

Pollsmoor ordered to keep admitting prisoners

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Department of Correctional Services (DCS) regional commissioner Delekile Klaas has ordered Pollsmoor Prison to continue taking prisoners until further notice after it started turning them away last week to comply with a court order to reduce overcrowding.

This rolls back national commissioner Zach Modise's instruction for Pollsmoor to stop admissions of awaiting-trial prisoners until it met the recommended 120 percent overcrowding rate.

Prisoners returning from court on Friday January 13 were either returned to court holding cells or diverted to ones at nearby police stations.

On December 5, Western Cape High Court judge Vincent Saldanha made a court order that overcrowding at Pollsmoor must be reduced to 120 percent by Wednesday December 21.

Mr Klaas said their long-term intention was to turn Pollsmoor into a remand facility.

The DCS has started a mass relocation of around 1 000 sentenced prisoners to the Free State and the Northern Cape during January and February.

Asked how moving sentenced prisoners to other prisons in the province would affect them and their visitors, Mr Klaas said Pollsmoor officials would keep prisoners' families informed.



■ Pollsmoor Prison is moving inmates to detention centres in other parts of the country.

However, at the end of last year, Freddie Engelbrecht, the deputy regional commissioner for correctional services, said Pollsmoor prisoners were unhappy about

being transferred from the Tokai facility. "They are taking it very badly. No one wants to be transferred," said Mr Engelbrecht. Prisoners were unhappy that they

were being moved further away from their families, many of whom could not afford extra travel costs.

Late last year, DCS area commissioner Ntobeko Clifford Mketshane and Tokai-based Women Taking Action (WTA) founder Shirley Paulse took the Bulletin, the Athlone News' sister paper, on a tour of Pollsmoor's newly renovated Block B of the women's correctional facility, which had made an extra 270 beds available.

Mr Klaas said earlier this week that those new cells were already being used.

Leaking roofs, mould, peeling paint and tiles, rusty beds and blocked plumbing have long plagued

the whole 53-year-old facility, which falls under the national Department of Public Works.

A male section, called B2, is also being renovated, and, once complete, will hold 159 awaiting-trial prisoners.

According to Mr Mketshane, Pollsmoor holds 7 477 prisoners instead of the 4 336 it was built for.

The problem, he said, was the awaiting-trial section, which was more than 200 percent full with 3 263 detainees instead of 1 690.

On Wednesday January 18, an urgent provincial joint meeting between DCS, SAPS and the Department of Justice had been arranged to decide on a way forward.