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PROVINCIAL GAME PLAN

Eastern Cape premier Oscar Mabuyane has big ideas about turning the province around — starting with an insistence on accountability

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Oscar Mabuyane:
Wants an administration
that prioritises service
delivery

In his ambitious quest to place the Eastern Cape on par with its peers, premier Oscar Mabuyane has vowed to revitalise the economy, tackle maladministration and root out corruption.

He's got a tough job ahead of him. The Eastern Cape contributed 8% to SA's GDP in 2017, according to Stats SA, behind Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. But with GDP per capita of just R55,094, it's the poorest province in the country. And with 35.4% unemployment on the narrow definition, it is battling the highest jobless rate in the country.

The R860m in irregular expenditure noted in auditor-general Kimi Makwetu's 2017/2018 consolidated report on national & provincial audit outcomes was far from top of the list (KwaZulu-Natal held that distinction, with R9.92bn). That,

however, didn't factor in the R4.4bn in irregular expenditure carried forward — or the R1.73bn and R143m under investigation in the provincial education department and premier's office.

But Mabuyane, who took office after the May election, is determined to change all that.

In an interview with the FM, the Eastern Cape ANC chair and former finance MEC talked tough, saying he wants to see real value for every rand of the R82.2bn budgeted for the province.

He's also hoping to lure big-ticket investment into the province, and plans to hold those in public service to account. He wants an administration that prioritises service delivery, is sensitive to clean governance and provides better job and economic opportunities.

Of course, politicians are in the habit of promising things, cautions University of Johan-