



ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

2008 STATE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2008

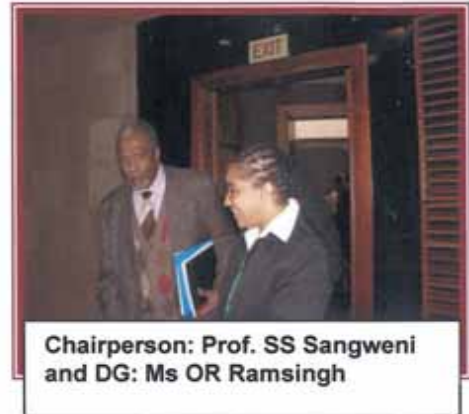
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1. INTRODUCTION

The State of the Public Service Report

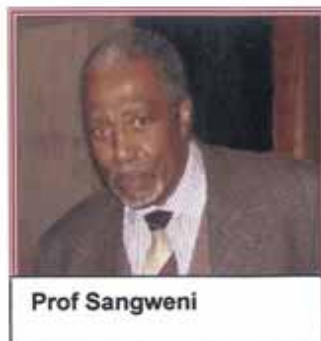
The Public Service Commission (PSC) is constitutionally mandated to monitor and evaluate the performance of the Public Service and to advise on good practice. In order to carry out this mandate, the PSC has over the years used the nine values and principles listed in section 195 of the Constitution as a monitoring and evaluation framework. In this process the PSC has, through a huge body of work, found that, individually and collectively, the principles are a useful framework for promoting good governance. Indeed, as Professor Stan Sangweni, Chairperson of the PSC indicated in his opening remarks, it is the hope of the PSC that these values and principles will in the fullness of time become part of public consciousness.



The PSC consolidates key findings from all its oversight activities into its SOPS Report. The State of the Public Service (SOPS) Report is thus an annual, evidence-based critical overview of the performance of the Public Service. To date the PSC has published seven editions of the Report, and these are now considered important reference sources by a wide range of role players. The Reports have also been cited at international forums and conferences.

The seventh edition of the SOPS Report was published in March 2008 under the theme: *A Mid-Term Review of Public Service Transformation*. The Report assesses the progress and challenges relating to the transformation of the Public Service since 2004, and in this way takes stock of government achievements, and highlights areas in which policy implementation should be accelerated.

Purpose of the Roundtable



In order to facilitate discussion on the issues raised in the 2008 SOPS Report, the PSC hosted a roundtable discussion involving a wide range of stakeholders in public administration. The main purpose was to present the 2008 SOPS Report to a critical audience representing a broader section of the South African society to, amongst others, comment on the findings of the Report. Such a discussion not only strengthens dialogue on public management issues in the country, but it also helps the PSC to reflect on the quality of its oversight work and to enhance it going forward. The roundtables are a

form of external review, placing the work of the PSC under scrutiny, and providing an opportunity for a diverse audience to pass judgement on the work of the PSC.

Attendance

The roundtable was held on 24 June 2008 in Pretoria at the South African Reserve Bank Conference Centre. It was attended by 33 participants (**Annexure A**) representing academia, the research and development sectors, state entities (provincial and national), professional associations, organised labour, members of the PSC (Commissioners) as well as staff from the Office of the Public Service Commission (OPSC).

Roundtable Approach

The event was officially opened by the Chairperson of the PSC, Professor Sangweni, after which a presentation of the 2008 SOPS Report was done by Mr Mashwahle Diphofa, Deputy Director-General: Monitoring and Evaluation in the OPSC. This was then followed by a critical review of the Report by a respondent. The inclusion of a respondent was to ensure that an external person who, while independent of the Public Service, has an understanding of government, sets the tone for the roundtable discussion.

In this regard the PSC had invited Professor Anne McLennan of the University of the Witwatersrand, an academic with an extensive understanding of the Public Service who has also had frequent interaction with a significant number of government departments.

Following Professor McLennan's input the floor was opened for comment on the content of the 2008 SOPS Report with regard to its findings on progress with the transformation of the Public Service, transformation challenges, and recommendations for improving the performance of the Public Service.

Outline of the Report

This Report presents a summary of the proceedings of the roundtable. The Report first gives an overview of the main findings of the 2008 edition. This is followed by a summary of the key points raised by the respondent that set the scene for the subsequent roundtable discussion. The Report finally highlights the key discussion points raised by participants and provides concluding remarks.

