

Draft new built environment regulations to be completed by financial year-end – Nxesi

By: Anine Kilian

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The Department of Public Works (DPW) is reviewing “outdated” legislation that regulates the built environment. Addressing media on the sidelines of a DPW bursary awards ceremony in Centurion, on Friday, Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi noted that the department intends to have new built environment draft regulations ready by the end of the financial year.

“Legislation around the construction industry is old. We have started the process of reviewing [the Council for the Built Environment Act], which regulates the built environment. The review process is being led by Public Works Deputy Minister Jeremy Cronin,” he noted. He added that legislation pertaining to the Construction Industry Development Board was also under review.

“We also need to develop and implement overarching Public Works legislation, which currently does not exist,” he stated. Nxesi, meanwhile, pointed out that the DPW’s seven-year turnaround plan was over 60% complete, noting that a major focus of the plan was promoting skills development within the built environment sector – in line with the National Development Plan. The plan was implemented in 2011 to avoid “irregularities we have had to deal with in the past”, he said.

Nxesi noted that the main objectives of the turnaround plan were to rebuild the technical and professional capacity of the DPW and the State more broadly, and to transform the built environment professions to reflect the demographics of the country. “In particular, we aim to facilitate access for learners from disadvantaged communities. We cannot be complacent that only 25% of built environment professionals are black – and only around 10% are female,” he said.

In line with this, the department has created a dedicated professional services branch with the purpose of opening up a skills pipeline to ensure the required supply of skilled professionals and technical personnel. He added that, as part of the turnaround plan, the department has employed private sector professionals to run highly technical aspects of the property and construction sectors.

“The DPW has a clear and strategic long-term interest in, and commitment to, technical and professional training in the built environment to rebuild the professional

capacity of the department and to contribute to [enabling the growth of persons with the] scarce skills required in the built environment generally.”

In an attempt to address built environment skills shortages, he noted that the department has adopted the ‘Council for the Built Environment’s Skills Pipeline Strategy’. The strategy spells out three interlinked intervention areas aimed at ensuring a seamless flow of professionals into the department. The three intervention areas have been labelled the push, the intermediate and the pull strategies.

“The push strategy is aimed at providing enough competent and skilled professionals in the built environment through supported and funded secondary and tertiary education programmes, while the pull strategy is aimed at training built environment professionals through supported candidacy and mentorship programmes,” he explained. He added that the pull strategy was aimed at making the built environment an attractive profession through retention and continuous professional development.

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