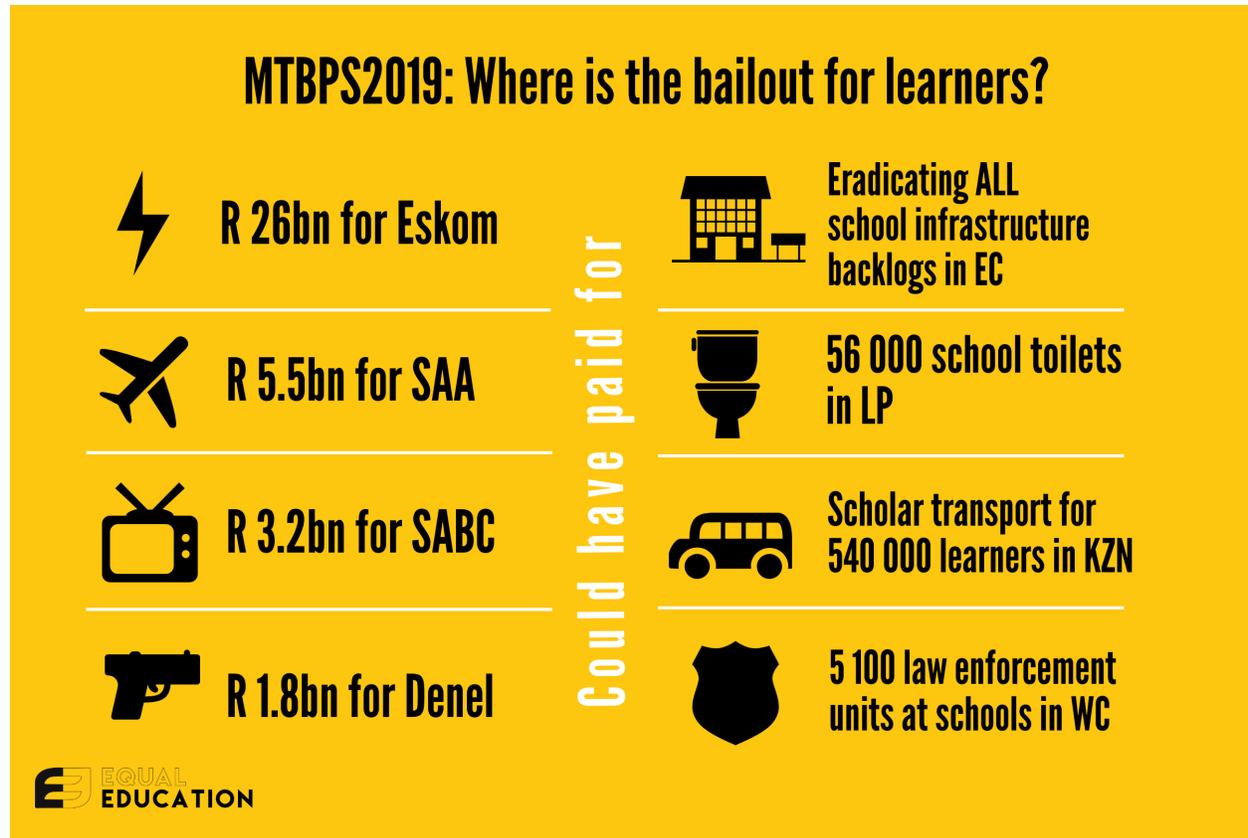


Equal Education media statement: Where is the bailout for learners in the 2019 MTBPS?

Today, Minister Tito Mboweni tabled the 2019 Medium Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS). While government has been able to find money to fund bailouts for almost every entity, from South African Airways (SAA) to the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), learners have to contend with reductions in projected spending on education and cuts to infrastructure grants. These bailouts could have been used to cover urgent priorities in our schools:¹



¹ Sources:

Eastern Cape school infrastructure backlog: Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education 2018 Norms Progress report

<https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Reports/2018%20Infrastructure%20Reports/EC%20Norms%20and%20Standard%20Report%202018.pdf?ver=2019-05-02-140356-930>

Limpopo toilets: Department of Basic Education presentation on the Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) programme

