

Holding power to account in a culture of secrecy and impunity

Accountability and public governance

At OUTA, accountability is not an abstract principle; it is about whether public officials follow the law, institutions do what they are meant to do, and whether public money is protected from abuse, waste and corruption.

Stefanie Fick

Executive Director: Accountability Division



Foreword

Behind every failure of governance is a cost borne by the public. That is why this work matters. That is the work of our Accountability Division.

Over the 2025/26 reporting period, we worked across multiple areas of government, including energy procurement, transport regulation, parliamentary oversight, higher education governance and public finance management. Some matters required lengthy legal battles. Others called for detailed investigation, policy engagement and sustained pressure on oversight bodies.

Our work takes place in an environment where transparency is often resisted, access to information is delayed or denied, oversight mechanisms are weakened and consequences for wrongdoing remain limited.

In this context, accountability is not achieved through a single intervention. It requires persistence.

Among the most important outcomes this year was the High Court judgment setting aside the electricity generation licences granted to three Karpowership projects. This effectively halted government's plan to procure electricity from floating gas-powered ships under the Risk Mitigation Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (RMIPPPP). It was a necessary intervention to uphold lawful process and protect the responsible use of public funds.

We also uncovered irregularities in the tender for a new driving licence card machine. This led to the Department of Transport approaching the court to have the tender reviewed and set aside.

Our work further included investigations into corruption at vehicle testing stations involving roadworthiness inspections, continued scrutiny of governance failures within SETAs, monitoring of fiscal policy and public

expenditure, and challenging regulatory and pricing decisions in the energy sector.

Our parliamentary oversight work continued to grow during the year. Through engagement with parliamentary structures, public participation initiatives and interactive symposia, we pushed for stronger oversight and improved public access to parliamentary processes.

The development of the Parliamentary Oversight Dashboard, PariiMeter, in partnership with Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) and OpenUp and co-funded by the European Union (EU), made important progress in opening up parliamentary proceedings and performance to the public.

Parliament too, must be held accountable.

This work is often made possible by whistleblowers, access to information processes, public records and collaboration with civil society partners. These sources of information remain essential in exposing wrongdoing and supporting efforts to drive reform.

Many of the matters covered in this report remain ongoing. That is the nature of accountability work. Progress is often slow. Resistance is common. Meaningful reform takes time.

We remain committed to following the evidence, pursuing the law and insisting that public institutions serve the public, not themselves.



Accountability by the numbers

1 March 2025 to 28 February 2026

Our Accountability Division investigates corruption, challenges unlawful decisions and advocates for stronger governance and oversight.

Accountability projects

- 29** Total projects active at close of the year
- 24** New projects opened during the reporting period
- 45** Projects completed or concluded
- 33** Projects closed as successful

Examples include the Karpowership electricity licence judgment, the overturning of the driving licence card machine tender and the repeal of Johannesburg's CCTV by-law.

Legal actions and litigation

Court cases initiated or ongoing

There were 14 active litigious matters during the year under review.

Key litigation matters during the reporting period included:

- judicial review of electricity generation licences issued to Karpowership;
- delinquent director proceedings relating to Helen Botes;
- constitutional litigation addressing accountability gaps in the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA);
- ongoing litigation relating to e-toll debt cases;
- ongoing litigation relating to the toll concessionaires;
- judicial review of the CEO appointment at Insurance Sector Education and Training Authority (INSETA); and
- Ernest Khosa's ongoing litigation against OUTA on the review and setting aside of an OUTA investigation report.

When leadership fails, lives are lost...

Delinquent director case underway



Helen Botes, former CEO Johannesburg Property Company

HELP OUTA HOLD HER ACCOUNTABLE





Why The PFMA Has Weak Accountability

PFMA (1999)

- No "delinquent director" provision.
- Only weak sanctions: suspension/dismissal.
- Officials **who fail their fiduciary duties** walk away free.





Policy engagement and submissions

Formal submissions made to Parliament or government

In September 2025, we also submitted commentary on the 2025 Audiovisual Media Services and Online Safety Policy.

We submitted a research report titled: “Broadcasting Digital Migration: Delayed, Expensive and Lacking Oversight”, to provide the Portfolio Committee of Communication and Digital Technologies with an overview of the process to date and to assist the committee in their future endeavours.

During the 2025/26 reporting period, we maintained sustained engagement with South Africa’s national budget process, focusing on fiscal discipline, transparency and the need to address corruption and wasteful expenditure.

