

■ CABINET

'No' to new ministerial handbook

Ramaphosa unhappy about guidelines relating to staff, cars, travel – orders its rewrite

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PRESIDENT Cyril Ramaphosa's administration has rejected the new ministerial handbook.

According to information obtained by Independent Media, Ramaphosa's Cabinet ordered Public Service and Administration Minister Senzo Mchunu, his finance and public works and infrastructure counterparts, Tito Mboweni and Patricia de Lille, to consult further on financial implications of the new Guide for Members of the Executive.

This was after the new guide was presented to the Cabinet following its public release in June following approval from Ramaphosa.

Apparently a new revised guide was presented to Ramaphosa's Cabinet last month and is awaiting his approval.

Issues addressed by the new guide include staffing in ministerial offices, the costs of official vehicles and

class of domestic and international travel.

The guide also focuses on the class of international travel, special travel benefits for ministers and their deputies and the occupation of state-owned residences.

Security upgrades at private residences, payment of water and electricity as well as domestic services also came under the spotlight.

Equipment, including cellphones and benefits to former members of the executive after relinquishing office, were also scrutinised as part of the review of the ministerial handbook.

The 33-page guide applies to ministers, their deputies, premiers and MECs and was expected to replace the ministerial handbook approved by former president Thabo Mbeki's Cabinet in February 2007.

Mchunu announced that the guide came into effect on June 8, 2019.

In a letter to his colleagues in the executive (ministers and deputy min-

isters), as well as premiers and MECs in June, Mchunu said Ramaphosa approved the guide.

"Members of the executive and the staff supporting such members are urged to acquaint themselves with the provisions thereof and ensure that fiscal prudence is taken into account..." reads Mchunu's letter.

Ramaphosa has the power to review the guide from time to time.

In terms of the new guide, the staff complements in the offices of ministers, their deputies, premiers and MECs have more than doubled in some instances.

Ministers and premiers were previously entitled to 10 core support staff while deputy ministers and MECs could have up to six.

The proposed staff establishment for the office of a member (minister, deputy minister, premiers and MECs) and administrative support staff will be between 11 and 15.

Ministers' offices will have 15 posts

while premiers and MECs will get 13 each, with deputy ministers having 11, the guide states.

The government will also increase the amount that can be spent on security at private residences designated as official residences from R100 000 to R250 000 and this will be adjusted annually by Mboweni and Cele on July 1 each year based on the inflation rate.

Should the cost of security measures be more than R250 000 the minister, deputy minister, premier or MEC will be responsible for the difference.

The guide also gave Mboweni widespread powers to curb spending on luxury cars and other perks.

The DA has rejected the guide for being formulated without consulting Parliament, which the official opposition described as a smack in the face of the public and political parties' constitutional mandate to perform oversight over the executive.