

“BE ON TIME, ON TASK AND MAINTAIN PROFESSIONALISM”

As part of his turnaround strategy, Minister TW Nxesi has embarked on a mission to stabilise the operations of the Department in the short-term, whilst embarking on a fundamental review and transformation in the longer-term. The Minister has visited various offices including the Head Office, Mthatha Regional Office, Limpopo, Pretoria and Johannesburg Regional Offices to begin the turnaround process.

Minister Nxesi's has been preaching the same sermon throughout these offices. His message has been both loud and clear during these visits emphasising that no turnaround or meaningful change can be imposed from the top down. “If we're going to talk about a turnaround, then everyone must be involved, from the head office, to the regions, to the lowest worker, a successful turnaround requires the active participation and buy-in of the organisation at every level. The turnaround is not a one size fits all blueprint run by consultants from outside the Department,” explains Minister Nxesi.

The Minister has emphasised that the turnaround strategy is a process where the Department is being reviewed and will then be renewed. He adds that the strategy is not an event but a process that will continue for a minimum of 18 months. A major issue of concern he has raised is that he will be simultaneously moving to address existing ‘suspensions’ and the prevailing ‘acting’ situations which currently exist within senior management, adding that these are bringing about instability in the organisation. “It's not about position and power, it's about what we want to achieve. Change starts at the top,” stresses Minister Nxesi.

The Minister has pointed out the three key factors that have put the Department of Public Works in the dire state that it is in. These are: **Fixed Asset Register, Lease Management** and **Audit Problems**. He has re-iterated that the DPW cannot continue with the chaos and that it must transform how things are done. Minister Nxesi has also pointed out that a number of stakeholders have been called to come on board and join forces with the DPW to combat this war on corruption, fraud and irregularities in the Department. Among these stakeholders is Treasury, with whom the Department has entered into a joint programme - to review all existing leases. The objectives of the joint programme include:

- To further identify irregular leases, and take the necessary action;
- To collect outstanding monies owed to the Department;
- To establish a reliable lease register;
- To review and strengthen the systems of the Department relating to lease and property management, and to train and capacitate staff accordingly.

He explains that investigations are currently underway in the regions and that the Department has also withdrawn financial delegations to regions and centralised the leases to ensure scrutiny and accountability.

In his addresses, the Minister asks several rhetorical questions. “As units, do we have shared goals? Do we have the right culture? Are we serving or betraying our people? As a Department, do we have the right structure, the right staff in the right places with the right skills?” The Minister has told the delegates that in order to build capacity, he had seconded officials with relevant skills from the Departmental entities. He says this has been in an effort to stabilise the Department as part of the short term solution. The Minister has said that he placed the seconded officials in the Director-General's office for the reasons of stability and continuity, because Ministers change with every election.

Minister Nxesi has urged staff members to be on time, on task and to maintain professional behaviour at all times. In closing, the Minister has said that he would not negotiate on fraud

and corruption. "We have to re-engineer the processes in the Department, whether we like it or not. We must start with the basics; I don't mind being unpopular for fighting corruption," says Minister Nxesi.