

## **NORTH-END PRISON IN PE GETS A NEW MAKE-OVER**

**By Tshuluzi Nkoana**

The newly upgraded R118-million North End Prison facility in Peterson Road in Port Elizabeth is about to see the new day – and will play a progressive role in the new democratic order.

The 60-year old facility, a declared heritage site because of its rich history dating back to the apartheid era, used to be a jail of several prominent political prisoners such as Tata Vuyisile Mini in 1952, Tata Govan Mbeki, Tata Raymond Mhlaba, Mama Janet Cherry, Tata Harold Strachan and many others.

Once completed, the prison is going to be a beautiful rehabilitation centre for the Client Department of Correctional Services and the Nelson Mandela Metro communities.

The facility was initially designed to accommodate 745 inmates, but it had twice the number before it was renovated.

In line with the heritage prescripts, the original prison doors will be restored and one single cell will be renovated to the original standard while the rest of the facility is completely upgraded.

Compliance with the current building regulations and security standards of the Department of Correctional Services was ensured.

The upgrades include full repairs and renovation of the building as approved by the Heritage Council.

The work includes the following areas:

The upgrading of the water reticulation and the supply of an underground 48-hour water storage tank.

The upgrading of the electrical infrastructure and the building of a substation in accordance with municipal requirements - to house the emergency generator, transformer and UPS system for the back-up of security system.

The installation of a full integrated security system that includes a 5m high security fence with movement detectors.

The removal of the mechanical boilers to change to the electrical system with the installation of heat pumps as an energy saving initiative.

The upgrading of roads and the building of garages to accommodate state vehicles.

The repairs of concrete spalling that had bad corrosion because of the proximity to the sea.

The upgrading of the kitchen equipment to meet the catering requirements of various religious needs of the inmates.

The laundry room is fully upgraded and will be equipped with the relevant and compliant laundry equipment, and

The badly damaged asbestos roof of the facility is being replaced with interlocking aluminium roof sheeting.

The construction of the prison was marred by delay because of contractual disputes, with the first contractor who was appointed on 11 October 2011. This contract was cancelled after the service provider applied and was granted voluntary liquidation.

The Department cancelled the contract and appointed a new service provider on 19 August 2014. This R118-million project has created the total number of 220 job opportunities in the area.

WorxNews spoke to Ms Thembeke Kolele, Chief Construction Project Manager who is based in Port Elizabeth, about the progress of North End Prison.

She has completed a number of projects but the special one right now is the North End Prison.

“The history of the building is absolutely fascinating. Working on this project to restore this building is also an incredible experience for me.

Some of the professional team members with 40-odd years of experience say they have never come across such a complex situation but we handled it with great skill and care,” explained Ms Kolele.

Ms Kolele also spoke about her background. She joined the Department as a Project Manager in 2005 and was promoted to Senior Project Manager in September 2009.

“I studied a National Diploma in Civil Engineering then an Advanced Diploma in Project Management and thereafter the Post Grad in Project Management.

“Currently I am studying towards my B Tech in Civil Engineering and when I finish next year; I plan to attempt the MBA studies and I am excited to say the least,” she said.

She says the North End Prison project is one of her best achievements by far.

“I am very proud to be involved in this project. It is something so special for our country's history and I am proud to be part of the DPW family that gives us opportunities to be part of history and make a difference in our professions.”