

BELA Action Summit

Repeal sections 5 and 6 of the BELA Act.

10 October 2024

We, the speakers of Afrikaans from all population groups:

- emphasise the importance of high-quality education for our country;
- believe in the power of mother-tongue teaching as a method to provide and protect quality education;
- would welcome and support quality mother-tongue education for all language communities;
- are disappointed with the state's slow progress with mother-tongue education for other language communities, which has resulted in almost 90% of South African children not being able to go to school in their own language;
- give recognition to the previous generations' struggle to establish Afrikaans as a language of education in the midst of difficult circumstances;
- believe that education in one's own language also conveys values and culture;
- express our appreciation for the Afrikaans school community that has established an outstanding school system;
- believe in the authority of governing bodies that give parents the right and responsibility to make decisions regarding their children's education;
- reject the idea of state schools where decisions about schools are made centrally; and
- are deeply disappointed in the state's inability to build new schools during the past 30 years and then wants to lay its capacity challenges at the door of already overcrowded Afrikaans schools.

Therefore, we reject:

- any attack or limitations on mother-tongue education in general and specifically on Afrikaans;
- the BELA legislation which tends to give the state more power in general over our schools, thereby seriously undermining and destroying parents' authority;
- sections 5 and 6 specifically which give the head of education the right to prescribe to schools regarding language and admissions; and
- the Gauteng Department of Education's hostile attitude towards Afrikaans schools.

Therefore, we have decided on the following course of action:

- to do everything in our power to protect the excellence of Afrikaans schools;
- to promote mother-tongue teaching in general, in order to promote excellent teaching in all language communities;
- to protect Afrikaans schools and Afrikaans in schools with everything in our power;
- to fight the centralist character of BELA and specifically sections 5 and 6;
- to actively participate in negotiations with the government and parties in the Government of National Unity to amend BELA;
- to specifically ask the DA and FF+ to reconsider their participation in the Government of National Unity if BELA is implemented in its current format;
- to hold a day of protest to show the world all Afrikaans-speaking people in South Africa reject the attack on mother-tongue education and on our schools;
- to proceed with court action if BELA is implemented in its current format; and
- to support the development of independent schools as complementary to the Afrikaans public school system.

For our language community, mother-tongue education in our schools and for our children is a red line.