

GREEN PAPER TRANSFORMING PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

[TITLE - to be decided]

Department of Public Service and Administration

17 December 1996

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Introduction

A guiding principle of the public service in South Africa will be that of service to the people

1. The South African public service faces many challenges in its efforts to become a truly representative, competent and democratic instrument and to play its proper role

in the reconciliation, reconstruction and development process. To fulfill this role effectively, the public service is being transformed to implement government policies according to the policy framework contained in the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (WPTPS) (Government Gazette No. 16838, dated 24 November 1995).

2. The WPTPS has defined transformation as a dynamic, focussed and relatively short-term process designed to fundamentally reshape the public service for its appointed role in the new dispensation in South Africa. In the WPTPS, eight transformation priorities are outlined and they are:

- i. Rationalisation and restructuring the Public Service;
- ii. Institution building and management;
- iii. Representativeness and affirmative action;
- iv. Transforming service delivery;
- v. Democratising the state;
- vi. Human resource development and training;
- vii. Employment conditions and labour relations; and
- viii. The promotion of a professional service ethos.

3. This document aims to address the need for a specific policy and criteria for the transformation priority, transforming (public) service delivery. It also provides the policy and criteria (principles) which would enable national departments and provincial administrations to develop departmental service delivery strategies. Departments and provincial administrations will need to develop the strategies to promote continuous improvement in the quantity, quality and equity of service provision. Among other things, such strategies will need, according to Chapter 11 of the WPTPS, to identify:

- a mission statement for service delivery, together with service guarantees;
- the services to be provided, to which groups, and at which service charges; in line with RDP priorities, the principle of affordability, and the principle of redirecting resources to areas and groups previously under-resourced;
- service standards, defined outputs and targets, and performance indicators; benchmarked against comparable international standards;
- monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and structures, designed to measure progress and introduce corrective action, where appropriate;
- plans for staffing, human resource development and organisational capacity building, tailored to service delivery needs;
- the redirection of human and other resources from administrative tasks to service provision, particularly for disadvantaged groups and areas;
- financial plans that link budgets directly to service needs and personnel plans;
- potential partnerships with the private sector, NGOs or community organisations will provide more effective forms of service delivery; and

- the development, particularly through training, of a culture of customer care and of approaches to service delivery that are sensitive to issues of race, gender and disability.

4. In order to ensure that service delivery is constantly improved, national departments and provincial administrations will be required to outline their specific short, medium and long term goals for service provision. They will also be required to provide annual and five yearly targets for the delivery of specific services, and will be required to report to Parliament on their achievements.

5. A transformed South African public service will be judged by one criterion above all: its effectiveness in delivering services which meet the basic needs of all South African citizens. Public services are not a privilege in a civilised and democratic society: they are a legitimate expectation. That is why meeting the basic needs of all citizens is one of the five key programmes of the Government's Reconstruction and Development Programme.

6. Improving delivery of public services means redressing the imbalances of the past and, while maintaining continuity of service to all levels of society, focusing on meeting the needs of the 40% of South Africans who are living below the poverty line and those who have previously been disadvantaged in terms of service delivery, such as black women living in rural areas. The objectives to be pursued therefore may include that of welfare, equity and efficiency, etc. It also means a complete change in the way that services are delivered. A shift away from inward-looking, bureaucratic systems, processes and attitudes, towards new ways of working which put the needs of the public first, is better, faster and more responsive to meet those needs.

7. This Green Paper explains how [...] will tackle the task of transforming the delivery of public services. It covers those parts of the public sector, both national and provincial, which are regulated by the Public Service Act (procl. 103/94). However the policies are relevant to all areas of the public sector, such as local government and parastatals, as well as the South African Defence Force and the Intelligence Services. Those parts of the public sector covered directly by this document therefore include three types of agencies -

- administrative agencies such as the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), which provide services directly to other national departments and provincial administrations rather than directly to the public;
- service delivery agencies, such as the (provincial) departments of Health, Agriculture and Education and particularly the components within them such as hospitals, tax offices, etc., which deliver services directly to the public; and
- statutory agencies, such as the Public Service Commission and the Auditor-General, which are established by the Constitution or other legislation as bodies independent from the executive with important regulatory and monitoring functions with respect to the public service.

