

Sport

Treasury coffin up for VIP burials

It remains to be seen how many official funerals in each province the R3.2-million will cover

Jessica Bezuidenhout

Provincial governments can rest in peace as they have been allocated a total of R30-million to enable them to bury qualifying VIPs for the next 12 months.

If the nine provinces budget smartly and stick to a maximum cost of R1-million per state funeral, they will be able to cover the cost of at least 29 burials. That would pretty much match the R1-million price tag of putting on the annual Cabinet lekgotla in January and February this year. That tender was awarded to Be-Sure Events, a company tasked with providing the marquees, air conditioning, audiovisual equipment, linen and flowers.

The department of public works, which released details of the latest funeral budgets on its website, did not respond to questions about the number of such funerals paid for during 2014-2015, so it is unclear whether there is a limit to how much may be spent on such events.

But its site does detail that each province has been given slightly

more than R3.2-million to cater for official and state funerals.

On the other hand, if the cost of the official funeral of murdered Bafana Bafana goalkeeper Senzo Meyiwa is anything to go by, it will cover just one funeral. The KwaZulu-Natal government previously confirmed having spent R3-million on the funeral of Meyiwa, a national hero.

But if national austerity guidelines are followed, as per directives from the treasury, the provinces could limit the cost of such funerals to R500 000 each. In that way, they'd be able to fund a total of 58 funerals, or even 116 should they scale down to a modest R250 000 an event.

The budget is likely to cover the bulk of the cost of the three categories of funerals — state, official and provincial official. These are reserved for, among others, the head of state and former presidents, serving ministers, the chief justice and premiers, as well as "distinguished persons" as approved by the president.

Among the more recent official funerals held include those for former cabinet minister Collins



Going fare: KwaZulu-Natal last year spent R3-million on the funeral for Bafana's Senzo Meyiwa. Photo: Siphwe Sibeko/Reuters

Chabane and his two bodyguards, who were killed in a car crash in March last year, as well as Olympic athlete Mbulaeni Mulaudzi who died in a car crash in 2014. The North

West, the only province to respond to questions from the *Mail & Guardian*, said it did not have any official funerals between January 2014 and January 2015.