<https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/SAFE%20Presentation.pdf?ver=2018-08-14-130300-673>

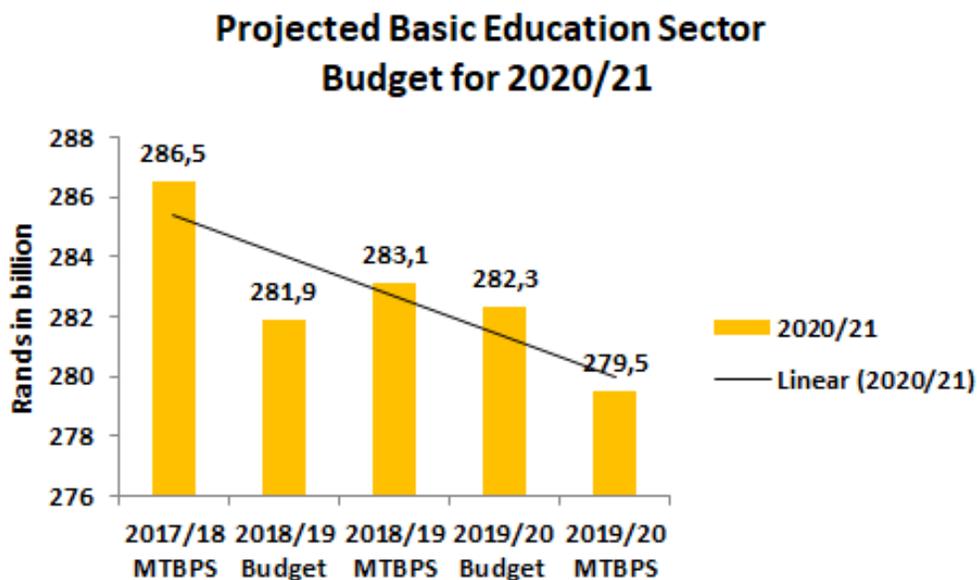
KwaZulu-Natal scholar transport: Court documents submitted by the KZN Department of Education to EE and the Equal Education Law Centre

Western Cape law enforcement: Meeting of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament's Standing Committee on Community Safety. Presentation by the Department of Community Safety, 11 October 2019.

(own calculations)

Budget trends within the basic education sector

Projections for allocations to basic education in the 2020/21 financial year have seen a pattern of downward revisions. Based on current projections, we are likely to be spending R7 billion less on education in the 2020/21 financial year, than what our plans reflected in 2017:



Source: 2017 - 2019 MTBPS and 2018 - 2019 Budget Reviews (National Treasury Documents)

The basic education sector makes up 14.1% of the country's total budget. It continues to grow, but at an achingly slow pace. When inflation is taken into account, the total basic education budget – that is, provincial and national budgets – is set to grow by a mere 0.8% in 2020/21.

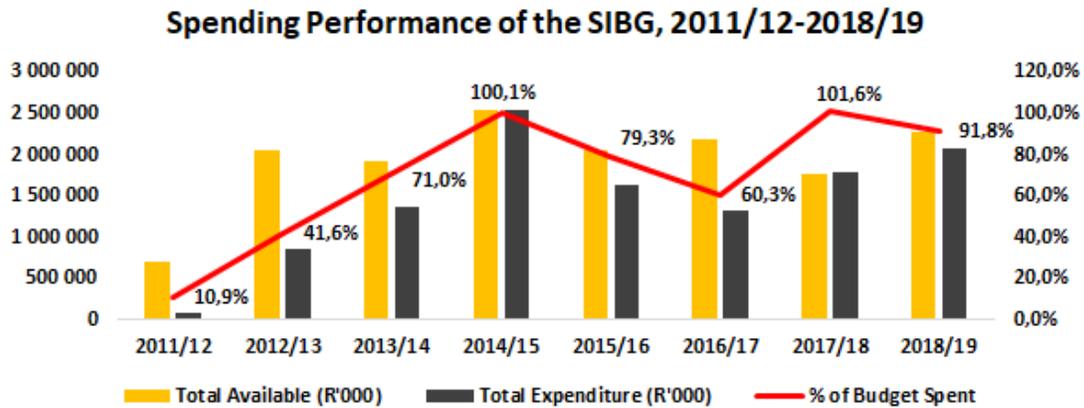
Reductions to infrastructure grants

Today's MTBPS announced cuts to ALL conditional grants, except for the early childhood development grant and the grant for learners with profound intellectual disabilities.² The budget for the School Infrastructure Backlogs grant (SIBG), which allocates money to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to build schools, continues to decline in the next financial year, with a projected R350 million real decrease.

