

■ POLITICS

R14.8m to rent premises

De Lille reveals cost of housing the Zondo Commission probing state capture

MAYIBONGWE MAQHINA

PUBLIC Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia de Lille has revealed that R14.8 million has been paid to a media company and property group for the housing of the Zondo Commission.

De Lille revealed this in a written response to a parliamentary question from EFF MP Mgcini Tshwaku, who quizzed De Lille on contracts signed with the companies as well as the duration of the contract and the amount paid to date.

In a written response, De Lille said up to R1.2m was paid monthly towards rental costs of offices and as well as the auditorium to Tiso Blackstar and Redefine Properties.

“The total amount paid to date is

R14 837 975.97,” she said.

A breakdown of the cost also shows that monthly rental for offices in the Tiso Blackstar building was R72 846.52 and the rental of the media company’s auditorium was R796 950.

The monthly rental of offices from Redefine Properties was R374 900.61.

De Lille said the lease agreement between the government, Redefine Properties and Tiso was signed between May and July last year.

“The lease agreements with Tiso Blackstar were signed for 12 months and have been extended for a further seven months. The lease agreement with Redefine was signed for three years,” she said.

Last year, former president Jacob Zuma appointed the State Capture

Commission of Inquiry as part of a remedial action ruling by former public protector Thuli Mandonsele.

Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng appointed his deputy Judge Raymond Zondo as chairperson of the commission. But the housing of the commission at Hill on Empire, a building owned by the Tiso Blackstar media group in Johannesburg, has attracted criticism from some quarters.

The red berets have called for the commission to move out of the Tiso Blackstar headquarters, saying it was at risk of becoming a “Mickey Mouse inquiry” and a waste of taxpayer’s money, because of the building it is located in.

Two months ago, a group calling itself “Concerned South African Cit-

izens” added its voice to the matter.

“The fact that the premises is owned by a mainstream media house, namely Tiso Black Star Media, creates the unfortunate impression that the commission could itself be captured, or be beholden to certain interest groups and financial commitments,” the group said

Judge Zondo previously maintained that the Tiso Blackstar building was chosen after an unsuccessful search for a suitable venue.

“I just want to make it clear that this commission, Public Works and the Department of Justice did not just go for a privately owned building without exploring the possibility of saving costs by using a government venue,” Judge Zondo said at the time.