In April 2025, OUTA made a formal submission to Parliament supporting the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers Amendment Bill, 2025, urging lawmakers to strengthen oversight and close loopholes that have historically enabled unchecked executive perks.

In June 2025, we made a submission to the national Department of Cooperative Governance as part of the review of South Africa’s White Paper on Local Government, emphasising that the root causes of municipal dysfunction lie in failed leadership, not inadequate laws or policy frameworks.

In August 2025, we welcomed the introduction of a second bill, named Constitution Twenty-second Amendment Bill, 2025, which addresses persistent wasteful expenditure and weak consequence management in government. We praised the bill’s emphasis on reinforcing accountability mechanisms across public entities, particularly proposals to tighten budgetary controls, curb inefficient spending, and impose clearer sanctions for maladministration and financial mismanagement.

Submissions made this year relate to:

- broadcasting digital migration;
- executive benefits oversight;
- ethical standards for public representatives;
- local government reform; and
- fiscal policy and national budget processes.

Transparency and access to information

PAIA requests submitted and ongoing

There were **20** PAIA applications submitted during the period under review.

Internal appeals lodged and ongoing

There were **12** internal appeals lodged during the period under review.

Complaints submitted to the Information Regulator and ongoing

There were **12** complaints submitted to the Information Regulator during the period under review.

These requests focused primarily on procurement decisions, governance failures and financial records held by public institutions.



Major accountability interventions

OUTA wins legal challenge against Karpowership plan

On 31 July 2025, we won a landmark legal challenge that overturned the electricity generation licences granted to three Karpowership projects. This action took three years and effectively ended the state's plans to procure power from floating gas-powered power ships owned by Karpowership.

We lodged our application in the Pretoria High Court on 26 April 2022, seeking a judicial review of the National Energy Regulator of South Africa's (Nersa) decisions to grant generation licences to the three Karpowership independent power producers. The court ultimately set aside Nersa's licensing decisions, finalising the matter.

The licences were a critical step in government's plan to sign 20-year "emergency" electricity contracts under the RMIPPPP. These contracts were expected to cost around R240 billion over a 20-year period, with the cost passed on to electricity consumers.

We argued that Nersa failed to properly consider the environmental, social and economic impacts of the projects, and that Karpowership lacked several key regulatory approvals. We also challenged the transparency and rationality of the decision-making process.

The judgment brought the matter to a close and prevented the implementation of a long-term electricity procurement deal.

Driving licence card machine contract overturned after OUTA exposes irregularities

On 6 January 2026, the Pretoria High Court overturned the Department of Transport's award of the driving licence card machine contract to Idemia Identity and Security SA, ruling that the tender was irregular, invalid, unlawful and unenforceable. The contract, worth R898 million, was intended to provide a new machine for producing driving licence cards.

In September 2024, OUTA submitted a detailed report to the Minister of Transport exposing corruption and irregularities in the procurement process after receiving whistleblower information. The Minister referred the report to the AGSA. The AGSA subsequently warned of irregularities and referenced the information provided by OUTA.

In July 2025, Minister Barbara Creecy initiated legal proceedings to review and halt the tender award, which ultimately led to the contract being set aside by the court in January 2026. This case illustrates the impact of whistleblower disclosures combined with independent civil society oversight.



Holding power to account in a culture of secrecy and impunity continued

Challenging Johannesburg's CCTV by-law

During 2025, we successfully challenged the City of Johannesburg's attempt to regulate privately owned closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras through a municipal by-law that threatened constitutional rights and community safety.

In early 2025, the City of Johannesburg adopted a *Privately-owned Closed-Circuit Television Surveillance Camera By-Law*, which sought to impose extensive regulatory requirements on residents and businesses whose CCTV cameras overlook public spaces. These included mandatory registration and annual re-registration, fees, approval processes, restrictions on the use and sharing of footage, and broad powers for city officials to access footage and enter private property.

We raised serious concerns that the by-law was unconstitutional, irrational and procedurally flawed. We argued that the city was attempting to assume policing functions that fall outside municipal powers, while imposing onerous administrative and financial burdens on law-abiding residents and businesses. We further warned that the by-law undermined privacy rights, discouraged the use of CCTV as a crime-prevention tool, and risked weakening community-based safety initiatives at a time when crime levels remain high.