2. DISCUSSION OF THE 2008 SOPS REPORT

Overview of the 2008 Edition

The 2008 SOPS Report focuses on how well government has fared in the period 2004 to 2007. In providing an overview of the findings of the Report, Mr Diphofa indicated that the Public Service had undergone three broad transformation phases since 1994. These are:

- *Rationalisation and Policy Development (1994-1999)*
- *Modernisation and Implementation (1999-2004)*
- *Accelerating Implementation (2004 to date)*



Mr Diphofa, DDG: M&E

Mr Diphofa said that the 2008 SOPS Report was retrospective and forward looking. On the one hand, the Report provided an assessment of the progress made in transforming public service delivery since 2004. On the other hand, the Report also highlighted issues that needed to be addressed by government to improve the performance of the Public Service in the remaining period of the current term of office of government and beyond. Mr Diphofa indicated that the Report discussed each principle according to the following framework:

- *Introduction of each value and principle in terms of its contribution to good governance*
- *A mid term review capturing significant events pertaining to that principle*
- *A synopsis of findings from previous SOPS Reports*
- *Issues that still warrant attention*
- *Points for consideration in terms of accelerating service delivery towards 2009 and beyond*

What follows is a concise overview of the findings of the 2008 SOPS Report under each principle, as presented by Mr Diphofa.

Principle 1: A high standard of professional ethics must be maintained

By 2004 Government has put a range of key policy instruments, normative frameworks and commitments to several multi-lateral anti-corruption agreements in place. Achievements after 2004 include the promulgation of the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act, the publication of guidelines on the implementation of the Act, and the establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Hotline. In June 2005 the National Anti-Corruption Programme was adopted. In 2006 the PSC proposed policy options on how to move the issue of conflict of interest beyond merely declaring potential conflicts of interest, but was disappointed by the slow progress in this regard.

The low rate of feedback from departments (36%) regarding cases referred to them from the National Anti-corruption Hotline, is concerning. Similarly, the rate of return of financial disclosures at 85% falls short of the 100% required. Departments have not met minimum requirements for

their anti-corruption programmes. Significant resources, therefore, will have to be invested in the building of anti-corruption capacity.

Principle 2: Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted

The foundation for greater adherence to the principle was laid by the Public Finance Management Act. There has been a shift away from narrow compliance based performance reporting towards one focused on reporting against pre-set objectives. Considerable effort has gone into improving the reliability of performance data, in comparison with financial data. The introduction of nationally uniform sector-specific budget structures has helped to facilitate comparisons of performance between provinces.

There has been a decrease in the level of under-spending, suggesting that departments are progressively overcoming their spending difficulties.

A recurring concern over the period under review has been the incidence of unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure. Departments should treat this as financial misconduct and deal with it in terms of disciplinary procedures. The number of cases of financial misconduct reported by departments has increased. In 2004/05, 513 cases were reported, which increased to 771 in 2005/06 and 1042 in 2006/07. Departments need to ensure that they also increase the rate of recovering money from officials involved in acts of financial misconduct.

Principle 3: Public administration must be development oriented

Addressing poverty has been a critical objective, and the economic growth of the country since 2004 has enabled an increase in public expenditure by over 9% per annum since 2004. About 25% of the population benefits from social grants. While this has had a huge impact on reducing poverty, questions remain about its sustainability.

The momentum for reducing poverty was further boosted by the introduction of various poverty reduction programmes like the Expanded Public Works Programme, and the broadening of access to basic services.

The work that has been initiated to develop and implement a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy should be accelerated. As a component of this strategy, steps have also been taken to develop a poverty matrix for the country. Such a matrix, which by nature only measures a few dimensions of poverty, should however not lead to an oversimplification of the lived experiences of the poor.

On the level of implementation, active beneficiary participation and

alignment of projects with local development plans, as well as the co-ordination of poverty reduction programmes, remain a challenge.

Principle 4: Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias

Important goals have been achieved, with inequality between races having dropped and the economic prospects of previously disadvantaged individuals improved through Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE). However, there are growing sentiments that it has exacerbated intra-racial inequality.