The customer must come first

8. Private companies cannot afford to ignore the needs and wishes of their customers if they want to stay in business, because dissatisfied customers can choose to take their business elsewhere. Knowing what the customer wants and providing it quicker, better and cheaper than your competitors, is essential to business success. Thus, in the private sector "the customer comes first" is not an empty slogan but a fundamental business principle.

9. By contrast, public sector “customers” cannot choose to take their business elsewhere. They cannot exert the same pressure on public service organisations (national departments and provincial administrations) to improve. National departments and provincial administrations which fail to satisfy their customers do not go out of business because of a lack of competition. Complaining often has little effect and can in any case be a daunting and time-consuming process. The individual citizen’s/ customer’s voice penetrates the walls of bureaucracy with difficulty.

10. The lack of information and complex regulations are two further barriers to citizens/ customers in dealing with national departments and provincial administrations. All too often it is left to the individual citizen/ customer to work out for him- or herself what services are available, and what he or she is entitled to. Too many government forms are complicated and not designed with the user in mind. Too many letters are written in a stilted, non-personal style which is off-putting to the person who receives it. Finding the right person to speak to in a national department and provincial administration, particularly someone who can give friendly, helpful advice can be very trying, leaving the individual citizen/ customer feeling helpless, frustrated and uncertain.

11. Many public servants, especially those who serve the public directly, are only too conscious of all this, because they have to face the public’s frustrations every day in their work. They would often like to see improvements and often have good ideas for what could be done, but they are bound by systems and practices which they believe they are helpless to change.

A fresh approach - the Principles of Public Service Delivery

12. A fresh approach is needed: an approach which puts pressure on systems, procedures, attitudes and behaviour within the Public Service and reorients them in the customer’s favour. This does not mean introducing more rules and centralised processes or micro-managing service delivery activities. Rather, it involves creating a framework for the delivery of public services which puts citizens/ customers first and enables them to hold public servants to account for the service they receive - a framework which frees up the energy and commitment of public servants to introduce more customer-focused ways of working. The framework consists of seven simple principles, derived from the policy goals set out in Chapter 11 of the WPTPS, which are aligned with Democracy and Accountability.

The Principles of Public Service Delivery

Democracy and accountability require -

1. Consultation Users and consumers of public services should be consulted about the level and quality of the services they receive and, wherever possible, to be given a choice about the services that are offered
2. Service standards Users and consumers of public services should be told what level and quality of service they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect
3. Courtesy Users and consumers of public services should be treated with courtesy and consideration
4. Information Users and consumers of public services should expect full, accurate information about the services they are entitled to receive

5. Openness and transparency The public should expect to be told how national departments and provincial administrations are run, how much they cost, and who is in charge
6. Responsiveness Users and consumers of public services should expect that, when the promised standard of service is not delivered, they will be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy, and that any complaint will produce a sympathetic, positive response
7. Value for money The public should expect that public services will be provided as economically and efficiently as possible

Putting Principles into practice

13. Putting the Principles of Public Service Delivery into practice is the challenge now facing the South African public service. The Principles will apply to national departments and provincial administrations and the components within them such as tax offices, hospitals, etc. From now on, the public can expect that all these organisations will be aiming to live up to the obligations which the Principles place upon them, and that tangible results will follow. The following paragraphs describe what national departments and provincial administrations will be expected to do.

Consulting users of services

14. From now on, national departments and provincial administrations will be required regularly and systematically to consult the users and consumers of their services about the services they provide. Consultation serves a number of purposes. First, it provides the public with the opportunity of influencing decisions about public services which affect their welfare. It can also foster a more participative and co-operative relationship between the providers and users of public services. Just as important, consultation will provide essential information about where national departments' and provincial administrations' priorities should lie in improving services.

