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Public Works 'fudging numbers'

Auditor-general finds KZN department fraught with irregularities

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THE KwaZulu-Natal Public Works Department has been found wanting by the auditor-general for failing to provide supporting documents for some of its programmes during auditing.

The 2018/19 auditor-general's compressed report tabled at the department's portfolio committee last week revealed that the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) was fraught with irregularities. According to the report, the reported achievement (in EPWP) of 6 157 positions in the programme for the target of 6 000 was not reliable as the department did

not have an adequate performance management system.

"In some instances, I was unable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence. In other instances the evidence provided supported an achievement of 8 312 positions. I was unable to confirm the reported achievement by alternative means. Consequently, I was unable to determine whether any further adjustments were required to the reported achievement," the report read.

Furthermore, the report stated that the department did not correctly record and classify payments relating to the development of intangible assets in the accounting records as required by Modified Cash Standard (MCS).

"The department adjusted their current and corresponding figure in the financial statement by R39.26 million to include work in progress on intangible assets, which was not in accordance with the MCS requirements. I was unable to determine the full extent of the misstatement and I could not confirm the work in progress by alternative means. Consequently, I was unable to determine the full extent of the work in progress stated at R73.58m as it was impractical to do so.

"The department did not use the correct values to record adjustments to prior year additions as required by MCS. Consequently, the restated 2017/18 immovable tangible capital assets closing balance of R17.87 bil-

lion was overstated by R21.09m. I was unable to determine the full extent of immovable tangible capital assets as it was impractical to do so," stated the report.

The shocking revelations come at a time when EPWP workers who form part of Durban Solid Waste (DSW) embarked on numerous strikes claiming that promises made to them by eThekweni Municipality regarding permanent employment had not been kept.

The DA called for Public Works MEC Peggy Nkonyeni to launch an independent audit into the EPWP in the province.

Martin Meyer, DA spokesperson on Public Works, said the programme

was fraught with irregularities and the department had completely lost control over it. "The programme in KZN is completely chaotic. To begin with, the department appears to have no idea how many people are employed as part of the programme. It also seems to be 'fudging' the numbers in a bid to sell the EPWP as a success story," Meyer said.

The IFP's Blessed Gwala said the programme was good but was vulnerable due to lack of honest people to manage it.

Public Works spokesperson Mbulelo Baloyi said he had forwarded the media query to the relevant people and was still awaiting their response to the request for an explanation.