

Setting up the Commission

SETTING UP

- 1 The President appointed the following persons as commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and their names were published in the Government Gazette (No. 16885) on 15 December 1995. They were Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Chairperson), Dr Alex Boraine (Vice-Chairperson), Ms Mary Burton, Adv Chris de Jager, the Revd Bongani Finca, Ms Sisi Khampepe, Mr Richard Lyster, Mr Wynand Malan, the Revd Dr Khoza Mgojo, Ms Hlengiwe Mkhize, Mr Dumisa Ntsebeza, Dr Wendy Orr, Adv Denzil Potgieter, Dr Mapule F Ramashala, Dr Fazel Randera, Ms Yasmin Sooka and Ms Glenda Wildschut.
 - 2 The Commission held its first meeting at Bishops court, the residence of the Archbishop of Cape Town, on the Day of Reconciliation, 16 December 1995. It was decided that the national office of the Commission would be in Cape Town, and commissioners were allocated the following committees:
 - a The Human Rights Violations Committee: Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Chairperson), Mr Wynand Malan (Vice-Chairperson), Ms Yasmin Sooka (Vice-Chairperson), Dr Alex Boraine, Ms Mary Burton, the Revd Bongani Finca, Mr Richard Lyster, and Dr Fazel Randera.
 - b The Amnesty Committee: Adv Chris de Jager, Ms Sisi Khampepe and Adv Denzil Potgieter.¹
 - c The Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee: Ms Hlengiwe Mkhize (Chairperson), Dr Wendy Orr (Vice-Chairperson), the Revd Dr Khoza Mgojo, Dr Mapule F Ramashala and Ms Glenda Wildschut.
 - d Mr Dumisa Ntsebeza was appointed as head of the Investigation Unit.²
 - 3 It was also agreed that the Department of Justice would assist in the process of establishing the offices and infrastructure of the Commission.
 - 4 On 8 January 1996, the Human Rights Violations Committee held its first meeting at the Johannesburg International Airport. A work plan for the Committee was tabled and discussed. It was agreed that the Committee would need to function in a decentralised manner.
 - 5 The full Commission held its second meeting on 22 - 26 January 1996 when a wide range of topics was discussed and decisions were made. After reviewing and discussing the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act (the Act), the Commission agreed that it would maintain regional offices in four centres, namely Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban and East London. It agreed further that the headquarters of the Amnesty Committee would be in Cape Town, while the headquarters of both the Human Rights Violations Committee and the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee would be in Johannesburg. There was a series of discussions on the role of the Investigation Unit, the management of information, the need for a sophisticated database, a media and communication strategy for the Commission, and the need for the safety and security of Commission staff and resources. An organisational plan outlining the staffing structure of the Commission was tabled and discussed, and the Commission agreed to advertise for staff without
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delay. Other matters discussed included the recording and transcription of meetings and hearings, and assistance offered by international donors.

- 6 The third full meeting of the Commission was held on the 13 and 14 February 1996. This meeting approved a full staffing plan together with job descriptions and the appointment of a finance manager, a head of research, a human resources manager and a human resources officer. The finance manager was mandated to draw up a budget without delay. Finally, the meeting agreed that the following commissioners would be responsible for the Commission's regional offices: Dr Wendy Orr (Cape Town), Dr Fazel Randera (Johannesburg), the Revd Bongani Finca (East London) and Mr Richard Lyster (Durban).

p THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL OFFICES

The national office and Cape Town regional office

- 7 At its second meeting in January 1996, the Commission agreed that the national office would be at 106 Adderley Street, Cape Town and, to save costs, the Cape Town regional office would be located in the same building.
- 8 The lease was signed to commence on 1 March 1996, and the offices were renovated and certain structural changes were made. They were ready for occupation shortly prior to that date. It took almost the entire month of March to equip and furnish the offices properly and to put proper administrative systems in place. The office was only fully functional from early April 1996.

The Johannesburg regional office

- 9 At its second meeting in January 1996, the Commission agreed that the Johannesburg regional office would be located in the Sanlam Building at the corner of Jeppe and Von Wielligh streets in Johannesburg.
- 10 Temporary office space was provided in the Sanlam Building from 15 January 1996. Floor plans for the Johannesburg office were complete by mid-February 1996, and the offices were constructed and ready for occupation by the third week of March 1996. Furniture and office equipment were installed at this time, and a few administrative and secretarial positions were filled in order to allow the office to begin to function. The office was fully staffed and functional by early May 1996.

The East London regional office

- 11 At its third meeting in February 1996, the Commission agreed that the East London regional office would be located in the NBS Building, 15 Terminus Street.
- 12 The first phase of occupation began on 1 March 1996 and entailed the provision of offices for one commissioner, two committee members and two secretaries. The second phase of occupation began on 5 March 1996, when the regional manager was employed. From that time on, new office space and furniture were acquired as new staff members were employed. The core staff was in place by 25 March 1996.
- 13 A satellite office was opened in Port Elizabeth and staffed by personnel previously based in East London together with some new appointees.

The Durban regional office

- 14 At its third meeting in February 1996, the Commission agreed that the Durban regional office would be located in Metlife House, 391 Smith Street, Durban.

- 15 The offices were ready for occupation by 15 March 1996. Twelve staff members had been employed by 25 March 1996 and basic office equipment and furniture had been purchased. The majority of staff had been employed by 13 May 1996 at which stage the office was fully operational.
- 16 A satellite office was opened in Bloemfontein in May 1996, where staff was recruited quickly because of its relatively small size. The office became functional almost immediately.

p CONCLUSION

- 17 The Commission moved relatively rapidly to establish itself. It was virtually inoperative during December 1995 and early January 1996, partly because this is traditionally a holiday period, and partly because certain commissioners had to terminate or arrange leaves of absence from their previous employment. It took an additional three to four months, with some regional variation, for the Commission to establish its infrastructure and to advertise and employ sufficient staff to begin functioning close to full capacity. The Commission was satisfied that the start-up phase was completed in a professional and efficient manner.