

ANC must take land issue to heart – expert

Eric Naki

The ANC's change of heart over land expropriation is a wake-up call in response to Julius Malema's Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), which has been advocating this radical stance.

Professor of public policy at Wits School of Governance, Susan Booysen, said the ANC had long been avoiding expropriation of land, only promising to act just prior to an election.

She said yesterday that expropriation had not been on the ANC's agenda.

"It is not surprising that the ANC has done little ... on the question of land reform," Booysen said.

On the other hand, the EFF has been championing land expropriation, which appealed to

The constitution allows for the expropriation of land for public purposes and in the public interest.

President Jacob Zuma

some among the dispossessed masses.

But this weekend, President Jacob Zuma announced that this year the government would be utilising the Expropriation of Land Act to pursue land reform and redistribution with greater speed and urgency and in line with the constitutional precepts.

"The constitution allows for the expropriation of land for

public purposes and in the public interest," Zuma said.

The 1913 and the follow up 1936 Land Acts resulted in blacks occupying a mere 13% of land, while whites had a lion's share at 87%.

According to the University of Western Cape's Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, by 2012, post-apartheid land reform had transferred 7.95 million hectares into black ownership, which is equivalent to 7.5%.

Booyesen said it was necessary to address the legacy of colonialism, which saw the majority excluded from possession of land.

"Land was historically taken inappropriately and the sooner the government addresses this matter systematically, the better for everyone. I remember in a few instances the ANC put this out as an election promise.

"It has become a seasonal cyclical position which comes every election. We hope they will take this matter seriously this time around," Booysen said.

Regarding Zuma's indication that the government would not budge on free tertiary education, Booysen said the #FeesMustFall movement was definitely going to resume after its December recess.

She said university students had lost hope of reaching a consensus and would renew their protests. "Because they are less trusting of the government, they are going to increase their repertoire this year," she added.

All universities increased fees by 8% this year despite calls for free education. A commission headed by Judge Jonathan Heher is investigating the feasibility of free education.