The introduction of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act was an important milestone in regulating the fairness of administrative decisions. However, after 7 years, compliance with the act is still low. There is still a need for educating the public about their rights. The corollary of such campaigns is however that departments have proper procedures and recourse mechanisms in place.

Principle 5: People's needs must be responded to and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy making

If the state does not provide avenues through which citizens can express their needs, and frustration, then other forms of activism may occur, as the service delivery protests experienced in the country have shown.

Izimbizo have been used to strengthen relations with communities. However, the lack of a proper feedback loop, in the form of appropriate action on issues raised by communities, is a concern. Community Development Workers are now deployed in all participating municipalities and play an important development facilitation role, but their impact needs to be assessed.

A recurring problem remains the lack of guidelines prescribing minimum levels of participation. Participation is not only about soliciting public inputs on policy but also a community and demand-driven approach to development. An honest assessment of how public participation can be enhanced is therefore necessary. A further recurring challenge is the lack of redress mechanisms as required by the Batho Pele policy. A very small proportion (3-5%) of departments rate themselves as excellent in this area.

Principle 6: Public administration must be accountable

A key instrument for accountability is the Performance Management and Development System. In this regard, there has been a low level of compliance with the Framework for the Evaluation of Heads of Department. The PSC has previously proposed a roundtable on the

challenges of effective implementation of the Framework. This should be convened as a matter of urgency. The level of compliance with the requirement that senior managers should sign performance agreements is not satisfactory. It is an indictment of the Executive and Heads of Department that concluding performance agreements has been ignored to a point where the President found it necessary to highlight it in the State of the Nation Address.

Qualified audit opinions remain a source of concern, with some departments receiving such an opinion for four years in a row. This raises important questions about how serious the system of accountability is taken. It is therefore important that Cabinet made a call for affected Executing Authorities and Heads of Department to account for qualified audit opinions.

The use of organisational performance assessment should also be considered to provide further insight into the performance of departments.

The development of a Government Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System during the period under review also marked an important development in efforts to improve accountability for performance.

Principle 7: Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information

The publication of Government's Programme of Action on the government website and the reporting of progress with implementation every two months has been an important development.

Whilst progress has been made in terms of annual reports, Treasury Guidelines are still not fully adhered to. The requirements of the Promotion of Access to Information Act are, similarly, not fully complied with.

The development of Annual Citizens' Reports, in addition to a department's annual report, should be something each department commits to. There is also no reason why departments' annual performance plans and quarterly reports could not be published on their websites.

Principle 8: Good human resource management and career development practices, to maximise human potential, must be cultivated

There has been a shift away from past management practices that were compliance driven, to approaches that harness human potential and support good performance. One of the key developments post 2004 has

been a growing recognition of the need to create a meaningful balance between centralised and decentralised authority for the management of human resources. The amendment of the Public Service Regulations regarding organisational structures is one of the visible steps in this regard. However, the capacity of Human Resource Management Units to give professional direction to effective policy implementation and effectively support a decentralised system, has been questioned.

The institution of a number of skills development programmes in the Public Service holds considerable promise. The Accelerated Development Programme is an exiting initiative targeting middle managers from designated groups to prepare them for the challenges of functioning in senior management. The Khaedu programme helps to keep senior managers in touch with analysing and solving practical service delivery challenges. However, these programmes need to be carefully monitored.

A stable environment is required for effective Human Resource Management and collective bargaining has been used to reach agreement on a wide range of issues. However, the massive Public Service strike of 2007 should lead to an honest reflection on what went wrong.

Several challenges remain. As the largest single employer, the Public Service needs to be concerned about the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The long time taken to fill posts remains a concern. The effectiveness of skills development policies must also be assessed. The current process of employees identifying training needs in consultation with supervisors, must be reconsidered since it does not lead to effective skills development programmes.

Principle 9: Public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people

The most visible success has been the extent to which the Public Service reflects the demographic composition of the country. Race representivity has continued to improve with the figure for African employees increasing to 80% in 2007. This has changed the composition of the Public Service dramatically.

It has taken departments a long time to achieve the gender representivity target of 30%, and it may take even longer to reach the revised target of 50% at Senior Management Service level. To improve gender representivity, focus needs to move beyond numeric targets to also consider issues of family friendly policies and improved gender relations in the workplace.

