

# NKANDLA DETAILS MAY STAY SECRET

Closed  
committee  
to decide on  
disclosure

**Craig Dodds**

POLITICAL BUREAU

PARLIAMENT's secretive joint standing committee on intelligence is to have the final say on how much of a classified report on the R206-million security upgrade at President Jacob Zuma's private home to make public.

The committee meets behind closed doors and its members are sworn to secrecy.

National Assembly Speaker Max Sisulu said in a letter to DA parliamentary leader Lindiwe Mazibuko he had received legal advice suggesting aspects of the report fell under the Intelligence Services Oversight Act.

The act gives the committee authority to "deliberate upon, hold hearings, subpoena witnesses and make recommendations" on these matters.

Given that Nkandla has been declared a national key point, making it illegal to disclose information about activities at the site, there are fears much of the contents of the report on an internal investigation by the Public Works Department will be kept under wraps.

However, Sisulu's letter says the committee must "consider and report" to Parliament on "those aspects that fall

within the purview of the act" and inform it of those that don't. These would be referred to "an appropriate committee".

Members of the intelligence committee will be required to balance "national security" against "national interest" in making this decision.

The act says a report of the intelligence committee may not contain anything "the inclusion of which will be more harmful to the national security than its exclusion will be to the national interest".

The government has already argued that revealing details of the work done at Zuma's home could compromise his security as head of state.

Members of the multiparty committee must have security clearance and are barred from divulging information they obtain in the course of their work without the permission of the

chairman and the consent of the head of the relevant intelligence service and the inspector-general of intelligence.

The Public Works investigation dealt mainly with the awarding of contracts for work at Nkandla and found irregularities in the process, including possible price inflation.

These have been referred to law enforcement agencies, but another aspect for Parliament to consider will be the specifications set out for the security upgrades after a "threat assessment" by police and security officials.

Work done at Nkandla included an underground bunker and clinic, a cattle culvert, guardhouse and tuckshop, according to a letter from then Public Works Minister Gwen Mahlangu Nkabinde purportedly updating Zuma on progress.

Total expenditure amounted to R206m, Public Works Minister Thu-

las Nxesi said after receiving the department's internal report.

Mazibuko said the DA was "strongly opposed" to Sisulu's decision to refer the report to a closed committee, which would "essentially bury the information" and prevent "those at the very top from being held accountable".

She said the details of the report related mostly to cost inflation in the Nkandla project and could not be considered sensitive. They had already been made public, she said.

She would write to Sisulu asking him to reconsider and to make the legal opinion he had received public.

"Should this not happen, we will consider the process to be fundamentally flawed and a backdoor mechanism to hide the contents of this report from South Africans in order to protect President Jacob Zuma from being held to account," Mazibuko said.