

Press Release

For immediate release

6 June 2014



Contact: Frans Cronje/Anthea Jeffery Tel: 011-482-7221 Email: ajj@sairr.org.za or fcronje@sairr.org.za

IRR: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IS KILLING BABIES AND MUST BE SCRAPPED

The CEO of the IRR, Dr Frans Cronje, says that it is time to scrap race-based affirmative action in South Africa given the damage the policy is causing to poor and vulnerable communities. According to the IRR, the policy has created a very small black elite that uses its capacity to control access to the benefits of the policy to perpetuate its own advantage. It is largely for this reason that, 20 years into our democracy, fewer than 10% of black-African people and/or households have private medical insurance or pay bonds on houses -- two of the best benchmarks of middle class status. At the same time, more than half of young people are unemployed. The juxtaposition of this small elite against the masses of desperately poor people suggests the extent of the gate-keeping practices that have been going on.

Worse than the gatekeeping, said the IRR, is that race-based affirmative action is a veil behind which to conceal corruption and incompetence - and mainly vulnerable communities are paying a deadly price for this. Because many people are appointed to positions on the basis of their race, there is little public criticism of those appointments even when the people in question are manifestly unfit. Take the example of events in Bloemhof this week. The Bloemhof municipality 'lost its capacity' to maintain the sewer plant. People drank contaminated tap water and three babies aged 7, 9, and 13 months died, while scores were hospitalised. There is no doubt that the officials responsible for these deaths were appointed, at least in part, on grounds of race-based affirmative action and that *a direct causal link therefore exists between the policy and the deaths*. Sheer state incompetence also saw babies die in Limpopo and Gauteng this week – and there can again be little doubt that affirmative action played a role in appointing the people responsible for those deaths.

Yet in all the commentary and reporting on the deaths, there is no mention of affirmative action. How can it be that perhaps the most high-profile of all government policies does not attract even a mention when things go as badly as they have in Bloemhof? As is so often the case, the truth lies in what no-one is prepared to say. Affirmative action cannot be mentioned because, even in the face of the deaths of children, to do so is to cross the barrier of political correctness forced on our country by the ideology of race-based empowerment. Cronje said that defending the policy in the face of these deaths, even by omission, reveals a callous indifference to the deaths of (mainly black) children.

Only once people begin to break down this barrier does it become possible to talk about alternatives – and these are what South Africa needs. Such alternatives should ensure that poor people become the focus of the policy. The most promising alternative may be the policy of Economic Empowerment for the Disadvantaged (EED) currently being developed by the IRR. This policy seeks to use socio-economic status to prioritise access to the building blocks of economic advancement, such as education, employment, and entrepreneurship. These, coupled with rapid rates of economic growth, will allow poor people to pull themselves out of poverty and into the middle classes.

End.
