

My Port Elizabeth, 24 May 2018

Education Department does not know how many abandoned schools there are

Dear MyPE

The Eastern Cape Department of Education has no recorded data of the number of school buildings that are no longer being used for the purpose of education. To make matters worse, the Department of Public Works has never been informed of any intention from its sister department to hand back schools that have been closed.

The disregard by the ANC-government relating to millions of rands of unused assets is unacceptable. In a DA-led government, public assets would not be mismanaged and would be redirected back to the people.

While the Department of Education is hell-bent on pushing its rationalisation programme onto communities, abandoned buildings worth millions are being stripped brick by brick instead of being used for other purposes.

This week it was reported in the media how the Kwaford Primary School in New Brighton has become a derelict den for criminals since its closure in 2016. In February, the media reported on the ruined state of the Vulindlela Technical Centre in Mdantsane — once regarded as one of the best technical high schools in East London — since its closure in 2017.

In both cases, Education claimed that the buildings had been handed over to Public Works.

In a shockingly poor and ill-informed response to a question for oral reply that I asked Education MEC Mandla Makupula at the legislature's sitting on 16 May, he said 726 schools had been closed, but "there is not recorded (sic) of this data" and "extent usage is not known whilst in some cases reported vandalism has been reported (sic)". He added that "the overall cost of these is not known...".

The lack of a holistic view regarding these public assets indicates a department that has fallen apart. MEC Makupula has lost control over his department.

In a response to a question for oral reply I asked the former MEC for Roads and Public Works, Thandiswa Marawu, at a sitting of the legislature in April, she stated unambiguously that no school buildings had been handed over to her department since 2015. She added that “there is a pending meeting between the two departments to formalise the handover, now that there is a list of closed schools available”. For the reply, click [here](#):

Why were the two MECs protecting each other, considering that MEC Makupula was unable to produce details of disused school buildings a month later, during the legislature’s sitting in May?

The people of this province are crying for more facilities for recreation, for Early Childhood Development- and Thusong Centres. Shamefully, we have only 23 Adult Education and Training Centres.

Clearly, the ANC-led provincial administration has the utmost disregard for state assets worth millions and paid for by the people. What we need is change.

Regards

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