In June 2025, **we filed an application** in the Johannesburg High Court seeking to have the by-law declared invalid. The challenge formed part of a broader civil-society response, alongside actions by other organisations, reflecting widespread public opposition to the city's approach.

Following sustained legal and public pressure, the City of Johannesburg repealed the CCTV by-law in September 2025, before the matter was heard in court. We welcomed the

repeal as a victory for constitutional rights, common sense and public safety, noting that the city had ultimately conceded that the by-law was untenable.

Although the substantive relief sought was achieved through repeal, we are in the process of seeking an order for legal costs, emphasising that municipalities should engage meaningfully with public concerns and constitutional constraints, rather than forcing residents and civil society to resort to litigation.

This outcome demonstrates the importance of active civil oversight in local governance. Our intervention helped ensure that measures intended to improve safety do not, in practice, erode fundamental rights or undermine the very community initiatives that help keep neighbourhoods safe.

Holding the powerful to account: the delinquent director project

During the reporting period we continued expanding our delinquent director project, a strategic litigation initiative aimed at holding senior decision makers in public entities personally accountable for misconduct and governance failures.

In July 2025, we filed an application in the Johannesburg High Court seeking an order declaring Helen Botes, then director and chief executive officer of the City of Johannesburg Property Company (JPC), a delinquent director in terms of section 162 of the Companies Act.

The case relates to governance failures and procurement irregularities linked to the management of the JPC's properties, including matters associated with the Usindiso building fire. Following the filing and service of the application, Botes was removed as a director of JPC.



During the reporting period the matter advanced through procedural stages. Botes expressed her intention to oppose the application, raising challenges regarding our standing and the substance of the allegations. In response, we resisted attempts to delay the proceedings and served a notice of bar to prevent any procedural obstruction.

By the end of the reporting period, pleadings had closed and the matter will continue during 2026. This case builds on our earlier litigation which resulted in former South African Airways chairperson Dudu Myeni being declared a delinquent director for life in 2020.

Constitutional challenge to strengthen accountability under the PFMA

In August 2025, we launched a **constitutional challenge** aimed at closing an accountability gap in South Africa's governance framework.

While the Companies Act of South Africa, 2008, allows courts to declare directors delinquent, many state-owned entities are governed solely by the PFMA, which does not provide for similar accountability mechanisms.

We filed an application in the Pretoria High Court seeking to have sections of the PFMA declared unconstitutional to the extent that they fail to provide an equivalent mechanism for holding accounting authorities personally accountable.

Through this application, we are asking the court to give Parliament an opportunity to amend the PFMA and, in the interim, to extend delinquent-director provisions to accounting authorities of PFMA-governed entities.

The matter will continue during 2026.

OUTA challenges the RTMC over secrecy on transaction fees

For more than three years, we have sought disclosure of how the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) calculates transaction fees charged to motorists for licensing and related services.

We submitted a Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) request in November 2022 seeking internal documents explaining how these fees are determined and how the revenue collected is used. After the RTMC refused the request and rejected an internal appeal, we lodged a complaint with the Information Regulator in April 2023.

In April 2024, the Information Regulator ruled in OUTA's favour and directed the RTMC to disclose the information. The RTMC objected to the enforcement order issued in February 2025 and indicated its intention to challenge it in court.

In August 2025, OUTA was notified that the RTMC opted not to contest the enforcement order and subsequently provided the requested documentation. After reviewing the information, OUTA concluded the project as successful. OUTA remains firm in its stance that the public is entitled to transparency regarding the calculation of these fees and the management of the revenue collected. See more [here](#).



Why is OUTA taking Helen Botes to court?

Because failure has deadly consequences.

Repercussions:

- **Declared unfit to lead:** Stripped of all directorships
- **Banned from power:** Blocked from controlling any company for up to life
- **Branded for tax abuse:** Her misconduct carved into legal record

HELP US WIN THIS CASE

DONATE NOW

OUTA
ORGANISATION UNDOING TAX ABUSE



Why The PFMA Has Weak Accountability

PFMA (1999)

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OUTA
ORGANISATION UNDOING TAX ABUSE

Holding power to account in a culture of secrecy and impunity continued



NSFAS crisis continues

During the 2025/26 reporting period, we continued our work to expose governance failures and alleged corruption at NSFAS, while defending the right of civil society to publish investigative findings in the public interest.

