

NATION

Public Works trying to curtail irregular expenditure, punish spendthrifts

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THE Department of Public Works says it is trying to cut down on irregular expenditure – after it shot up to R34 billion a few years ago.

Senior officials in the department told MPs yesterday that they were implementing measures to stop the increase in irregular expenditure, and to make sure officials found involved

in this were dealt with.

Deputy director-general Lesetja Toona said the department has appointed service providers to look at transactions over the past few years.

This followed disclaimer audit opinions by the auditor-general relating to irregular expenditure amounting to billions of rand.

“One of the disclaimer items was both irregular and fruitless expenditure, and for us to deal with that, the

requirement from the auditor-general was that they were not satisfied that irregular and fruitless expenditure at that time were complete.

“We were then requested to revisit the population from 2009/10, all payments, all tender documents and all quotations that were awarded. We had to go and review all the documentation. In 2014/15, when we eventually dealt with irregular expenditure, when it was no longer a qualification issue, we disclosed in the annual report about R34bn in irregular expenditure in PMTE (property management trading entity),” said Toona.

He said this came as a shock to the country and now it needed to be fixed.

“I think that shocked the entire country, but we had to go back about five years, starting from 2009/10 at that time,” he said.

“We then had to deal with the R34bn, and conduct an investigation to make sure that those who contributed towards that irregular expenditure were held to account,” said Toona.

He said because the department did not have internal capacity to deal with those transactions because of the magnitude and quantum, it brought in interim capacity to deal with it.

He said preventive measures to stop irregular expenditure were now being put in place.