

■ CABINET

# President walks the talk in new line-up

*Tainted ministers dropped in leaner, younger mix with more women – including surprise De Lille*

SIHLE MAVUSO

sihle.mavuso@inl.co.za

PRESIDENT Cyril Ramaphosa, as promised, last night reduced the number of Cabinet ministers, retained David Mabuza as his deputy and reinstated Pravin Gordhan as Public Enterprises minister despite calls for both of them to be excluded from his executive.

He also introduced a surprise element, announcing that former Cape Town mayor and Good party leader Patricia de Lille would head up Public Works and Infrastructure.

He also went against the tide and booted out tainted former ministers like Bathabile Dlamini, Michael Masutha and Dipuo Letsatsi-Duba.

Mabuza's appointment was in doubt last week when he postponed his swearing in as a member of the National Assembly in order to clear his name with the ANC's Integrity Committee. He later took his oath of office but there was still speculation that Ramaphosa may not appoint him.

For Gordhan, his appointment is viewed as a victory as last week Public Protector advocate Busisiwe Mkhwebane made adverse findings against him, potentially ruling him out until he had cleared his name. The issue divided the country, with some civil organisations questioning the timing of the release of the report, and alleging it was timed to harm his advancement in the incoming government.

Ramaphosa emulated Thabo Mbeki and Nelson Mandela when he appointed De Lille who had left the DA an angry woman after complaining of mistreatment and racism. Both former presidents appointed politicians from opposition parties to their Cabinets.

Ramaphosa took three days after his inauguration to make the announcement, which received the blessing of alliance partners, the SACP and Cosatu. In reducing his Cabinet from 36 to 28 ministers, Ramaphosa has the same number as the first democratically elected president, Nelson Mandela.



PRESIDENT Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the nation last night, announcing his Cabinet for the sixth Parliament at the Union Buildings. | GCIS

The most prominent exclusion is that of Dlamini, the president of the ANC Women's League, a senior position that has always come with a Cabinet deployment. At some point in 2012, Angie Motshekga, because of the powerful president position in the league, was kept in the Cabinet even when her then Department of Basic Education failed to deliver textbooks to schools in Limpopo.

Ramaphosa said he reduced his Cabinet because of the country's ailing economy and dwindling public purse, as in the light of that, there was a need

to spend the country's resources wisely.

In his message, he said his Cabinet ministers, who include old horses and newbies, would be subjected to signing performance contracts and there would be consequences for non-performance.

"We must all become servant leaders," he said.

The SACP last night said it welcomed the announcement of the Cabinet, saying consultation had taken place.

"The president has matched his words with his deeds – he has indeed

walked the talk. This important attribute should be the defining feature of his leadership, and that of every member of the executive, as well as deputy ministers, throughout this term of office."

Political analyst Daniel Silke said the appointment of De Lille was a positive step that represented a break from the tunnel vision that had been part of the ANC under former president Jacob Zuma.

"It seems that the appointment shows that the president is more willing to engage with ideas from outside

his own party and reach out to MPs across the aisle. This goes with the idea of putting the country before the party."

The EFF said it rejected Ramaphosa's cabinet, saying it remains "a bloated bunch of people, with is a clear disregard of the public purse in favour of satisfying the factional demands of the ANC".

In a statement, the party described Ramaphosa as "a dishonest, manipulative person whose Cabinet decision is an absolute insult to the intelligence of the country".