The greatest challenge has been with improving disability representivity,

which at 1,79% is below the target of 2%. The hearings on disability equity conducted by the PSC attempted to provide a grounded appreciation of the challenges faced by departments in the achievement of disability representivity. The development of a central database for people with disabilities should be a useful mechanism in enhancing disability representivity, as should strategic partnerships with organisations representing disabled people.

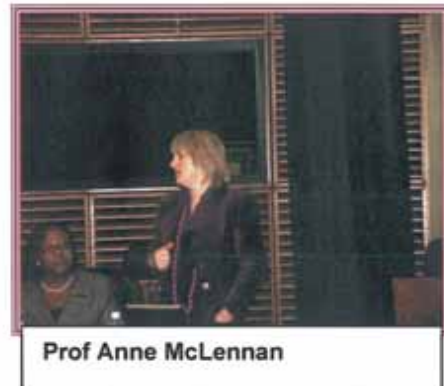
It is important that representivity continues to be monitored, or hard earned gains could be lost. It is also important that diversity management receives attention and that efforts to create dynamic, co-operative and productive work place cultures are enhanced.

Respondent's Review of the 2008 Edition

Introduction

Professor Anne McLennan introduced her response to the SOPS Report by commending the PSC on an excellent mid-term review. She commented that the SOPS Reports have occupied a significant space in the governance landscape by –

- reinforcing the nine constitutional values and principles through regular reporting;
- collecting, collating and analyzing data and putting it into the public realm; and
- asking some of the uncomfortable questions in open dialogue.



The concept of Good Governance

In order to contextualise her response, Prof McLennan provided an explanation of what the concept of Good Governance means. For her good governance refers, in the context of public administration, to the responsiveness and accountability of the Public Service. She pointed out that good governance required the provision of information that would support informed public participation in policy development and implementation. In this regard, she noted that the monitoring and evaluation work carried out by institutions such as the PSC facilitated the putting of information into the public space, and also fostered adherence to the Constitutional principles. However, the effective provision of information to the public depended on the capacity, including the skills and moral conduct, of the Public Service.

Critical challenges facing the Public Service

Professor McLennan summarised the findings of the 2008 SOPS Report with regard to the transformation of the Public Service and, putting her own emphasis on key areas that still required attention, proposed the following as critical challenges facing the Public Service.

- Ensuring a strong, ethical and capable institutional leadership with a moral mission that can move beyond policy and planning to action.
- Building human resource and institutional capacity.
- The need to ensure compliance with new policy frameworks by making reporting, accounting and fair process routine actions.
- The challenge to put people first. In her view, there seems to be a tendency to focus on regulatory processes, which sometimes compromise responsiveness to needs. The challenge is, therefore, to build trust and develop processes that engage people honestly and provide them with information to make decisions and live their lives.
- The challenge of building a legitimate and accountable Public Service without undermining key constitutional principles.

Questions with regard to what constitutes good performance under each value

In relation to the findings under each principle, Professor McLennan posed the following questions, with implications for how each principle is applied in practice. The questions will require the PSC to further expand on its work to interpret and give advice on the application of these principles.

a. A high standard of professional ethics must be maintained:

What impact do the findings of the SOPS Report have on public perceptions about the motives and ethics of the Public Service and therefore on the overall legitimacy of government?

b. Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted:

How do we define public value to make the links between efficiency, effectiveness and delivery?

c. Public administration must be development oriented:

What measures should be used to assess poverty? How should the poor be included in planning and decision making?

d. Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias:

How does one create an open and accountable administrative environment?

e. People's needs must be responded to and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy making:

What is the appropriate strategy for engaging with citizens and providing feedback to them? What is citizen engagement and how much of it should be done? Does it improve delivery?

f. *Public administration must be accountable:*

Can we measure the impact of a poorly implemented performance management system on delivery? How does one create an accountable environment, from Executing Authorities and Heads of Department and down?

g. *Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information:*

How can we provide accessible and useable information to the public and at the same time deal with fear of exposure of departments for poor performance?

h. *Good human resource management and career development practices to maximise human potential, must be cultivated:*

Who is responsible for Human Resource Management? Is it Human Resource Management support components or line managers? Is an enabling environment provided to ensure a willingness of staff to get things done?

i. *Public administration must be representative:*

The achievements with regard to meeting representivity targets are important but the key question is whether workplace relationships and cultures have shifted to accommodate diversity.

