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De Lille shoots down MP housing allowance

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MINISTER Patricia de Lille has shot down any suggestion of providing each MP with a housing allowance instead of accommodation in the three parliamentary villages in Cape Town.

“The responsibility of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure is to provide accommodation to government departments and MPs, among others, in terms of its mandate.

“Any request for allowances to public office bearers must be made to the Independent Commission for Remuneration of Public Office Bearers,” De Lille said. She made the statement in a written responses to parliamentary questions from the DA’s Willem Faber, who enquired about the costs incurred by the government for Acacia Park, Laboria and Pelican parks over the past 10 years.

The MPs and sessional officials performing parliamentary duties stay at the villages at a nominal rent of up to R400 a month, but this depends on the number of bedrooms in the houses they occupy.

They do not pay for municipal rates and services, and maintenance is the responsibility of the department.

De Lille revealed that 343 MPs stayed in the villages between 2009 and 2014 with 315 sessional officials.

In the parliamentary term ending in May 2019, 353 MPs and 300 sessional officials stayed at the villages.

De Lille’s response showed that the government incurred R743 million in expenses over 10 years on the three villages, which have a combined 508 housing units and 155 apartments.

The minister said the total transport costs for the three villages was R38m in the fourth term and R35m in the fifth term.

The rates and services cost R112.6m in both terms with R27.1m spent in the fourth term and R85.4m in the fifth term. But Faber said yesterday: “There should be a system implemented for MPs to stay in one of the parks or provide them with allowance to rent their own places.”

Faber also said the government could save millions of rand considering that MPs do not stay at the parliamentary villages for the whole year.

MPs come to Parliament on Tuesdays and leave on Thursdays or Fridays if the national legislature was in session and stay away for about two months in a year at their constituencies when on recess, he said.