

# Mvula Trust steps away from row over toilets

**Contractor locked school toilets after claiming he's owed for work done**

**SIYA TSEWU**

MTHATHA BUREAU

siyat@dispatch.co.za

The Mvula Trust has distanced itself from the row between a contractor and the department of education relating to the closure of toilets at four schools.

Mvula Trust spokesperson Mashao Mohale said they handed over the project to the department two years ago, and this had been done after the project had been completed.

He added that the teachers and pupils had been using the toilets for two years.

The contractor is Siyaphambili Trading 98 cc.

"Furthermore, the contractor has been paid for work done. The only outstanding issue relates to the final accounts which were approved by, among others, the independent quantity surveyors and the department of public works in September 2018.

"The contractor refused to cooperate and accept the values in the final accounts," Mohale said.

"We would also like to state that the amounts in the final accounts are not millions as claimed by the contractor."

Almost 1,000 pupils at four schools – Gwegwe Senior Primary School, Xhwili Primary and Tantseka Junior Secondary and Julukuqu Junior Secretary – have been forced to relieve themselves in the veld after the toilets were locked up by the contractor, claiming he was owed millions.

Mohale said they were pleased that the contractor was currently engaging with the quantity surveyors to resolve the dispute but viewed his refusal to unlock the toilets as not being in good faith. "The department of education in the province will have to institute legal proceedings against the contractor should he continue to deny learners and teachers their basic rights of access to sanitation services."

Mohale disputed media reports that the Mvula Trust, a non-profit organisation, had won a multimillion-rand contract in 2012 to build pit latrines in rural schools in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

Parents gave the department of education an ultimatum, saying if the toilets were not opened, they would report the matter to President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The Daily Dispatch reported last week that the department of education had referred the matter to its legal department, saying the contractor was impeding pupils' rights.

On Wednesday, Siyaphambili 98 cc owner Jerry Sifanele said: "I did everything they asked for and even went as far as doing extra work on the project." He said he would dismantle some of those "extras" if the "outstanding millions" owed to him were not paid.

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