The PSC's methodology for compiling the Report

Professor McLennan posed the following challenges with regard to the methodology that the PSC followed to compile the report, and the impact the PSC hopes to achieve with the report:

- The challenge of collecting reliable data on a regular and ongoing basis and putting it into the public space.
- The challenge to demonstrate improvement in service delivery, or level of compliance with the nine constitutional principles, by improving the rigour of measurement of these variables and showing progress in comparison to a baseline.

Professor McLennan challenged the PSC by noting that an assumption underlying the publication of a report on the State of the Public Service, is that highlighting challenges will lead to improved public service performance. This assumption is not self-evidently true, and perhaps what happens as a consequence of the review process, needs to be explored. For example, ways to get the Public Service to engage with the findings and provide feedback to the PSC need to be explored.

Discussion points raised by participants on the 2008 Edition

General comments

The PSC was commended for the quality of the 2008 SOPS Report. Participants indicated that the Report was greatly appreciated and was an eye opener on critical developments in the Public Service. Using a scale of 1 to 10, the Report was given an overall rating of 8,5. Participants indicated that the Report was also successful in projecting the image of the PSC as an oversight body, which independently assesses performance, while at the same time not presenting itself as a policing agency.



Ms Themba Kgasi of the Department of Home Affairs, Professor Jerry Kuye of the University of Pretoria and Ms Lucky Moeketsi of the Office of the Premier, Mpumalanga

Participants felt that the improvement of departmental performance can, in part, be attributed to the PSC's reports. The reports are influential documents in public administration and should be shared with the private sector since they are also impacted upon by the Public Service. Broader distribution of the PSC's work would also help to eliminate misconceptions about the Public Service.

Further, it was indicated that the Report is cautious rather than confrontational in tone. The content is presented in a manner that stimulates debate rather than giving easy solutions. Participants felt that the 2008 SOPS Report erred on the side of caution and challenged the PSC to be more robust in its criticism and bolder in its recommendations. For example, in assessing the implementation of the performance management and development system, the PSC could have boldly critiqued government's decision to introduce a standardised system, which is not suited to the variety of operational settings in the Public Service. Similarly, the lack of consequences for poor performance could have been covered in the Report as an important weakness of the system.

The PSC should aim to develop its recommendations into practical measures that can be implemented, or solutions to the identified weaknesses. The Report sought to create a balance between a high level analysis of the transformation of the Public Service and being specific enough so that the reader can understand the practical implications of the findings and recommendations in diverse settings.

Participants also felt that the 2008 SOPS Report fell short of assessing the impact of policies, systems and events on the performance of the Public Service. For example, the impact of the June 2007 strike by

public servants could have been examined further. As another instance, not enough was made of the issue of human resource capacity as a challenge affecting the performance of departments. A detailed assessment of the human resource capacity challenges facing the Public Service would help guide future curricula taught at tertiary institutions to provide future public servants with the appropriate skills.

The lack of consequences for non-compliance with various prescripts as an important contributing factor to administrative malpractice, should have been covered in the 2008 SOPS Report, and specific recommendations on how to curb non-compliance would have been helpful.

In addition to the above comments, participants indicated that the 2008 SOPS Report should have provided guidance on measures towards building and promoting commitment to the moral purpose of serving people and being responsive to their needs.

*Methodology used
by the PSC in
compiling the Report*

Participants fully aligned themselves with the remarks of the respondent with regard to the measurement of performance and the strategies the PSC employs to ensure that its recommendations are implemented and lead to actual improvement in the level of compliance with the constitutional values. Although the Report remained an important source of information about the Public Service, it seems that the same weaknesses are pointed out year after year.

With regard to measurement, participants felt that the PSC should spell out the indicators and standards of what would constitute an acceptable level of performance under each value. The PSC should then measure the performance of the Public Service consistently against the same indicators over a number of years so that a trend in performance can be established. With regard to making sure that departments engage with findings and implement recommendations, participants suggested that the Report should be presented to the managements of departments and that roundtables similar to this one should also be conducted in the provinces.

3. CONCLUSION

The SOPS roundtables are one of the mechanisms for placing the work of the PSC under scrutiny, thus providing the PSC with an opportunity to invite a varied external audience to pass judgement on its work.