15. There are many ways to consult users of services, including customer surveys, interviews with individual users, consultation groups, and meetings with consumer representative bodies and community groups. Each department and provincial administration is at liberty to choose the method to be adopted but, whatever method is chosen, the result must be a representative cross section of the views of the entire range of users. Particular effort must be made to include the views of those who, due to geography, language barriers, fear of authority or any other reason, have previously found it hard to make their voices heard. Often, more than one method of consultation will be needed to ensure comprehensiveness and representativeness. For example, a customer survey which provides statistical evidence will need to be supplemented by examples of individual users' actual experience. The consultation process should be undertaken sensitively; for example people should not be asked to reveal unnecessary personal information, and they should be able to give their views anonymously if they wish.

16. The results of the consultation process must be reported to Ministers and MECs, and made public, and should also be widely publicised within the organisation so that all staff are aware of how their services are perceived. The results must then be taken into account when decisions are made about the level and type of service to be provided. This does not mean that consultation should result in a list of impossible demands that cannot be met; but, conducted intelligently, it should reveal where

resources and effort should be focused in future to meet users' most pressing needs. It should represent an amicable balance between what the customers want and what departments and provincial administrations can realistically provide.

Setting Service Standards

17. From the end of 1997 onwards, national departments and provincial administrations will be required to publish standards for the level and quality of services they provide. Service Standards must be relevant and meaningful to the individual user. This means that they must cover the aspects of service which matter most to users, as revealed by the consultation process, and set in terms which are relevant and easily understood. Standards must also be precise and measurable, so that users can judge for themselves whether or not they are receiving what was promised, eg by stipulating the length taken to authorise claims, issue identity documents, answer letters, the number of citizens who in future will have access to the services provided, what services will in future be provided, etc.

18. More concrete examples may include health departments stipulating the key standards a patient can expect in a hospital which may include: how long they can expect to wait at the outpatient clinic; the maximum waiting time for a non-urgent operation; the name of the person responsible for their case; the information they are entitled to receive about their treatment, etc.

19. Service Standards will be approved by the Minister or MEC of the relevant department, who is ultimately responsible for the services being provided. The Service Standards should be demanding but realistic. This means that they should reflect a level of service which is higher than that currently offered but which can be achieved with dedicated effort, and by adopting more efficient and customer-focused working practices. Service Standards must then be published and displayed at the point of delivery and communicated as widely as possible to all potential users so that they know what level of service they are entitled to expect, and can complain if they do not receive it.

20. Publishing standards is not enough, however. Performance against standards must be regularly measured and the results must be published at least once a year, and more frequently where appropriate. This is an important ingredient of national departments' and provincial administrations' accountability to their users. It is also essential in order to track improvements in services from year to year, and to inform decisions about the levels to which standards should be raised in future.

21. Results should be reviewed annually and, as Service Standards are achieved, so they should be raised incrementally. There can be no question of reducing a standard, once set, solely on the grounds that it has not been met. If standards are not met, the reasons must be explained publicly and a new target date set for when they will be achieved.

Ensuring courtesy

22. Under the Principles of Public Service Delivery the concept of courtesy goes much wider than asking public servants to give a polite smile and saying 'please' and 'thank you', though these are certainly required. It embraces an entire code of behaviour which calls for public servants to put themselves in the shoes of the users

of their services and to treat them with as much consideration and respect as they would want to receive themselves. It means making sure that the words 'public service' is a day-to-day reality for every citizen/ customer they deal with. Many public servants do this instinctively; they joined the public service precisely because they have a genuine desire to serve the public. The Principles of Public Service Delivery require that the behaviour of all public servants is raised to the level of the best.

23. This means that public servants should be instructed about the standards of behaviour to be adopted when dealing with individual members of the public, and that performance which falls below these standards should not be tolerated. For example, all public servants should identify themselves by name when dealing with the public directly, whether in person, on the telephone or in writing. Standards should be set for the way public servants should address members of the public, for the style and tone of written communications and the maximum length of time within which responses must be made to enquiries from the public, for how interviews should be conducted, for how to deal with complaints, for how to deal considerately with members of the public who are disabled, or who have difficulty in understanding complex rules and regulations, or filling in application forms, and so on.

