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DPWI DEPUTY MINISTER LEADS OPERATION BRING BACK IN CAPE TOWN



Article by Fanisa Makhubela, Pictures by Tumelo Sekwele

Deputy Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Sihle Zikalala, today led officials from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) on Operation Bring Back (OBB), a nationwide campaign to reclaim state-owned properties that have been illegally occupied, hijacked, or stolen. The Deputy Minister conducted site visits in Goodwood and Khayelitsha, two areas identified as property hijacking hotspots in the Western Cape. Following the visits, he briefed the media on the department's ongoing efforts to protect and safeguard public assets across the country.

The property visited in Goodwood has a unique and symbolic history. It was originally owned by an elderly woman who, in her will, directed that the property be transferred to the South African Police Service (SAPS) for use in the fight against drugs. For a time, SAPS occupied the building before vacating it. The property was later leased for private commercial use, but once the lease expired, it was abandoned. Left unsecured, it became vulnerable to illegal occupation and hijacking.

Speaking during the site visit, Deputy Minister Zikalala emphasised that reclaiming such properties is critical to restoring dignity, order, and accountability in the use of state assets. "Public assets belong to the people of South Africa. They must be protected and utilised to serve for public good, not for private profiteering or criminal activities," he said.

The Western Cape is one of the provinces most affected by property hijackings. According to DPWI records, over 40 state-owned properties and land parcels are believed to be hijacked or illegally occupied in the province. The Deputy Minister stressed that the department will not tolerate such acts and will intensify its efforts through Operation Bring Back, to reclaim and repurpose properties for public use.

The OBB campaign has been rolled out nationally, targeting illegally occupied and stolen state properties in urban and rural areas. Through this programme, the DPWI aims to:

- Reclaim state-owned properties that have been hijacked or illegally transferred.
- Protect assets from further vandalism, neglect, or criminal use.
- Ensure that properties are used for the benefit of communities and government service delivery.



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