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# Government must nationalise traffic police, standardise service conditions

By **Thulani Ngwenya**

Officers must also wear same uniforms across provinces

Severe organisational challenges and poor working conditions pose a constant roadblock for traffic police in their work, compromising the safety of SA's roads.

Our traffic departments are extremely disorganised in terms of their operational structures, preventing traffic officers from taking a strategic, co-ordinated approach to policing our roads and limiting their efficiency and impact.

Additionally, they are facing unacceptable working conditions and conditions of service, even as they serve on the frontlines to protect our communities and save lives.

In response, we have proposed a number of recommendations that the government must implement with urgency, beginning with nationalising the traffic police and standardising their benefits and conditions of service.

Following engagements with traffic officials, the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (Popcru) has identified several issues and possible solutions to improve traffic officers' efficiency.

Currently, traffic police are highly fragmented across various provinces and work without a clear line of command, as there is no uniform approach to the location of traffic police within various provincial departments.

For example, traffic police in Mpumalanga are split between the department of public works and the

department of transport. Northern Cape traffic officers are located under the department of safety and liaison, Gauteng traffic officers under community safety and Western Cape traffic police under the new department of monitoring.

This is even reflected in the lack of consistency in traffic officer uniforms between the various provinces. Furthermore, shift systems are not applied consistently.

To achieve a strategic, co-ordinated approach to traffic

policing, all traffic officers should be located within the national department of transport.

Currently, traffic officers receive different remuneration and benefit packages. This drives traffic officers to relocate to provinces where they will receive better benefits, creating personnel shortages in other provinces.

In terms of standard procedures, there should be two traffic officers per vehicle, but in many cases, officers are dispatched alone,

compromising their safety.

Thorough studies must be done to review international benchmarks in terms of officer-to-population ratios. Government must employ more traffic police and ensure vacancies are filled.

Finally, the Public Service Act of 1994 allows personnel to retire at the age of 65. However, as traffic officers fall under the category of uniform personnel, they must retire at 60.

To standardise conditions of service, traffic officials

should be appointed under the National Road Traffic Act 93 of 1996.

Alarming, traffic officials also have no hopes of promotion and upward mobility. As they are employed under the Public Service Act, provinces rely on PSCBC Resolution 3 of 2009 and their pay levels and progression are capped.

Next, despite the dangerous nature of their profession, there are no death grants for traffic police in many provinces across, even as they work tirelessly to safeguard travellers on our roads.

To protect and provide for their families should the worst happen, a death grant benefit of R250,000 should be instated immediately across all provinces. Moreover, traffic police need to have their danger allowance increased to R1,500 as a special dispensation.

Some officers have even reported that they have not been provided with a firearm for six years. It is also important to note that many members have not received sufficient training. Plus, from a safety perspective, firearm training in particular should be continuous.

Ultimately, as Popcru, we are committed to advocating for the rights of our traffic police, as they are pivotal in protecting the lives of motorists and upholding traffic laws. We are determined to engage with government until improvements are made.

■ Ngwenya is Popcru president



Poor working conditions pose a constant roadblock for traffic police in their work, compromising the safety of SA's roads. / WERNER HILLS