24. National departments and provincial administrations should draw up and publish a behaviour code, giving guidance about the way public servants should behave towards the public/ customers and setting courtesy standards against which the performance of individual staff will be assessed including - among other things - their salary progression. Service delivery and customer care must be included in public service training programmes and formal training given to all those who deal directly with the public, whether face-to-face, in writing or on the telephone. This need not mean spending a lot of additional resources: it is more a case of refocusing existing training courses on service delivery.

25. Equally important to formal training, is the informal training which comes from the example set by senior managers, and the day to day guidance that new staff receive from their more experienced colleagues. Junior staff quickly pick up the unspoken messages about an organisation's values from the way their seniors behave and learn to adapt to 'how we do things round here'. Senior managers have a duty to ensure that these values are in line with the Principles of Public Service Delivery.

26. An important aspect of encouraging customer-focused behaviour is to provide staff with opportunities to suggest ways of improving service and for senior managers to take these suggestions seriously. This applies particularly to staff who come into regular contact with the public and usually have an accurate appreciation of their needs and concerns. Senior managers should regularly meet with such staff to get feedback about services.

Providing more and better information

27. Where customers have little or no choice about the services they receive, information is one of the most powerful tools - sometimes the only tool - that they have to exercise their right to good service. In future, national departments and provincial administrations must work harder to make sure that citizens/ customers can use the tool of information. Implementing the Principles of Public Service delivery

calls for a complete transformation of the way in which national departments and provincial administrations communicate with those who use their services.

28. National departments and provincial administrations must make sure that citizens/ customers have access to full, accurate and up-to-date information about the services which are available to them, and what their entitlements are. This must be done actively where the information is available and the citizen/ customer is able to work out how to obtain it. Likewise, written documents must be in a simple official language that is easily understood. The consultation process should be used to find out what the citizen/ customer needs to know, and then to work out how, where and when the information can best be provided.

29. Information must be provided in forms which meet the varying needs of different users. This is essential to ensure that those who are disadvantaged by physical disability, language barriers, geographical distance or in any other way are included. For example, it should not be assumed that written information will be suitable for all users: many people prefer to receive information verbally, so that they can ask questions and check their understanding. Written information should be plain and free of jargon, and supported by graphical material where this will make it easier to understand. There should always be a name and contact number for obtaining further information and advice. All written information should be tested on the target audience for readability and comprehensiveness.

30. As a minimum, information about services should be available at the point of delivery, but for users who are remote from the point of delivery, other arrangements will be needed. For example: schools, libraries, clinics and local community institutions might be able to help; toll-free telephone helplines, in a variety of languages where needed, can be extremely effective; and service providers should consider making regular visits to remote communities.

Increasing openness and transparency

31. Openness and transparency are the hallmarks of democratic government and are fundamental to the public service transformation process. In terms of public service delivery, their importance lies in the need to build confidence and trust between national departments and provincial administrations and the citizens/ customers they serve. A key aspect of this is that the public should know more about the way national departments and provincial administrations are run, how well they perform, the resources they consume, and who is in charge.

32. National departments and provincial administrations will be required to publish an annual statement - a Report to Citizens/ Customers - setting out, in plain language:

- the staff numbers employed, and the names and responsibilities of senior officials;
- the performance against targets for: financial savings, increased efficiency and improved service delivery;
- the resources consumed, including salaries and other staff costs, and other operating expenses;
- any income, such as fees for services; and
- targets for the following year.

33. Reports to Citizens/ Customers are not a substitute for national departments' and provincial administrations' formal annual reports. Their aim is, in one or two pages of straightforward language, to provide the public with key information which they are entitled to know. The Reports should be distributed as widely as possible throughout the community. Reports to Citizens/ Customers should also be submitted to Parliament to assist the relevant Portfolio Committees in scrutinising departmental activities.

