

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 5814. [1002]

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5814. [1002]. Ms P P Mngadi (MK) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

[Question submitted for oral reply now placed for written reply because it is more than quota (Rule 137(8))]

(a) What are the reasons that she has allowed the scholar transport for learners displaced by the 2022 floods in Durban to be terminated due to a shortage of funding, whereas her department identified and allocated specific funds for that purpose and (b) how does the failure to prioritise and secure continuous support for the most vulnerable learners with no alternative means to access education align with her department's budget management?

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Response

(a) The Department of Basic Education (DBE) acknowledges that the provision of learner transport is a shared responsibility between the Provincial Departments of Education (PEDs) and the Provincial Departments of Transport (DoTs), funded through the provincial equitable share.

In the case of KwaZulu-Natal, the Department of Transport (DoT) is the primary provincial body responsible for the planning, coordination, and management of scholar transport services, while the Department of Education (DoE) plays a supporting role by identifying learners who require transport assistance. Specifically:

- The KwaZulu-Natal DoT is responsible for planning, coordinating, and overseeing the scholar transport system, developing implementation strategies, and tendering for and managing service providers; and
- The KwaZulu-Natal DoE identifies learners who need transport and provides this data to the DoT to ensure that the programme responds effectively to identified learner needs.

While the DBE has advised that it has not been formally notified of the termination of scholar transport for learners displaced by the 2022 floods in Durban, the DBE takes all reports of such disruptions seriously. The DBE will engage the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government to seek clarity on this matter and offer support where appropriate.

The right to basic education, as enshrined in section 29(1)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, and operationalised through the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), includes ensuring that learners can safely and consistently access schools. Learner transport is therefore a vital enabler of educational access, particularly for learners in rural, remote, or disaster-affected areas.

(b) While the Minister of Basic Education does not hold executive authority over the administration or financing of learner transport in provinces, the DBE will formally request a report from the KwaZulu-Natal DoE to determine the nature of the challenge and explore possible interventions.

The Minister remains committed to ensuring that no learner is denied access to education due to logistical or financial barriers, and that learners displaced by natural disasters continue to receive the necessary support to attend school safely.

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In line with section 92(3)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, and Rule 134(5)(b) of the National Assembly Rules, the Honourable Member is respectfully advised to refer this matter to the Members of the Executive Council (MEC) responsible for Transport and Education in KwaZulu-Natal, who hold the executive authority for scholar transport provisioning in the province.