Our engagement with NSFAS follows several years of investigation into systemic failures at the entity, including the mismanagement of student accommodation, weak oversight of service providers and alleged abuse of public funds. These investigations culminated in **detailed reports** published by us in 2023, which contributed to significant leadership consequences, including the dismissal of the NSFAS chief executive officer and the resignation of the board chair.

A major development during the reporting period was a high court judgment in July 2025 that upheld our right to publish investigative reports on NSFAS. The Johannesburg High Court dismissed an application brought by former NSFAS board chair, Ernest Khosa, who had sought to compel us to remove the report from our website and to provide him with a pre-publication hearing. The court found that we were entitled to publish the report and that civil society organisations are not legally required to offer a pre-publication hearing to individuals implicated in investigative reports.

The judgment represents an important victory for transparency and civil-society oversight. It affirmed that investigative reporting and advocacy carried out in the public interest should not be chilled by attempts to suppress disclosure through litigation. The ruling also strengthened the legal position of whistleblowers and

watchdog organisations seeking to expose maladministration in public entities. Although Ernest Khosa was granted leave to appeal, the appeal ultimately lapsed, leaving the judgment intact.

We continue to call for criminal accountability for those implicated in the abuse of NSFAS funds and remain engaged with law-enforcement agencies and oversight bodies. As governance and operational challenges at NSFAS persist, we will continue to monitor developments, defend our investigative work, and advocate for reforms that prioritise students, transparency and accountability.

For more on our work on NSFAS, click [here](#).

Going to court to challenge the reappointment of the INSETA CEO

During the period under review, we escalated our work on governance failures at **INSETA**, moving from investigation and engagement to legal action. This followed sustained concerns about maladministration, weak oversight and a lack of consequence management at INSETA.

In December 2025, we filed an application in the Pretoria High Court challenging the reappointment of INSETA's chief executive officer, Gugu Mkhize, for a further five-year term. Our application asks the court to review and set aside the decision by Minister Buti Manamela to reappoint Ms Mkhize, to declare it invalid and unconstitutional and order the INSETA board to conduct a new, transparent and competitive appointment process. The respondents include the Minister of Higher Education and Training, the INSETA board, INSETA and Gugu Mkhize.

Holding power to account in a culture of secrecy and impunity continued



How SETA leadership directly affects YOUR opportunities



Good SETA leadership

- Creates **more opportunities**
- Funds relevant training
- **Pays on time**
- Builds ethical, efficient systems
- Helps the youth **become more employable**
- Helps **reduce unemployment** and drives growth

Opportunity

Bad SETA leadership

- Quietly **takes opportunities away**
- **Wastes or loots** millions of rand
- Fuels skills mismatch and **rising unemployment**
- Leaves thousands of young people behind
- Appoints **incompetent** or inappropriate skills development providers
- **Delays or bungles** certification of students

Opportunity stolen

In 2025, more than four out of every ten young people aged 15 – 34 were not in employment, education or training.*

SETAs are critical for South Africa's future.

Skilled, experienced, ethical leaders = More jobs and hope | **Continued failure = Lost futures and rising unemployment**

* StatsSA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Nov 2025

decision making across the sector reinforced concerns that political influence continues to undermine accountability. While the placement of several SETAs under administration acknowledged the depth of dysfunction, we warned that administration alone is insufficient without time-bound interventions, credible

leadership appointments and firm consequence management. The exclusion of INSETA from these interventions, despite documented governance and financial concerns, further highlighted the need for urgent, system-wide reform to restore integrity and ensure SETAs serve their intended public purpose.

Corruption in vehicle roadworthiness testing

During 2025, we conducted an investigation into corruption within South Africa's vehicle roadworthiness testing system, exposing serious weaknesses in oversight and enforcement that pose risks to public safety.

The investigation identified cases in which authorised vehicle testing stations issued certificates without conducting proper inspections or manipulated test outcomes to ensure vehicles passed. In several instances, vehicles with significant mechanical defects were reportedly certified as roadworthy and permitted to operate on public roads.

Our findings highlighted systemic problems within the regulatory framework governing roadworthiness testing. These include inadequate monitoring of testing stations, weak auditing mechanisms, conflicts of interest where testing stations have financial incentives to approve vehicles and limited consequence management when irregularities are detected.

The investigation also raised concerns about the lack of consistent enforcement action against operators and officials involved in fraudulent certification practices. This environment creates opportunities for corruption while undermining confidence in the integrity of the roadworthiness system.

