

## Column Corruption – A social disease

# How to create reckoning during the Year of Accountability?

This article focuses on options to capitalise on the recently proclaimed 'Year of Accountability'. Given the fact that the previous three articles in this column has centred on the topic of accountability, the President is spot-on to declare 2019 the Year of Accountability.

The Namibia public sector is in a serious accountability crisis that is affecting not only governance at all levels, but is contributing to the trend of reduced transparency, and increased lawlessness as well as the arbitrary application of the law. Politicians and board members are not being held accountable for their actions as has been evident during numerous occasions during 2018. Probably due to vested interests of those that appoint board members (ministers) and board members' vested interests towards the ruling party, most of them seem toothless.

It is time for the President to intervene to act on his promise of '2018 The Year of Reckoning' of which we have not seen very much during 2018. If the President is serious about changing the status quo of accountability (that includes reckoning) and governance of the 99 SOEs, this is the time to do. Ministers need to reflect and rectify their accountability/reckoning deficit before we continue with 2019. If not, old habits are most likely to be retained during the election year - in digging up the past historic struggles of political ideology with limited economic accountability towards the public. We have trajected down the slope of reduced political accountability since Independence. This is evident from the state of reduced public service delivery at all levels of government, e.g. corrupt local government authorities such as Okahandja, Grootfontein and Karibib. More evidence include the numerous financial



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bankrupt SOEs and suspended, including corrupt CEOs that have left with golden handshakes, e.g. TransNamib, the Namibian Airports Company and Air Namibia.

With such a low baseline of accountability as described, options about how to improve are numerous. Ministers and Members of Parliament (MPs) can have scorecards. They can be rated in terms of the performance of their appointees, financial control and quality of contributions. Ministers can be rated in terms of value for money (a public service value) provided to and by the offices/ministries/agencies they are accountable for. Performance Effectiveness Measures (PEMs) for ministers/deputies, their institutions and MPs can be introduced. These measures should be enforced and corrective penalties against ministers and MPs should be taken - which is currently not the case - as the President has praised his ministers end of 2018. Citizens and the media should have access to these PEMs because political and public accountability are meaningless if it is not transparent and if the end user, the citizens, do not have an opportunity to debate it.

Ultimately, the President is accountable. It is for him to provide clear direction about how to hold ministers/deputies, MPs and government accountable. Are we expecting too much? Time will tell.

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