT) increase. Maimane said VAT was set to hit the poor hardest.

Maimane said the DA did not agree with the country’s legislation on broad-based black economic empowerment but did not propose scrapping legislation to this effect. Instead, it wanted to expand it to become more “inclusive”.

The private sector could do more to contribute to society than following “narrow and prescriptive empowerment legislation”, including creating and retaining jobs, providing clean energy and water purification plants to rural communities, awarding scholarships, mixed-



Quotable:
Mmusi Maimane, who is expected to be re-elected as DA leader this weekend, said on Thursday the party put more emphasis on recruiting diverse talent than on the colour of its officials in government roles.
/Ruvan Boshoff

use housing developments, and providing affordable healthcare superior to that of the public healthcare system.

To create employment the party has proposed a R150 job-seekers allowance for the unemployed between the ages of 18 and 34, work-based training in the public sector and an expanded Extended Public Works Programme

In addition, it proposed a “job-seekers exemption certificate”, which would allow job

seekers to agree to work under “any conditions with which they are comfortable”.

This was aimed at potentially circumventing labour legislation

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and the national minimum wage and was a “last resort” for those seeking employment, the party said.

It was set to push for a “city-led economic growth agenda”. Maimane said the fact that the party governed Cape Town, Johannesburg, Tshwane and Nelson Mandela Bay indicated that it governed “the economy” since, combined, these cities contributed some 50% to the country’s GDP.

The congress was set to

debate how to enable these cities to drive the growth project while growing secondary cities.

As land remained a hot topic politically, the DA is steering clear of “political rhetoric”, focusing its strategy on property ownership, attracting investment and “creating jobs in the form of win-win partnerships” to help the nation “heal the divisions of the past”.

The congress will take place on Saturday and Sunday.

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