

Ministerial handbook head for President

By **THABO MOKONE**

PUBLIC Service and Administration Minister Ayanda Dlodlo is expected to submit the final draft of a revised ministerial handbook to President Cyril Ramaphosa this week – but she was mum on exactly what would be cut from the list of perks.

Dlodlo indicated that she was determined to bring the review of the controversial documents that sets out the office perks for cabinet ministers and their deputies to an end following a decade-long review process.

She also came out in support of a “pay-freeze” for senior civil servants and other highly-paid public office bearers such as ministers, MPs and judges as the government tries to rein in the public sector wage bill that currently hovers at around R587-billion a year.

Dlodlo said it was “unfortunate” that it had taken almost ten years for the review of the ministerial handbook to be concluded – but said the matter should be settled this week.

The government announced a review of the ministerial handbook in 2009 following public pressure after it emerged that ministers in the then president Jacob Zuma administration had embarked on a shopping spree, buying luxurious vehicles shortly after assuming office.

The Zuma ministers at the time cited the fact that procurement of the cars – which each cost as much as R1.2-million – was provided for in guidelines

in the ministerial handbook.

Dlodlo declined to indicate what perks of ministers would be scrapped or drastically reduced.

“Hopefully by the end of next week I would have delivered a document to the president ... the final draft of the ministerial handbook will by the end of next week be submitted to the president,” she said.

“I’ve written letters to ministers whose input we’re supposed to have solicited last year still.

“I’ve spoken to one of them, comrade Thulas Nxesi [minister of public works], who has said he’ll work on it very quickly and I’m sure others will do the same,” Dlodlo said.

Turning to the burgeoning public sector wage bill, Dlodlo said she supported calls for senior civil servants and public representatives to forfeit salary hikes for a certain period in an effort to prevent the bill from spiralling out of control.

“I would really support that; it was actually raised by one of the premiers in the mandate committee, to say we should consider a wage freeze for all public office bearers if we’re to claw back on what we acceded to in the bargaining chamber.”

Dlodlo said she was also planning to introduce a comprehensive remuneration strategy that cut across all three spheres of government, to prevent a situation where municipalities and government departments gave different salary increases to civil servants. —
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