

# Department of Health in building stalemate

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THE process to find an alternative building for the Department of Health cannot start until formal procurement procedures have been followed.

This follows staff protests led by the Public Servants Association and National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union regarding the bad state of the department's building in the CBD.

The building was found to be not compliant with Occupational Work and Safety Standards and had non-functional air-conditioning systems, which negatively affected workers' health.

The unions, however, blamed the Department of Public Works for failing to assist in finding an alternative building. This would allow engineers to renovate the current building.

But Public Works spokesperson Reggie Ngcobo said they needed to receive a signed-off space requirement and funding confirmation from the Department of Health before starting procurement processes.

"We have been engaging with the Department of Health and outlined the requirements for initiating a process to source alternative accommodation," said Ngcobo.

PSA chairperson in the Department of Health Peter Moloi accused Public Works of frustrating the process and making things difficult for the process to move forward.

He said Minister of Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi had instructed executives from the Department of Public Works in front of their

minister, Thulas Nxesi, to resolve this problem.

The Department of Public Works, however, insisted it was the responsibility of its health counterpart to bring confirmation to National Treasury if it needed assistance in finding an alternative building.

Earlier in the year, it was established that the Pretoria CBD had no suitable and compliant building to be used as an alternative.

Moloi said: "After a meeting with the ministers from both departments two weeks ago, we agreed that executives would come with us to assess three buildings recommended in Menlyn, but Public Works executives did not come.

"This is despite knowledge from expert reports that the health headquarters were not habitable. These towers have no windows and the air-conditioning does not work... that is dangerous.

"In fact, Motsoaledi and his department are on record saying all the complaints raised by labour are legitimate, but Public Works is just dragging its feet."

However, Ngcobo said the unions did not forward any information about alternative buildings to the Department of Public Works for consideration.

Department of Health spokesperson Popo Maja said his department was urgently engaging with unions through mediation to resolve the situation.

"We are very positive and optimistic about the outcome of this mediation. There are staff that are not at work. An appeal was made to unionised staff to respect the rights of staff who do not wish to participate in the protest."