

Government

Setas worst performing

*Controversy, allegations of non-performance, corruption and mismanagement seem to have been linked to Sector Education and Training Authorities (Setas) since they were set up in March 2000. The **Labour Bulletin** reports on Labour Minister Membathisi Mdladlana's plans to reduce the number of Setas through mergers.*

It is rather ironic that amongst the worst performing Setas are those either associated with local or national government. This is despite all the talk within government circles of the need for employers to be committed to the Skills Development Act and the recent claims by public service and administration minister Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi that skills development in the public sector was a top priority. It would appear however, that Mdladlana's first port of call should be consulting with his counterparts in cabinet to ensure their departments take Setas and the Act more seriously. He announced recently that three Setas faced closure (or would be forced to merge with other Setas) for under-performing. These included local government, water and defence. Other poor performing Setas included public service, mining qualification, forestry, police, tourism and wholesale and retail. Unions including the SA Municipal Workers Union (Samwu) have expressed concern around the operation of the local authority Seta while public sector unions have similarly expressed concern about the public sector Seta. The Public Servants Association (PSA) says the Seta is

controlled by Fraser-Moleketi's office with the past and the present acting CEO both coming from her office. The current acting CEO is also government's chief negotiator in the current round of wage negotiations in the bargaining council. There might well be some corporate governance concerns here!

Mdladlana did however, express his concerns around the poor performance of the local government Seta: 'With the local government Seta the sad part is that we want training of 2 000 community development workers. And so I will not allow a situation where local municipalities, who can perform, (are) delayed at national level by people who don't want to do their work. That I cannot allow. Therefore we are proceeding with the training of these development community workers.' Mdladlana's targeting of non-performing Setas comes in the wake of reports that the department planned to begin a process of consultation with all the 25 Setas to discuss which should be merging with each other. Discussions between the department and Setas will start in August. The department has indicated that there will not be a massive redesign of the system. Instead there will be changes on the margins. **LB**

Geraldine on skills and wages

During an interview with public service and administration minister Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, after her budget speech in parliament on 21 June she stated that skills development and human resources was high on the priority list of her department.

Following on from claims that the department would explore the possibility of importing skills from other countries, Fraser-Moleketi said: 'We will only look at bringing in skills where we do not have them in SA'. Such a process she said would only occur where the country had a bilateral arrangement with another country as was achieved in the case of Cuba with the Cuban doctors. On the question of wages, she said the relationship between government and unions had matured and she was looking forward to a robust and sound round of negotiations