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Cronin slams use of old law

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DEPUTY Public Works Minister Jeremy Cronin says Parliament should consider changing the apartheid-era National Key Points Act as it is contrary to the values of a democratic South Africa.

He questioned the appropriateness and constitutionality of the legislation – cited by his immediate boss Thulas Nxesi when he refused to make public the full report on a departmental investigation into R206 million security upgrades at President Jacob Zuma's Nkandla residence.

Cronin said although the act still prevailed and the government relied on it for certain matters, particularly the security of office-bearers, including presidents and premiers, it was “awkward” legislation and Parliament needed to “evaluate if that’s what we want in the new South Africa”.

The act applies to “any place or area” so important that its loss,

damage, disruption or immobilisation may “prejudice the Republic”, or whenever a minister of police or defence considers it “necessary or expedient for the safety of the republic”.

It also prohibits anyone from providing “information relating to the security measures applicable at any national key point, or in respect of any incident that occurred there”.

It was used by the apartheid government to draw a veil of secrecy around its security and military operations.

The act has been used by Nxesi and others to withhold details of the controversial Nkandla security “enhancements”, leading to accusations of a cover-up.

Cronin had included his views on the act in the written version of his speech during the debate this week on Zuma's State of the Nation address, but omitted them when he delivered it in the National Assembly, prompting the DA to call for him to clarify his position.