Rather than releasing the investigation publicly, we submitted our findings to the relevant authorities in March 2025, including the Minister of Transport, to support further investigation and enforcement action. The minister instructed the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) to investigate irregularities and corrupt activities at vehicle testing stations under a transport proclamation issued to the SIU.

We recommended stronger regulatory oversight, independent auditing of testing centres, improved data monitoring and greater protection for whistleblowers reporting corruption in the sector.

The investigation formed part of our broader work to strengthen accountability in the transport sector and ensure that regulatory systems intended to protect the public function effectively.

The ongoing saga of the driving licence card validity period

In South Africa, driver's licence cards are currently valid for five years, after which drivers are required to renew them. This frequent renewal process results in long queues, administrative burdens on licensing centres and unnecessary costs for citizens.

We have been **advocating for the extension** of the validity period to at least ten years, aligning with the international best practices. A longer validity period would alleviate congestion at licensing centres, reduce administrative costs and improve the overall efficiency of the system for both the government and motorists.

However, we emphasise that any changes to licence validity periods should be grounded in transparent research and international best practices. While we support the extension, we have raised concerns regarding the potential increase in fees, urging that any fee hikes must be based on clear and publicly available cost breakdowns.

For several years, we have engaged with the Department of Transport and the minister on this issue. We have also conducted research comparing South Africa's driver's licence renewal process with international standards.

The minister had committed to conducting a cost-benefit analysis to determine the financial implications of extending the licence validity period. This analysis was expected to be completed by October 2025.

In line with this commitment, we followed up with the minister on 26 November 2025 to request an update on the matter.

We continue to monitor developments and engage with government. Recent reports suggest that the Department of Transport is considering extending the validity period from five years to eight years, though no final decision has been made yet.

As of March 2026, media reports indicated that the Department of Transport missed the deadline for starting consultations on the proposed extension, as the cost-benefit analysis had not been completed. The analysis will ultimately determine whether the change will proceed.

While the government previously suggested that the extension would definitely occur, the matter remains under review.

Broadcasting digital migration: delays persist as analogue switch-off looms

In March 2025, we submitted a [research report](#) to the Portfolio Committee on Communication and Digital Technologies, detailing key challenges that have plagued the Broadcasting Digital Migration (BDM) project for over a decade – most notably, persistent delays and irregular expenditure. We also called on Parliament to conduct an urgent investigation into the project's handling and to ensure that the parties responsible are held accountable for their actions.

The BDM project was approved in 2008 and was designed to move South Africa from analogue to digital television broadcasting, aiming to improve signal quality, free up spectrum for mobile broadband, and create a more efficient broadcasting system. However, the process has been mired in years of delays, missed deadlines and wasteful expenditure. Despite repeated calls for action, digital migration remains incomplete, with the latest deadline – December 2024 – missed by a wide margin.

The failure to distribute set-top boxes (STBs) to vulnerable households, coupled with the absence of a public awareness campaign, leaves millions reliant on an outdated analogue system, risking loss of access to essential television services. Between 2.2 million and 4.5 million households may be affected, many of whom cannot afford to migrate to digital platforms without government support.

We have previously raised concerns about the ongoing wasteful expenditure and dubious tenders linked to the project, echoing the need for strong oversight and effective consequence management.

In the submission to Parliament, we emphasise the need for Parliament to fulfil its constitutional duty of oversight and accountability. As the final deadline approaches, we call on Parliament to act decisively to ensure that the transition to digital broadcasting is completed in a way that benefits all South Africans, especially those in vulnerable communities.

Watching the budget

During the 2025/26 reporting period, we maintained sustained engagement with South Africa's national budget process, focusing on fiscal discipline, transparency and the need to address corruption and wasteful expenditure.

The year was unusual in that the Minister of Finance was required to return to Parliament multiple times to present revised versions of the budget after the initial proposals failed to secure sufficient political support. The revisions followed strong opposition to proposed tax increases and concerns about the broader direction of fiscal policy.



While the process reflected divisions within government and Parliament, it also demonstrated that budget proposals are not immune from scrutiny or challenge. The revisions highlighted the growing pressure on government to justify fiscal decisions and respond to public and political concerns.

In March 2025, we submitted proposals to the Minister of Finance identifying potential savings of approximately R500 billion annually through improved revenue collection, reduced wasteful expenditure and stronger procurement oversight.

