

ANC fights with mayor over jobs

But he stands his ground

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THE off-the-cuff remarks by mayor Solly Msimanga that the revised Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) – Gata Le Nna – had received the thumbs-up from two national departments has sparked fresh criticism from the regional ANC.

At last week's State of the Capital Address, Msimanga said both the departments of Labour and Public Works had praised the programme.

The ANC has asked him to produce documentary evidence to support his statement. Previously, the ANC criticised the DA for employing pensioners and party volunteers through the programme.

The DA has denied such claims, challenging those with evidence of wrongdoing to produce it.

Msimanga launched the new version of the EPWP in December to replace the ANC's *Vat Alles*.

The EPWP was designed by the national government as a poverty-alleviation project to create low-paying jobs.

Msimanga said: "What's nice about this is that right now we have the departments of Labour and Public Works saying they will adopt our system and implement it at provincial and national level, because it has proved that it is working."

The ANC's Tshwane council caucus leader Mapiti Matsena said: "What he said is not correct. The problem with the mayor is that he makes statements that he can't produce evidence for."

He added that Msimanga had adopted a tendency of crediting statements to either the provincial or national departments, without proof. "Every time we investigate his statements we find there is no such thing.

"Previously he said his administration had launched an investigation, together with the premier, into the death of five children killed in a high-mast lighting freak accident in Soshanguve. We found that it was not correct," he said.

Matsena said the ANC had complained to the Department of Labour about the manner in which the DA-led administration had treated former beneficiaries of the defunct *Vat Alles*.

"We have written to the Department of Labour on behalf of those beneficiaries to complain about the bad treatment meted out to them."

He said as far as he knew the department was investigating the accident. "We followed up on the case on Friday, because of what the mayor had said about the department's stance. We are still waiting for their response," he said.

According to him, the department was worried that the city had failed to "take into consideration those who were already part of the programme, before it employs new people".

But Msimanga fired a salvo at the ANC, saying it used the EPWP to hire those who carried party membership.

"We adopted an open and inclusive recruitment and lottery selection system, giving every qualifying individual an equal opportunity to secure employment through the EPWP programme."

He added that the employment was done through a lottery system, where beneficiaries were randomly chosen.

"Significantly, the city designed the database in such a manner so that we can appoint EPWP beneficiaries by their age; the ward where they live; their skills set; and their gender; without referring to their political affiliation," Msimanga said.

Since 2016 the revised EPWP Recruitment Framework Policy had created 16 125 EPWP work opportunities across various programmes and projects in the city, he pointed out.

"In the 2017/18 financial year, the city set a target to create 23 000 work opportunities through the implementation of EPWP projects.

"The infrastructure sector will contribute 12 200 work opportunities; the social sector 10 250; and the environmental and cultural sector 550; out of the total target of 23 000 employment opportunities.

"As the executive mayor, my office will have its own dedicated programme that uses 200 EPWP beneficiaries for rapid service delivery response and support in the city," he added.