

COMMITTEE SLATES COST OF HOSPITAL CONSTRUCTION THAT STARTED 13 YEARS AGO

R1.8bn hospital in spotlight

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THE provincial department of health was yesterday sent packing by the portfolio committee on health over the construction of a mental hospital that started 13 years ago.

The portfolio committee asked the department not to continue with its presentation because it was “confusing” them.

The committee said it did not make sense that the construction had cost tax payers more than R1.8bn from the estimated R290m when the project started in 2005 and was still not complete.

Lindelwa Dunjwa, chairperson of the committee, said the national department needed to take full responsibility over the delays.

“We have listened and having a second round of questions will not assist the committee as we will become frustrated. This is not taking us anywhere,” Dunjwa said.

She said the presentation by the departments was a matter of compliance to honour the invitation to the meeting.

“The committee was of the view that the departments were not prepared to provide any information regarding the project,” Dunjwa said.

She said the committee was concerned about the delays of the project because it is was a clear indication of challenges that the project was facing.

“As members of the joint task team that is tasked with dealing with management of the project, the department failed to alert the committee of any challenges. The committee is awaiting the submission of the audit firm Sizwe

Ntaluba-Gobodo and the accountant-general’s report on the project which the department has promised to share.”

The department of health was led by MEC Lebogang Motlhaping and senior management officials.

Dunjwa said the department needed to submit all the relevant documents to the committee within five working days.

“The committee was of the view that the provincial department came to present without making the necessary preparations as requested. The committee came to the observation that there might be huge corruption and waste in the said project,” she said.

The National Council of Provinces visit to the province last year raised concerns regarding the long constructed hospital which was costing tax payers a lot of money.

NCOP deputy chairperson Raseriti Tau said the hospital was the longest project the provincial government has had to undertake and it was failing them.

The provincial department of public works and roads said the mental health facility was 92% in its completion phase.

“The department agreed with the contractor to change the approach of construction to enable sectional or zoned completion of the whole project.

“Some of the zoned areas are far ahead and are almost complete. The department is still anticipating taking first delivery by the end of the year, thereafter a commissioning process will commence.

The Kimberley Mental Health Hospital was meant to be completed in 2008 at a cost of just under R900m.

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Lindelwa Dunjwa