We emphasised that South Africa's fiscal challenges are driven primarily by governance failures, inefficiency and corruption rather than a shortage of tax revenue. See more [here](#).

Still waiting for transparency on toll concessionaire profits

Our legal challenge regarding the SANRAL concessionaire contracts has been a significant part of our efforts to ensure greater transparency and fairness within the South African tolling system. The focus of the challenge has been on the tolling agreements, particularly those involving the Bakwena and N3TC Concessionaires. These concession agreements are set to run until 2035 and we consistently raised concerns about their transparency, fairness and impact on commuters.

Our primary concerns regarding the concession contracts revolve around several key issues. We believe that there has been a lack of transparency with insufficient and unclear information provided on how toll fees are calculated and how the revenue generated from these tolls is managed. We have also raised concerns about the fairness and competitiveness of the procurement process for these tolling contracts, questioning whether SANRAL's practices have truly prioritised the public's best interests. See more [here](#).

We are currently involved in two significant concessionaire cases, each addressing concerns over the fairness, transparency and impact of tolling systems in South Africa. The Bakwena and the N3TC Concessionaire matters focuses on the lack of transparency in the concession's financial dealings and the long-term viability of the toll system. We seek to ensure that the public has access to information about how toll fees are set and how the revenue is utilised.

On 14 November 2023, the Pretoria High Court dismissed our application in the N3TC matter, which had challenged SANRAL's refusal to provide key documents requested in a PAIA request more than four years ago, particularly N3TC financial statements relating to the toll concession. SANRAL opposed the application and N3TC also joined the case to oppose the handover of the information.

Although we lost the initial court case against N3TC, we are in the process of appealing the Pretoria High Court's decision and the matter will be heard during 2026.

With regard to the Bakwena matter, the matter will be heard during April 2026.

These legal battles have been pivotal in our pursuit for transparency and accountability within the tolling system. It has also brought to the forefront the broader issue of privatisation of public infrastructure and its consequences for local communities.

While these cases are still ongoing, we remain committed to holding SANRAL accountable, pushing for a fairer, more equitable tolling system and ensuring that the interests of the public are adequately protected.

Advocating stronger oversight of executive benefits

In April 2025, we made a formal submission to Parliament supporting the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers Amendment Bill, 2025, urging lawmakers to strengthen oversight and close loopholes that have historically enabled unchecked executive perks. The submission responded to a Government Gazette notice proposing changes to the Ministerial Handbook, which in 2022 had quietly extended expensive benefits – including free water and electricity at official residences and expanded private offices – for ministers and deputy ministers, costing taxpayers an estimated R87 million annually.

We welcomed the intent of the bill as a crucial step toward restoring public confidence in government spending, emphasising that the current system allows changes to executive benefits without parliamentary scrutiny, costing transparency, or consultation with the independent commission tasked with advising on public office-bearer remuneration.

In our submission, we recommended that any changes to benefits for the President, Deputy President, ministers or deputy ministers should be:

- notified to Parliament within 30 days;
- preceded by a recommendation from the Independent Commission for the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers; and
- that the Ministerial Handbook be recognised as a delegated legislative instrument subject to parliamentary review.

We also called for mandatory public access to costing models and economic justifications, and for benefits granted outside the proposed process to be treated as unauthorised expenditure under the PFMA.

We stressed that we do not oppose fair and reasonable remuneration for public officials but argued that stronger checks, transparency and accountability are essential to prevent misuse of public funds under the guise of executive entitlements. The submission is [here](#).

Supporting structural reform through abolition of Deputy Minister posts

In August 2025, OUTA made a formal submission to Parliament in support of a private member's bill introduced by Athol Trollip proposing the abolition of the office of Deputy Minister.

The bill sought to reduce unnecessary executive expenditure, streamline government structures and improve fiscal discipline by removing positions widely viewed as duplicative and costly, with limited operational necessity.

OUTA welcomed the proposal as a practical governance reform aimed at curbing excessive public spending and reducing political patronage opportunities within the executive.

In our submission, we argued that South Africa's constrained fiscal environment requires government structures to prioritise efficiency, value for money and constitutional purpose. We noted that eliminating non-essential executive roles could strengthen public confidence by demonstrating political willingness to reduce waste at the highest levels of government.

Holding power to account in a culture of secrecy and impunity continued

We further emphasised that structural reforms of this nature should form part of broader efforts to improve consequence management, governance efficiency and responsible use of taxpayer funds.

