

KZN's road carnage: who is to blame? By Thobeka Ngema 6m ago Share this article: ShareTweetShareShareShareEmailShare Durban - OPPOSITION parties have accused the Department of Transport, Community Safety and Liaison of being responsible for road fatalities and crashes because of 232 vacant Road Traffic Inspectorate (RTI) posts not being filled. Since May, at least 50 people have been killed in major crashes in KwaZulu- Natal. Last weekend, 20 people were killed in three separate crashes in the Midlands and northern KZN. MEC Bheki Ntuli believed parties were trying to score "cheap political points" and that in most, if not all, of the accidents, human behaviour and motorists' negligence were to blame. DA Transport spokesperson Sharon Hoosen called on Ntuli to urgently commit to the restructuring of the RTI in order to increase the presence of law enforcement officers on the province's roads, 24 hours a day. "This is particularly relevant as we approach the festive season, with its high traffic volumes. Despite knowing that road fatalities increase drastically at this time, there is no effective plan in place to address this," said Hoosen. "Reckless driving, speeding and the failure to abide by the rules of the road continue to be major contributing factors when it comes to many lives being lost, and the time has come for the MEC and the Department of Transport to address the crisis that exists within the RTI. Most importantly, they must urgently review filling the more than 232 vacant posts." Hoosen's IFP counterpart Steven Moodley agreed that officers should be deployed 24/7. Moodley said the department was to blame for road accidents and road fatalities because there were insufficient traffic police on KZN roads. "Ntuli needed to provide compelling reasons why the vacant posts were not filled. We seek answers as to when these posts will be advertised as well as clear and concise time frames for the resolution of this urgent matter. The time for complacency and excuses is over. "The RTI simply cannot provide an effective service if they remain under- staffed. We cannot sit back and witness more road deaths as a result of incompetent leadership in the department. These posts should be filled urgently and vigilance should be maintained at all times," said Moodley. South Africans Against Drunk Driving director Caro Smit said that visible policing helped to curb road crashes because people tended to behave better. "It was really shocking that KZN had 232 vacant posts and why they had so many deaths. We really think there should be more visible policing but we want them to be engaged police so that they are actually doing this. It has to be done 24 hours a day, 365 days a year." Public Servants Association of South Africa provincial manager Mlungisi Ndlovu said they were aware of the vacant posts and had pushed the department to fill all positions "because it should not take more than three months to fill a position". "The department must fill all vacant positions with immediate effect. We understand about budget constraints, but positions that are budgeted for must be filled because they should not compromise our members to do the work that is supposed to be done by 10 people but is done by three people. It

compromises service delivery and has impacted on the operations of the different departments,” said Ndlovu. On filling these posts, the MEC said the department had been updating the Provincial Legislature regularly through the Transport Portfolio Committee regarding the discussions with the Department of Public Service and Administration, with a view to finalising the organisational structure. “Despite these engagements, the department prioritised the filling of posts within the enforcement unit and the approval was received from the premier to fill 116 posts. “We have already filled 14 of these posts; 102 posts were advertised towards the end of 2019, of which five posts are in the appointment stage and the remaining 97 posts are in the selection process. These posts are anticipated to be filled during the first half of the 2021/2022 financial year,” said Ntuli. He said they were seeking approval from the premier to fill a further 16 posts within the provincial inspectorate, with the intention to fill them by the end of the 2021/2022 financial year. He said the department was also seeking to recruit 60 trainee provincial inspectors during the next financial year. Daily News