

LAND REFORM

Nxesi says land and property allotted for restitution

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The Department of Public Works had identified about 22,000 hectares for land reform, Minister Thulas Nxesi said on Tuesday.

The state has a property portfolio (more than 93,000 buildings on about 29,000 land parcels) under the custodianship of public works.

The departmental budget allocation over the medium term amounts to about R24bn.

Critics of the drive to amend section 25 of the Constitution to allow for expropriation without compensation often argue that the state should focus on redistributing land under its ownership, some of which is unaccounted for or underutilised.

David Maseko, a member of the ANC's economic transformation committee, said in March that expropriation without compensation would target mainly unused land "[so] use it or lose it, even if you are black".

Delivering his budget vote speech in Parliament, Nxesi said land and properties continued to be identified for land reform and social housing – including student accommodation.

"We have supplied higher education ... with a list of buildings, and established a joint task team to expedite the matter. [A total] 3,500 hectares are to be released to human settlements ... [and] some 22,000 hectares have been identified for restitution and land reform," the minister said.

The department has identified unused properties, collectively valued at R7.4bn, for disposal or letting. These will be advertised on open tender.

DA MP Malcom Figg said: "The Department has revealed ... it holds a portfolio ... of land and property holdings, worth over R12bn, that are lying idle ... While this land and properties are not used, rates and taxes paid on these holdings, which comprise 1.9-million hectares and over 12,000 properties, have amounted to R138m since 2014.

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