Through this submission, OUTA reinforced its long-standing advocacy for leaner, more accountable government structures that better serve citizens while reducing avoidable public expenditure. Read our submission [here](#).

Strengthening ethical standards for public representatives

Later in August 2025, OUTA submitted commentary to Parliament on a separate private member's bill introduced by Adv Glynnis Breytenbach, which sought to strengthen ethical governance by disqualifying former judges and Chapter 9 office bearers removed for misconduct from serving in Parliament, provincial legislatures or municipal councils.

OUTA welcomed this bill as a necessary constitutional safeguard to prevent individuals found unfit for high public office from re-entering positions of political authority.

In our submission, we argued that this reform would close a significant legal gap, strengthen consequence management and reinforce constitutional principles of integrity, accountability and ethical leadership.

We further recommended that future reforms expand such disqualification measures to include individuals convicted of serious criminal offences, those guilty of gross public sector misconduct, and delinquent directors declared under the Companies Act.

Through this submission, OUTA advanced its broader advocacy for stronger ethical eligibility standards in democratic institutions, helping to restore public trust and prevent the recycling of misconduct within the state. Read our submission [here](#).

Leadership, not law, is the core challenge in local government

In June 2025, we made a submission to the national Department of Cooperative Governance as part of the review of South Africa's *White Paper on Local Government*, emphasising that the root causes of municipal dysfunction lie in failed leadership, not inadequate laws or policy frameworks. The submission argues that more than two decades after the original 1998 White Paper, systemic governance failures persist across municipalities, characterised by financial mismanagement, political interference, weak internal controls and declining public trust.

Our analysis highlights that oversight mechanisms exist but are often underused or ineffective due to lack of political will, cadre deployment, and a habit of filling leadership positions based on affiliation rather than competence. We underscored that corruption, nepotism and procurement irregularities continue to flourish in an environment where deterrence is weak, whistleblowers lack protection and law-enforcement responses are slow or inconsistent.

The submission also calls for greater citizen engagement in shaping and monitoring local government performance, noting that constitutional requirements for public participation are frequently superficial and tokenistic. We argued that genuine engagement – supported by accessible information on municipal budgets, project planning and performance – is essential if reform efforts embedded in the new White Paper are to have any meaningful impact.

Our intervention in the policy review process frames local government reform as a leadership and accountability challenge first, rather than a problem of legal frameworks alone, reinforcing our broader advocacy for ethical governance, professional administration and active civil oversight at the municipal level.

Parliamentary Oversight Report again finds Parliament weak, but hopes for better

During the reporting period, we published our seventh annual Parliamentary Oversight Report (POR), assessing how effectively Parliament holds the executive to account. For the first time we utilised ParliMeter to bolster our quantitative research on parliamentary proceedings, increasing its portfolio committee analyses from 11 committees to all committees.

The report found that parliamentary activity had increased compared to previous years, with more committee meetings and written questions submitted by Members of Parliament (MPs).

However, the report concluded that increased activity has not yet translated into consistent accountability. The findings of this report were covered by the webinar on 29 October 2025 with the theme of *7th Parliament: The Review Nobody Escapes*, mirroring the title of the POR. The link to the website is [here](#). The link to the 2025 report is [here](#).

Enhancing accountability: launching the ParliMeter

During 2025/26, we formally launched and continued developing **ParliMeter**, a new parliamentary oversight tool designed to strengthen transparency, accountability and public participation in South Africa's democratic processes.

ParliMeter was officially launched on 6 March 2025 by us in collaboration with the **PMG** and **OpenUp**. All three organisations share a commitment to advancing open governance and enabling citizens to engage meaningfully with public institutions. The project is co-funded by the **EU** under its Enhancing Accountability and Transparency Programme, a multi-year initiative aimed at improving public access to governance processes and strengthening oversight mechanisms.

ParliMeter is an online dashboard that makes parliamentary activity data accessible to the public. Drawing on information sourced through PMG, the tool tracks parliamentary attendance, committee activity and legislative processes.

The platform supports research, oversight and public engagement by providing structured data on parliamentary performance.

Since its launch, ParliMeter has also been used in webinars and engagements with civil society and governance practitioners, with user feedback helping to refine the platform and expand its practical usefulness. This includes two workshops in Gauteng and two workshops in the Western Cape, in September 2025.

