

Foreword

Budget reform aims to ensure that budgets reflect government's objectives and support the extension and improvement of service delivery. Enhancing transparency and accountability is a key element of this agenda. The 2008 Estimates of National Expenditure (ENE) contain the results of further reform efforts.

As part of our ongoing efforts to improve the non-financial performance information which complements information on the allocation of resources, this ENE includes more detailed and quantifiable objectives and measures and reorganised trendable performance indicators. As the veracity of this information improves, oversight bodies such as Parliament, policy makers and decision makers, as well as civil society and the public can use this information as a tool to hold the executive accountable for results achieved and value for money in public expenditure.

The ENE continues to provide extensive information for the last three financial years, the present year and for the three years of the medium term expenditure period. This information relates to the strategies of departments, policy developments and spending plans. The ENE contains the widest consolidated financial reporting for the public entities published in South Africa. Building on this, we introduce performance information for some of these entities.

Transparent and accountable governance is enhanced when comprehensive budget documents are tabled for public scrutiny and legislative oversight. The amounts to be appropriated by Parliament for each vote are set out at the beginning of each chapter and further details are found throughout the chapter, providing a firm link with the 2008 Appropriation Bill. Accounting officers, including myself, will be held accountable for performance accordingly.

The ENE is a collective statement of budget allocations, policy priorities and accountability information. I thank my colleagues in departments and public entities for their invaluable commitment as well as their collaboration and understanding during the budget process. The expenditure estimates of departments are the outcome of an arduous administrative and executive process. Treasury budget analysts, under the political guidance of the Minister of Finance and the Ministers' Committee on the Budget, have worked closely with the policy and budget teams of departments and entities to ensure that government priorities are appropriately funded.

Systematic budget reform initiatives form part of the process of achieving a step change in service delivery to South Africans, helping departments to prioritise, plan, budget and implement relevant programmes. Beyond allocating the resources and reporting on the budget in the ENE, much work lies ahead. Our efforts will be wasted if we were to stop here.

The Treasury is grateful for the contribution of teams from departments and entities and the strengthening of relationships across government as budget reform is progressively implemented. Thanks also go to the Treasury team who worked so hard in producing this substantial document.



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Contents (alphabetically)

Introduction	i
Information contained in each chapter	xix
23. Agriculture	447
12. Arts and Culture	203
24. Communications	471
18. Correctional Services	353
19. Defence	373
13. Education	229
25. Environmental Affairs and Tourism	497
3. Foreign Affairs	27
6. Government Communication and Information Systems	87
14. Health	257
4. Home Affairs	45
26. Housing	525
20. Independent Complaints Directorate	401
21. Justice and Constitutional Development	409
15. Labour	283
27. Land Affairs	549
28. Minerals and Energy	569
7. National Treasury	107
2. Parliament	15
29. Provincial and Local Government	599
30. Public Enterprises	623
8. Public Service and Administration	145
9. Public Service Commission	163
5. Public Works	67
10. South African Management Development Institute	175
22. Safety and Security	433
31. Science and Technology	647
16. Social Development	313
17. Sport and Recreation South Africa	335
11. Statistics South Africa	185
1. The Presidency	1
32. Trade and Industry	675
33. Transport	721
34. Water Affairs and Forestry	757

Contents

Introduction	i
Information contained in each chapter	xix
Central Government and Administration	
1. The Presidency	1
2. Parliament	15
3. Foreign Affairs	27
4. Home Affairs	45
5. Public Works	67
Financial and Administrative Services	
6. Government Communication and Information Systems	87
7. National Treasury	107
8. Public Service and Administration	145
9. Public Service Commission	163
10. South African Management Development Institute	175
11. Statistics South Africa	185
Social Services	
12. Arts and Culture	203
13. Education	229
14. Health	257
15. Labour	283
16. Social Development	313
17. Sport and Recreation South Africa	335
Justice and Protection Services	
18. Correctional Services	353
19. Defence	373
20. Independent Complaints Directorate	401
21. Justice and Constitutional Development	409
22. Safety and Security	433
Economic Services	
23. Agriculture	447
24. Communications	471
25. Environmental Affairs and Tourism	497
26. Housing	525
27. Land Affairs	549
28. Minerals and Energy	569
29. Provincial and Local Government	599
30. Public Enterprises	623
31. Science and Technology	647
32. Trade and Industry	675
33. Transport	721
34. Water Affairs and Forestry	757