

■ 'CHAOTIC'

Concern over public works programme

THAMI MAGUBANE

thami.magubane@inl.co.za

THE Department of Public Works (DPW) in KwaZulu-Natal has come under fire for its management of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP).

The Mercury has seen an audit report by Auditor-General Kimi Makwetu that raised concern about the state of the programme.

The report also questioned the accuracy of the programme's job-creation statistics, arguing that there had been discrepancies found.

The report, directed to members of the Public Works portfolio committee, showed the department had received a qualified audit.

The EPWP programme employs workers on a temporary basis with government departments or contractors.

The DPW had reported an achievement of 6 157 jobs, against a target of 6 000, in the 2017/2018 financial year.

But the auditor-general said this was not reliable.

"In some instances, I was unable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence," said Makwetu.

"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."

DA MPL Martin Meyer said the party wanted the DPW to conduct an independent audit because it was concerned the department had lost control of the programme.

"To begin with, the department appears to have no idea how many people are employed as part of the programme," Meyer said.

"It also seems to be fudging the numbers in a bid to sell the EPWP as a success story.

"The current EPWP programme in KZN is completely chaotic, while being little more than a tool for the ANC to

reward its own supporters with jobs for pals, and a desperate attempt to boost the province's shocking employment figures," he said.

KZN Public Works spokesperson Mbulelo Baloyi said the department was the provincial co-ordinator of EPWP and collected reports on job targets from the entities, which were involved in the EPWP, and provided these statistics to the government.

He added that this information was used to inform the budgeting process.

He said the individual reports of entities remained their responsibility.

The department shares information and offers capacity building to municipalities and other entities on the EPWP compliance principles, he said.

"It must be emphasised that the department did and continues to provide technical support to all public bodies in order for them to maximise job creation and to report credible, reliable and complete data; and effectively report on the EPWP system," he said.