As indicated by Ms Odette Ramsingh, Director-General of the OPSC, comments that participants made at previous roundtables had been considered in subsequent editions of SOPS Reports. For example, the

2007 roundtable discussions requested that the Report be written in a more accessible language, reflect on trends over the years and make more explicit recommendations. These were taken forward when the 2008 SOPS Report was compiled. Similarly, the inputs given on the 2008 SOPS Report will be considered in the next edition of the Report, to make it even more robust.

Ms Ramsingh welcomed the suggestion that the PSC should engage in provincial roundtable discussions as well as one-on-one discussions with departments on its findings and recommendations. Such an approach was in line with the PSC's strategy to deepen its advocacy work and ensure that there is greater appreciation of the value of its work.

In the final analysis, the 2008 Roundtable Discussion was an insightful and informative event and gave the PSC pointers on how to improve the Report.

The following are the key points participants advised the PSC to consider:

- The report should be more robust and critical in its findings and bolder in its recommendations.
- The findings in the report should be substantiated by rigorous research. This relates to the systematic collection of evidence and bringing this into the public domain, better measurement of performance, and analysis of the factors that determine performance.
- The PSC should lay down the indicators and standards of what constitutes acceptable performance under each of the values.
- The PSC should ensure that its recommendations offer practical, implementable solutions or actions that decision makers can take.
- The PSC should consider ways to improve the impact of its work – that is, moving from publication of findings and recommendations, to implementation of recommendations, to better performance of the Public Service as measured against the values. This includes, as a minimum, better dissemination and advocacy of its findings to all departments and levels of decision-makers.

ANNEXURE A

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION
1. Prof. Stan S. Sangweni	Chairperson	Public Service Commission
2. Ms Odette R. Ramsingh	Director General	Public Service Commission
3. Mr Sam Vukela	Deputy Director General	Department of Public Works
4. Mr Tozi Faba	Deputy Director General	Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG)
5. Mr Christopher Parkin	Chief Financial Officer	CIDA City Campus
6. Ms Sarah Cheane	Deputy Director General	Department of Trade and Industry
7. Ms Angela Bester	SAMEA Member	SAMEA
8. Mr Kgabo Mahoai	Commissioner	Public Service Commission
9. Dr Eddie Bain	Commissioner	Public Service Commission
10. Dr Dovhani Mamphiswana	Chief Director	Public Service Commission
11. Mr Vuso Shabalala	Deputy Director General	Department of Justice and Constitutional Development
12. Prof Anne McLennan	Acting Director	Graduate School of Public Development and Management, WITS
13. Mr Robert Kriger	Director-Policy & Strategy	National Research Foundation
14. Ms. M. Njikelana	Director Governance	Office of the Premier: Eastern Cape Province
15. Dr Nozipho Mxakato-Diseko	Commissioner	Public Service Commission
16. Ms Bontle P Lerumo	Deputy Director General	Public Service Commission
17. Ms Koko Mashigo (Mokgalong)	Commissioner	Public Service Commission
18. Mr Lucky Moelefi	Deputy Director General	Office of the Premier: Mpumalanga Province
19. Prof. Jerry O. Kuye	Director	School of Public Management and Admin: Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, University

NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION
		of Pretoria
20. Ms Desiree Tlhoale	Chief Director	Office of the Premier: North West Province
21. Ms Themba Kgasi	Director	Department of Home Affairs
22. Mr Tshepo Mokomatsidi	Director	Public Service Commission
23. Mrs Irene Mathenjwa	Director	Public Service Commission
24. Mr Japhter Semenya	Director	Public Service Commission
25. Mr Vuyo Skweyiya	Senior Forensic Inspector	Public Service Commission
26. Mr Linga Naidoo	Director	Public Service Commission
27. Ms Aquina Thulare	CEC Member	COSATU
28. Mr Mashwahle Diphofa	Deputy Director General: Monitoring & Evaluation	Public Service Commission
29. Mr Kobus Van Der Merwe	Director: Programme Evaluation	Public Service Commission
30. Ms Alidia Seabi	Specialist Researcher – Governance Monitoring	Public Service Commission
31. Ms Kleintjie Henning	Director: Monitoring and Evaluation	Public Service Commission
32. Mrs Thoko Masangu	Deputy Director: Programme Evaluation	Public Service Commission
33. Mr Morris Mthusamy	Director: DG Office	Public Service Commission