Increasing responsiveness

34. Responsiveness is a core value of the transformed public service. Its application in practice will have a profound effect on the way national departments and provincial administrations operate. The capacity and willingness to take action when things go wrong are the necessary counterparts of the standard setting process. The key to implementing the responsiveness Principle lies in being able to identify quickly and accurately when services are falling below the promised standard and having procedures in place to remedy the situation. This needs to be done at the individual level in transactions with citizens/ customers, and at the organisational level, in relation to the entire service delivery programme.

35. What this means, in practice, is a completely new approach to handling complaints. Complaints are seen by many public servants as a time-consuming irritation. Where complaints procedures exist they are often lengthy and bureaucratic, aimed at defending the department's actions rather than solving the user's problem. Many departments have no procedures for regularly reviewing complaints in order to identify systemic problems. Indeed many organisations do not collect statistics about the number and type of complaints they receive. Often, 'complaints' are counted as such only when they are put in writing through the formal channels. Yet many citizens/ customers do not bother using the formal channels because they have no confidence in their effectiveness and because they find the process time-consuming and sometimes daunting. This means that national departments and provincial administrations frequently underestimate the level of dissatisfaction which exists.

36. The first step, therefore, is to acknowledge that all dissatisfaction, however expressed, is an indication that the citizen/ customer does not consider that the promised standard of service is being delivered and then to establish ways of measuring all expressions of dissatisfaction. Staff should be encouraged to welcome complaints as an opportunity to improve service, and to report complaints so that weaknesses can be identified and remedied. The head of each department should regularly and personally review complaints, and how they have been dealt with.

37. National departments and provincial administrations are required to review and improve their complaints systems, in line with the following principles:

- **Accessibility.** Complaints systems should be well-publicised and easy to use. Excessive formality should be avoided. Systems which require complaints to be made only in writing may be convenient for the organisation but can be off-putting to many customers and should therefore also be welcomed in other ways such as personal face-to-face complaints or by telephone;
- **Speed.** Customers will become more dissatisfied the longer it takes to respond to their complaint. An immediate and genuine apology together with a full explanation will often be

all that they want. Where delay is unavoidable, the customer should be kept informed of progress and told when an outcome can be expected;

- **Fairness.** Complaints should be fully and impartially investigated. Many customers will be nervous of complaining to the manager of an office about one of his or her own staff, or about some aspect of the system for which the manager is responsible. Wherever possible, therefore, an independent avenue should be offered for customers to use if they are dissatisfied with the response they receive the first time round;
- **Confidentiality.** Customers' confidentiality should be protected, so that they are not deterred from making complaints by feeling that they will be treated less sympathetically in future;
- **Effectiveness.** The response to a complaint, however trivial, should take full account of the customer's concerns and feelings. Where a mistake has been made, or the service has fallen below the promised standard, the response should be immediate, starting with an apology and a full explanation; an assurance that the occurrence will not be repeated; and then whatever remedial action is necessary. Wherever possible, staff who deal with the public direct should be empowered to take action themselves to put things right;
- **Review.** Complaints systems should incorporate mechanisms for review and for feeding back suggestions for change to those who are responsible for providing the service, so that mistakes and failures do not recur; and
- **Training.** Complaints handling procedures should be publicised throughout the organisation and training given to all staff so that they know what action to take when a complaint is received.

Getting better value for money

38. Improving public service delivery can only be achieved within the resources that the nation and specifically, the national departments and provincial administrations can afford. The service delivery programme must go forward in the context of a transformation programme that is also aimed at reducing public expenditure and creating a leaner public service. It is therefore essential to make better use of the resources already available. The Public Service currently costs about R 142 billion a year to run. It is a large sum by any standard and already more than the country can afford. If only 10% of this amount were saved in improved efficiency and reducing waste, there would be R 14,2 billion available per year to plough back into improved services. The key aims of the [...title....] programme will therefore be to search for ways of simplifying procedures, reduce delays and duplication and to refocus scarce resources on delivering services better.

