



DG APPEARS AT THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



Article by Thamsanqa Mchunu, Pictures Supplied

The Director-General of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure led a delegation to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) hearing about the infrastructural challenges and human rights concerns affecting both police and correctional centres, in Rustenburg, in the North West Province.

The DG was accompanied by the Head of the Property Management Trading Entity (PMTE), Siza Sibande and the DDG: Construction Projects Management, Batho Mokhothu.

The main concerns that the Human Rights Commission (HRC) wanted answers to were the following:

1. Dilapidated or incomplete holding cells
2. Non-functional ablution facilities
3. Overcrowded detention spaces
4. Inadequate sanitation and water supply; and
5. Structural hazards, posing safety risks to detainees and officers.

The DG and his team explained to the HRC that answers to the SAHRC enquiries with regards to the above issues were provided in different documents that were appended to the letter that the DG sent on 1 September 2024. He also took the Commission through the context and reasons for the dilapidated state of many of the facilities that the Human Rights Commission had visited, in the North West. He indicated that there is a huge maintenance backlog on state properties that are occupied by many user

Departments. The backlog on 56 414 properties is more than R29 billion. The main reason for this huge maintenance backlog is the ageing infrastructure where many of the buildings were constructed as far back as 1915.

In the case of most of the facilities, the electrical, mechanical, building, civil and mechanical infrastructure has exceeded their useful lifespans. A typical example of what has been discovered during facility condition assessments are the boilers that were installed as far back as 1978. One should however not look at the boiler in isolation to the steam infrastructure, calorifiers, laundry equipment, kitchen equipment, factory, farming operations which require steam generation for effective services to be rendered. Most of this is now obsolete and will require investment by registering Capital Works projects.

The above context is very important in order for the HRC to be apprised of, and to appreciate the fact that major infrastructure upgrades and/or replacement is needed and that such must be prioritised and funded by the client with all capital projects registered by SAPS and DCS annually in their User Asset Management plans, in accordance with the Government Immovable Asset Management Act (Act 19 of 2007). Mr Mdakane also pointed out that with regards to Repairs and Renovation of Infrastructure, DPWI, does register projects which are funded from accommodation charges paid by SAPS and DCS, however such projects have to be identified by the client, prioritised by them and then registered accordingly. The DG called for the massive capital injection from National Treasury and the Private Sector for state buildings that have reached the end of their usefulness, to be rebuilt.

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