

The beat goes on as Employment Equity Committee moves forward.....against all odds

Vusi Shabalala reports

With the looming and continued reality and experience of a tarnished Public Works' entire image since towards the end of the year 2011, mostly management, staff, stakeholders, the public including the media has felt a frenzy and hostile environment of being within or part of the system. This feeling alone left most personnel members and management alike, who had the department at their hearts, to seek solace.

It will not always be a case of regret and stress as we see it today, through the eyes of the Public Works Employment Equity Committee. This is one of the departmental committees whose members show the agility and eagerness to beat the piano with a positive note, to steering the department to moving forward...against all odds. Since its inception and formalization by the KZN Public Works executive leadership, the Departmental Employment Equity Committee (DEEC) has thus far shown prominence in the way of doing things.

As we turn our attention today, embracing the strides made by KZN Department of Public Works and its officials, our focus is on the Departmental Employment Equity Committee which today makes its mark as a threshold towards Public Works' stance of "working together" for a constructive and productive workforce

To remind the reader, this session was actually a scheduled committee meeting but the committee coordinator, Ms Fikile Luthuli in liaison with other committee members saw it befitting to invite an opinion leader relevant to sharing a light with us to addressing issues of employment

equity in government. With the blessings of luck that befell on the Department as Dr Mosia Mojaki from the University of KwaZulu-Natal had the pleasure to provide us with his fruitful and concise presentation that talked to mostly "employment equity" related concerns or issues experienced in government work cycle in particular the Department of Public Works.



Dr Mosia Mojaki from the University of KwaZulu-Natal busy with a presentation

From the presentation, one could deduce in a simple and fathomable understanding that "employment equity" may mean "equal opportunity" - one of the first concepts commonly used to define equality in employment for all public service. Equally so, this was based on the notion that if discrimination in employment ended, all officials in the public sector would have equal access to equal employment opportunities. However, equal opportunity programs did not result in any significant redistribution in the employment of disadvantaged group members in the government and private workforce.



Ms Fikile Luthuli (*left*) and Ms Phumla Sibisi (*right*) and Mr L I Mthembu seated at the back, all from Head Office (Fedsure House) made ensured the session went well as planned.

In supporting these sentiments, Employment Equity should be seen as a continuous planning process used by the Department as an employer of choice to:

- ✓ ensure appropriate representation of all group members throughout the Public Works' workforce;
- ✓ identify and eliminate barriers in the department's employment procedures and policies;
- ✓ implement positive and well defined policies and practices to ensure the effects of systemic barriers are eliminated; and

Furthermore, the aim of Employment Equity for the KZN Department of Public Works is to:

- remedy past discrimination in employment opportunities and prevent future barriers;
- eliminate employment barriers for all the group members identified in the Employment Equity Act ;
- improve access and distribution throughout all occupations and at all levels for members of the group members; and
- foster a conducive equity environment within the department



The Departmental Equity Committee forum in session

After an hour of intense presentation and discussion, Dr Mojaki eventually left and the committee meeting continued. Chaired by Mr Duma, the General Manager: Corporate Services and also with the presence and active participation of Ms Jean Makhaye Ms Jean Makhaye, the Senior Manager: Human Resource Management, one could indeed attest that this is serious business and that Corporate Services means business.



It's all systems go as members share a sense of humour during the session (*l to r*): Ms P Sibisi, Mr Bongsi Radebe, MsThandeka Zondi from Southern Region and Ms Jean Makhaye (Senior Manager: Public Works' Human Resource Management)

It is also quite encouraging to see the direct involvement of managers at such sessions as this spells the passion they have for their work and the Department in entity. To supplement this compliment, such approach by managers directly and indirectly creates that space of job enrichment for employees across



Here above right is Mr Duma, chairperson of the DEEC with Mr NR Nzimande (on the left) listening attentively.

It is unbelievable to note that within a short space of time, Corporate Services managed to submit approximately three policies for approval by the Ministry. All that is well always ends well. This is without pretence or favour that the “the beat goes on as Employment Equity Committee moves forward...against all odds.”



(f/tr)Ms Gugu Sikhakhane from the North Coast Region, Mr SJ Atwaru from Head Office (Fedsure House) and Ms R Saib paying full attention during the presentation



Seen here are members of the committee Ms Zinhle Mpungose (right) from Midlands Region and on the left is Ms Carol Stuart-Williams from Head Office (HRD)



Ms Sibisi seated between Mr Hadebe (left) and Ms Makhaye (right) listening to the chairperson's closing remarks



In his closing remarks, Mr Duma made an emphasis to all that it does not take an individual or an employee alone but that the environment has to make matters easy for one to changes possible. “Work environment is a place of making a person develop and become courageous to do good and more good” he stressed. “We anticipate more of these similar sessions in future” he remarked and wish all well for the better.

