

MY ZA (News24)

Des van Rooyen's R1m hotel stay

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Cape Town – No one was ready for Minister Des van Rooyen's appointment, including the Department of Public Works, which took six months to find him accommodation. And so the newly appointed minister spent months living in a hotel while awaiting a ministerial house, a stay which cost almost R1m. Van Rooyen spent 122 nights in hotels and two nights in a guest house during this time, of which 35 were in an official capacity.

In a written reply on Monday the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta) said the cost will be borne by the Department of Public Works. The department was replying to a question from the DA's Kevin Mileham about whether or not Van Rooyen or any member of his family were accommodated in a hotel at the department's expense.

The department was also asked to detail the reasons why.

Apology for delay

Van Rooyen was appointed by President Jacob Zuma as South Africa's Finance Minister after Nhlanhla Nene was fired at the end of 2015. Van Rooyen was then appointed to head Cogta after a four-day stint in the finance ministry. In the reply Cogta said state-owned accommodation had been requested for Van Rooyen from January 1.

"The process was not finalised timeously as expected hence [the Department of Public Works] communicated an apology for delay through the letter dated 24 July 2016. [The Department of Public Works] further committed to incur minister's hotel costs of R968 562.00 as the state-owned residence was allocated from 1 June 2016," the department said. In 2016 amaBhungane reported that Van Rooyen was booked in the hotel on a month-to-month basis and the hotel was "to the most appropriate norms in line with approved financial prescripts".

At the time the hotel stay was reported to have cost R500 000. The hotel, 131 on Herbert Baker, has a 180-degree view of Pretoria and borders a nature reserve in the wealthy suburb of Groenkloof, according to the report.