39. Many improvements that the public would like to see cost nothing, and can sometimes even reduce costs. A courteous and respectful greeting requires no financial investment. Failure to give a member of the public a simple, satisfactory explanation to an enquiry may result in an incorrectly completed application form which will cost time to put right. A few hours each month of a senior manager's time spent talking to the public/ their customers - and the staff who serve them - is worth hundreds of Rand in customer surveys.

Encouraging innovation, rewarding excellence

40. It is not only the public who would like to see public services improve. Many dedicated public servants, particularly those who serve the public directly, are frustrated by systems and procedures which are often a barrier to good service rather than a support for it. It is essential to the success of [...title....] that the commitment,

energy and skills of these people are harnessed to tackle inefficient, outdated and bureaucratic practices, to simplify complex procedures, and to identify new and better ways of delivering services.

41. Performance appraisal will in future include an assessment of the performance of individual staff in contributing to improving service to the public. This will be particularly important in the case of staff who serve the public directly, where a key indicator will be how they rate in their dealings with the public. An award scheme - the [...title...] award - will be introduced to recognise and reward outstanding performance in improving public services. There will be two types of awards, one for individuals and one for groups of staff, who can demonstrate not only that the service they provide lives up to the Principles of Public Service Delivery but also that they have brought about some significant improvement in the standard of service they deliver. The awards will be made annually, and the public will also be invited to participate in nominating worthy candidates.

Partnership with the wider community

42. Improving public service delivery matters not only to the individual users of services, but also to the whole community. Improved delivery of service in our national departments and provincial administrations, as well as in components within these organisations such as hospitals, tax offices, etc., is essential for the future economic prosperity and social development of the country.

43. Business and industry, NGOs, academic institutions and other bodies throughout the community should be encouraged to play a part in supporting [...title...]. For example, local businesses might fund the publication of Service Standards in a variety of official languages, or a multi-lingual telephone helpline, or sponsor a customer survey. They could also offer secondments and exchanges to public servants to broaden their experience. NGOs could help to spread information about what services are available and where to obtain them. Community groups can help individual users to access public service complaints schemes and could work with public services on simplifying procedures and regulations. Academic institutions might be willing to conduct comparative studies on international best practice in public service improvement.

44. As part of their consultation exercises, departments should involve representatives of the wider community in discussions about the future development of public services. Departments should also forge partnerships with business, NGOs and other stakeholders to encourage them to participate in service improvement initiatives.

Making it happen

45. National departments and provincial administrations are required to publish service standards by the end of 1997, and to have already put in place the organisational arrangements to ensure that these are delivered and reported on. As a first step, each organisation must draw up, by the end of May 1997, a service delivery improvement plan, setting out what their draft service standards are and how they propose to implement their programme. Consultation with customers on the draft service standards should be completed by the end of June 1997, and agreement reached on the draft service standards by 31 August. Monitoring arrangements should be devised by the end of September 1997, and arrangements should be in place by the

end of November 1997 to ensure that the service standards will be delivered and the remaining five Principles of Public Service Delivery adhered to.

46. Service Delivery improvement plans will serve several purposes. They will:

- provide a basis for discussion and agreement with Ministers and MECs about service delivery priorities and standard setting;
- inform staff and encourage them to focus on improved service delivery;
- provide a policy monitoring document for the DPSA, the national and provincial and inter-provincial transformation co-ordinating committees, and departmental transformation units; and
- provide the basis for the eventual published document setting out the organisation's service standards and other service delivery goals and commitments.

47. Service Delivery improvement plans should set out, among other things:

- existing levels of service and the proposed service standards to be adopted;
- how service standards will be monitored and reported on, and the management information systems which will support this;
- the organisational and systems arrangements which will ensure standards are met;
- the human resource training, supervision and appraisal arrangements which will ensure that staff behave in accordance with the Principles of Public Service Delivery;
- how the department's communications systems will be geared up to provide information about services of the type and frequency that customers require;
- how complaints systems will be developed to identify and rectify failure to deliver the promised standard to individual 'customers'; and
- the financial management systems which will collect data on the unit costs of key services, in order to provide information for standard and priority setting in subsequent years.

