

HEALTH DEPT FUNDS WASTED

Bus clinics tender shock

Thami Magubane

THERE have been startling allegations about how the Department of Health blew millions of rand on tenders to supply buses to be used as mobile clinics in the province.

The health portfolio committee was told on Friday that the department had spent more than R100 million on numerous tenders to supply mobile clinics. Some of these were allegedly not used.

The chairperson of the portfolio committee, Yusuf Bhamjee, said legal action must be taken against those who were involved, "in this maladministration which is tantamount to corruption".

Bhamjee said they had learned that in 2015, the department had leased one bus (to be used as a mobile clinic) for about R1m per month for 36 months at a cost of about R52m.

He said there had been a deviation from normal tender procedures to acquire four more buses at a cost of about R51m, despite the buses having mechanical problems.

"When these buses/trucks were to be registered with the Department of Transport, it was reported that these were found to be unroadworthy. As the department stands today, it owes R750 000 on licence fees, whereas the cost of these vehicles were reported to be around R51m," said Bhamjee.

He said they were also informed that the department had bought one more bus/truck for about R7m to be stationed at RK Khan Hospital, and was meant to operate at eThekweni Metro. This bus

was reported to be gathering dust because staff had not been trained to use it. Bhamjee said the report was shocking. "It was a complete wasteful and fruitless expenditure which at one level exposed the department's poor record keeping and management of its assets."

"We as the portfolio committee assure the broader community that we will scrutinise the said report so that we can pinpoint where and by whom the impropriety regarding the mobile clinics occurred," he said.

DA spokesperson Dr Imran Keeka said: "This matter has been on the DA's radar since we first heard about it in 2014. That year and again in 2015 and 2016, we submitted written parliamentary questions on the issue. To date, there has been no response from the MEC, Sibongiseni Dhlomo."

He said the department had chosen to speak on the matter when one of the ANC MPLs asked about it.

"What is strange to us is that the MEC is making this to be their efforts to deal with corruption when in fact it was something we have been asking him about for the past few years," said Keeka.

IFP MPL Ncamisile Nkwanyana said that to see the department's money being misspent was unacceptable. "The department is already facing financial difficulty and it is unconscionable that public money is being spent buying useless items that are not being used when money is needed to service the community," said Nkwanyana.

The department did not comment yesterday.