

GOVERNMENT HAS SPENT R124M

Figures show need for labour brokers

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WHILE Cosatu wants the practice banned, it has emerged that the government has paid labour brokers nearly R124 million during the past financial year.

Government departments hired 510 employees through labour brokers to help out with projects, fill gaps during busy times or stand in for permanent employees on maternity or sick leave.

This came to light in a series of written replies to parliamentary questions posed by the DA in the wake of Parliament's labour committee launching a series of public hearings on the practice and a vociferous campaign by Cosatu and its affiliates for a total ban.

So far, the departments of Justice, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Public Service and Administration, Social Development, Health, Communication, Transport and the Treasury have all admitted to having used labour brokers during 2008/09. The percentage of staff obtained through

labour broking ranged from 0.45 percent (Transport) to 9 percent (Communication).

The Department of Justice spent the most money, using labour brokers to provide 264 temporary staff members to fill mostly vacant positions, at a cost of R89.3m – an average of about R338 000 for each temporary employee. The National Treasury spent R11.7m on 80 employees. Social Development spent almost R1.8m on 55 temporary staff members.

DA MP and labour spokesman Andrew Louw said yesterday that the reasons given by the departments proved that labour brokers were necessary. "The ANC and Cosatu need to think twice about their calls to ban labour brokers."

The DA said it would continue posing questions about government's use of labour brokers to the remaining departments, after Labour Minister Membathisi Mdladlana labelled labour brokers as "parasites".

The DA and Cope have come together on the issue, proposing self-regulation for brokers.