

## **Vote 16: NFP Speech on Arts and Culture Budget Debate**

Hon Speaker

Hon MEC

Hon Committee Chairperson

Hon Members

All guests

The Department of Arts and Culture is mandated with promoting, supporting and protecting the arts, culture and heritage of KZN. In a province as culturally diverse as ours, this means arts and culture has an immense contribution to make in nation building.

The NFP is happy about some of the inroads the department has made such as the increase in the number of mobile libraries in rural communities. We also support the plans to construct a central provincial heritage archive which will benefit future generations, making sure that all our peoples' history is protected.

We also welcome the establishment of an Arts Academy in the province although we await detailed plans on exactly how this will organization will function and how it will meet its objectives. We look forward to engaging further with the department on this.

During the last financial year, we have witnessed the transfer of the KZN Music House from the Department of Economic Development and Tourism to the Department of Arts and Culture. The NFP fully supported this move. KZN Music House has the potential to play a great role in assisting new artists, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to grow in their careers.

But KZN Music House was plagued with problems ranging from allegations of misuse of funds to poor management ability. There were also various reports that claimed the entity was bankrupt. So we would therefore like an indication from the department with regards to the progress in this entity and the turnaround strategy particularly because Treasury has allocated this entity R12million for this financial year.

We are concerned that the Community Library Services Grant has been decreased by R2 million for the 2015/2016 year. We agree with the committee that the department should engage Treasury on additional allocations. Community libraries are central to creating literate citizens, particularly in previously disadvantaged areas.

The NFP would like to caution the department in the construction of a Mega Library in EThekweni. It is estimated that R500 million will be spent on this single project. We believe these costs are too excessive. Surely these funds could be used to build many more libraries across the province, in areas where they are needed. We encourage the department to

rethink this plan and to investigate these operational costs especially in light of the directive from national cabinet; for all spheres of government to introduce cost-cutting measures.

We are pleased to see that funding has been made available to fill critical vacant posts for managers and staff in Arts Centres. This will have a positive impact on job creation. Many poor communities, especially in rural areas, rely on Art Centres to earn a living.

MEC, during last year's budget speech, you made a commitment that an amount of R3 million had been set aside for an artist skills training programme. The number of artists who benefitted from this initiative was 4105 in 2014/15. The department offered training in graphic design, choreography, film making and directing as well as business management. And we applaud this. However, we are deeply concerned that for the 2015/2016 financial year, your department only aims to train just over 2040 artists. What is the reason for this dramatic decline?

With a budget of R783.9 million, the NFP believes this is insufficient. The needs of this sector in our province are too great and we encourage the MEC to lobby Treasury to allocate more funds to this department.

Thank you.

**Presented by:** Hon PH Khuzwayo