

# Health department HQ set to relocate

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THE Department of Health could move its headquarters from the CBD to Menlyn following continued protests by staff and unions unhappy with the condition of the building.

Spokesperson Popo Maja said Director-General Malebona Matsoso and her counterpart in the Department of Public Works Mziwonke Dlabantu were inspecting three buildings as an alternative.

Earlier this year, Maja told the Pretoria News that the CBD did not have an alternative building that was fully compliant with Occupational Health and Safety Standards. This was after an assessment of several buildings belonging to the Department of Public Works.

The National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (Nehawu) and Public Servants Association recommended three buildings in Menlyn to Minister of Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi and his Public Works counterpart Thulas Nxesi during an urgent meeting last week.

The meeting was called after unions and staff members staged a total shutdown of the building. Police were called in to help reopen two side entrances to allow staff who wanted to work to enter the building.

On Thursday morning, the unions told the protesting workers that they were impressed by Motsoaledi's stance during the urgent meeting. They said Motsoaledi acknowledged all the grievances as legitimate since his personal office was also affected. Maja said: "Yes, a move could be possible, but so far there is a sense that the build-

ing might not be able to house the entire staff of approximately 1 500 people. However, if that is the case, the department could be split to different buildings as was done in the past." Maja said he was happy that staff and unions acknowledged that Motsoaledi was also affected by the same problems they raised. However, he insisted that staff wanting to continue working during the protests should not be prevented from entering the building.

Nehawu's Bhungani Mzolo said the unions gave the departments time to assess recommended buildings and decide if they could be used as alternatives.

"This time we are positive that the departments can finally move until this building in the CBD is properly fixed.

"Motsoaledi told Nxesi that his department was a tenant in the problematic building. He said he should be focused on health issues than finding and fixing buildings.

"We are happy Motsoaledi seems to be on our side and we believe it is time this problem is resolved. We also want the departments to institute a forensic audit and investigate possible corruption that could have taken place between 2004 and 2010 when the building was first renovated. "How could a building that was vacated to be renovated still have so many problems? We want answers," said Mzolo. Public Servants Association general manager Ivan Fredericks said it was important that the problem was resolved amicably because the building's poor ventilation and insufficient air-conditioning was not good for the health of staff members.