Statements of Public Service Commitment

48. National departments and provincial administrations will be required to publish its Service Standards in a Statement of Public Service Commitment by the end of 1997. The main aim is to make a clear commitment to the Service Standards that users can expect, but the statement should also explain how the organisation will fulfil each of the Principles of Public Service Delivery to the public. Each Statement will be signed by the relevant Minister or MEC who will be answerable for the delivery of the Commitment. The DPSA may be consulted in drawing up the Statements.

49. Statements of Public Service Commitment should be short, simple and easy to understand. Strenuous efforts should be made to ensure that all users and potential users are aware of the Statements, because it is an essential tool to enable them to demand services in accordance with the Principles of Public Service Delivery to the public. In widely spread rural areas, for example, the press, radio, TV and local community centres will be encouraged to publicise the Statements and, where this will assist communication, they should be published/ communicated in local languages.

Pilot areas

50. Some national departments and provincial administrations have already embarked on service improvement programmes and will be ready to launch their service standards well before the end of 1997. The three pilot areas of the Public Service are the national Department of Health, the Department of Home Affairs, and Provincial Administration: North-West.

Supporting departments' efforts

51. Transformation units in national departments and provincial administrations will have a key role to play in helping to support national departments' and provincial administrations' efforts to improve service delivery, by feeding in fresh ideas for improvements and identifying areas where existing systems are a stumbling block to better service. They will also monitor the results of their department's service delivery improvement programme and offer suggestions for making more rapid and effective progress. At national and provincial level, the various transformation co-ordinating committees will be valuable as focal points for sharing experience and best practice, and ensuring that momentum is maintained right across the Public Service.

52. The DPSA, which has a policy responsibility for the transformation of the Public Service and, within that, for improving service delivery, has set up a support team within the Directorate: Public Service Reform to guide and assist national departments and provincial administrations. The DPSA will also monitor the overall progress of the initiative, in addition to the normal monitoring to be done by the Public Service Commission and report the results to Parliament.

53. The DPSA's support team will be available to work supportively with national departments and provincial administrations when requested to assist in the development of their Statements of Public Service Commitment. As a first step, the DPSA will prepare and issue guidelines on implementing the Principles of Public Service Delivery, and on drawing up service delivery improvement programmes. The DPSA will also arrange regular opportunities for national departments and provincial administrations to exchange information and best practice on topics of common interest, such as standard setting, the development of improved complaints systems, and consultation techniques; and to learn from relevant national and international experience.

Timetable

54. The timetable for implementing [...] is ambitious, but it is achievable with commitment and effort. There are four key target dates:

End of February 1997: National service delivery conference at Fort Hare University, Bisho in collaboration with the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration and Fort Hare University

End of March 1997: Publication of the [...] White Paper, signaling the launch of [...].

Pilot areas publish their statements of Public Service Commitment and begin to implement their service delivery improvement programmes

End of December 1997: National departments and provincial administrations publish their Statements of Public Service Commitment.

December 1998: First year's results published

No time to lose

“After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb”
(Nelson Mandela, ‘The Long Walk to Freedom’)

55. Improving public service delivery is not a one-off exercise. It is an ongoing and dynamic process, because as standards are met, they must be gradually raised. This document marks only the first stage in that process. There is a great deal to do, and progress will sometimes be frustratingly slow; but the task is one of the most worthwhile and rewarding that the public service faces, and the need is urgent, so there is no time to lose. It is a process that must involve every public servant, at every level, in every department, whether they work behind the scenes or directly with the public.

56. During the next 12 months the citizens of South Africa should see the first tangible signs of a major step-change in the way that public services are delivered, and the start of a continuous process of improvement which will lead in time to public services that the public have a right to expect and that public servants are proud to provide.