The SIBG funds the nationally administered Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI). Since inception, ASIDI has been allocated a total of R15.5 billion, but spending on this programme has

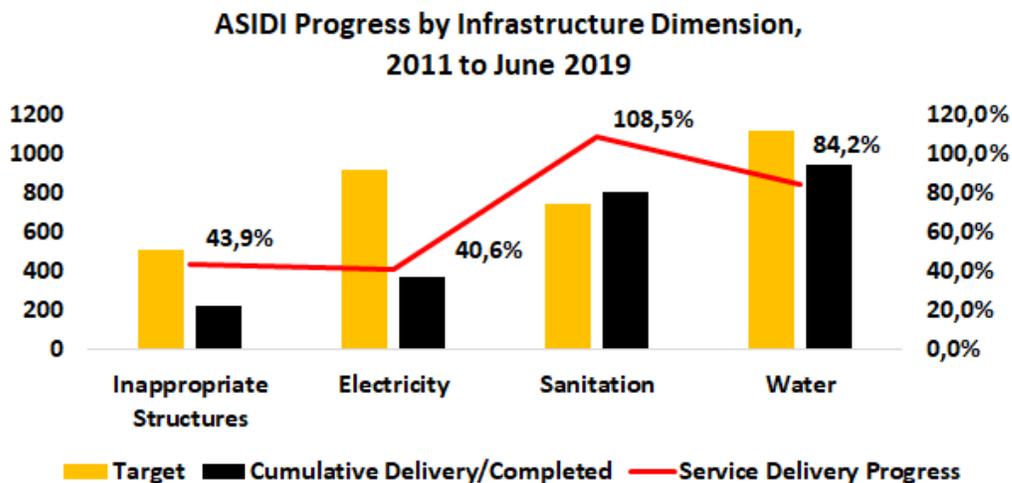
² 2019 Medium Term Budget Policy Statement

been erratic. This year's budget has been cut by R40 million due to the slow implementation of water & sanitation projects.³



Source: Financial and Fiscal Commission Presentation to Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Basic Education, 2019

Efficient spending of SIBG funds is another challenge for the DBE. While they have, on average, spent 70% of the budget per year, ASIDI's progress with meeting its targets over the past 8 years, has been worryingly slow.



Source: Financial and Fiscal Commission Presentation to Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Basic Education, 2019

ASIDI continued to perform poorly in the first half of 2019/20, and does not look set to meet its annual targets. Between April and September, only 11 schools were built against a target of 59!⁴

³ Adjusted Estimates of National Expenditure (2019)

<http://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/mtbps/2019/aene/Vote%202014%20Basic%20Education.pdf>

⁴ Adjusted Estimates of National Expenditure (2019)

ASIDI Targets vs Performance								
	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
	Target	Performance	Target	Performance	Target	Performance	Target	Performance
Schools Built	136	7	115	3	50	21	59	11*
Sanitation	265	9	257	4	285	200	717	63*
Water	459	10	344	1	325	199	227	52*
Electricity	620	0	134	29				

* ASIDI performance in the first half of the 2019/20 financial year

Conclusion

South Africa's public education system is fraught with inequalities that result in disparate schooling experiences for learners – favouring those who can afford to pay and access better resourced schools. The education budget is one of the tools the government can use to address these inequalities and ensure that all learners have an equal opportunity to access quality basic education.

At some point government has to be brave enough to ensure that the difficult trade-offs it has to make, prioritise the well-being and rights of the people and children of this country, instead of tolerating mismanagement, irregular and inefficient spending and the looting of the State's coffers.

[ENDS]

To arrange a media interview:

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