The launch of ParliMeter represents a significant step in our broader parliamentary oversight work. As the tool develops, it has the potential to expand its scope to include additional datasets and functionality, further strengthening public oversight and contributing to more accountable governance in South Africa.

Do you engage with Parliament?

[Visit the ParliMeter](#)

Scheduled meetings per day ALJ ⓘ

2.1 ↓ 34% vs. long term avg.

— All parties — ALJ — 30 day avg. — Long term avg.

Average length of a single meeting ALL ⓘ

134 mins ↑ 18 vs. long term avg.

○ Meetings — Avg. — Long term avg.

Avg. meetings per committee ALL ⓘ

6 ↑ 12% above avg.

Committee	Meetings	Total time	Trend
1. Home Affairs	68	8h 14m	
2. Finance Standing Committee	68	6h 8m	
3. Communications and Digital Technologi...	68	6h 35m	
4. Employment and Labour	68	9h 4m	
5. Health	68	4h 7min	

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Observing the annual International Day of Parliament on 30 June, the webinar *Parliamentary Citizen Monitoring and Engagement: Unpacking the International Day of Parliamentarism* took place on 2 July 2025. Hosted by our own Robyn Pasensie, the panellists for this webinar were diverse, including Lethogonolo Letshele (Open Secrets), Ndodana Hadeba (Civil Society Unmuted Coalition of South Africa), Samantha Waterhouse (Equal Education) and Brent Simons (Parliament's Public Participation Task Team).

In August 2025, ParliMeter hosted a powerful webinar linked to *Women's Day on Women, Parliament and Parliamentary Processes*, exploring progress made, barriers that remain and alliances needed to strengthen women's influence in Parliament. The discussion was facilitated by Gabriella Razzano, with panellists Cynthia Chishimba and Namuma Mulindi. The recording is [here](#) and statistics on women and Parliament are [here](#).

As part of this project, our team has produced a collection of reports. These are available on both our website and the ParliMeter website.

Holding power to account in a culture of secrecy and impunity continued

Strengthening collaboration between civil society and provincial legislatures

In October 2025, we co-hosted a symposium with the Western Cape Provincial Parliament (WCPP) aimed at deepening collaboration between civil society organisations (CSOs) and the provincial legislature to improve oversight, accountability and meaningful public participation in governance. The event, held in Cape Town and funded by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), brought together CSOs, WCPP administrative staff, academics and oversight bodies to discuss how joint initiatives can rebuild trust in democratic institutions and enhance legislative scrutiny.

Participants at the symposium emphasised the need for structured engagement mechanisms between the WCPP and civil society, grounded in transparent processes that genuinely incorporate public input into oversight work. Practical proposals emerged from breakaway discussions, including creating a central repository for public submissions to committee processes, producing plain-language legislation summaries, extending participation timelines, and developing “report cards” to show how public contributions influence lawmaking.

Speakers highlighted that provincial legislatures oversee a significant majority of public spending – from schools and clinics to infrastructure – and thus must serve as anchors of accountability in their own right. There was broad consensus that civil society adds value through research capacity, community insights and by bringing citizens’ perspectives into legislative processes, while also acknowledging barriers such as mistrust, political dominance and limited technological infrastructure.

OUTA and partners reaffirmed our commitment to sustained dialogue and collaboration with the WCPP, signalling that strengthened partnerships between legislatures and civil actors are essential for effective oversight, responsive governance and rebuilding public confidence in democratic processes. Complementing the WCPP symposium, we organised a second symposium in November 2025, with the objective to deepen collaboration between Parliament, provincial legislatures and CSOs. Building on previous discussions in October 2025, the symposium highlighted ongoing challenges in public participation, such as limited access to information, weak feedback loops and political gatekeeping. However, it also emphasised a shared commitment from both civil society and parliamentary actors to rebuild trust through cooperation, transparency and stronger oversight.

Key discussions at this symposium focused on actionable strategies for improving the integration of civil society into legislative processes. The event culminated in a six-point action plan that emphasised collaborative oversight, improved civic education, accessible participation mechanisms and stronger performance monitoring for MPs and councillors. Additionally, the symposium reinforced the importance of consistent engagement, use of digital tools, and hybrid participation models to bridge South Africa’s digital divide and ensure greater inclusivity in governance. The ultimate goal was to make public participation more meaningful, transparent and effective, ensuring that citizens’ voices lead to tangible change.

More information on our work on parliamentary oversight is available on our [website](#).





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