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'Unfair' Cabinet perks

SA ministers and deputy ministers do not pay for municipal services

South Africa's ministers and deputy ministers do not pay anything for municipal services such as water and electricity at their official residences after President Cyril Ramaphosa changed the rules of Cabinet's perks.

City Press reported that Ramaphosa made the revision in April, the same month that South Africans had their electricity tariffs increased.

The revision to the ministerial handbook states that the Department of Public Works will now pay for the water and electricity at state-

owned residences.

The politicians are exempt from paying for rates despite ministers earning R2,4 million a year and deputy ministers being paid R2 million a year.

The decision by Ramaphosa comes a few months after he announced salary hikes for politicians and other government officials. The president had said in June that the salaries would be increased by three percent and would be backdated to April 2021. Despite the public outrage over

the salary increases, Parliament said the hikes were necessary for the politicians to cope with the increase in the cost of living.

Parliament's spokesperson Moloto Mothapo said the criticism that the three percent salary increases were "tone deaf" was unfair because ministers, MPs, and MPLs last had salary increases in April 2019.

Ramaphosa in April also increased the limit that Cabinet members can spend on luxury cars.

In March, the DA revealed that

Cabinet had apparently blown more than R20 million in public funds on buying fuel and brand new luxury vehicles for ministers and deputy ministers over the past three years.

DA MP and spokesperson on public service and administration, Leon Schreiber, said many of the new vehicles allegedly cost much more than the R700 000 spending limit nominally imposed by the November 2019 version of the Ministerial Handbook.

In terms of the handbook, each Cabinet minister and deputy minis-

ter is given a luxury vehicle to use in Pretoria and Cape Town, courtesy of the South African taxpayer. The cost of fuel, maintenance, tires and tolls for all of these vehicles is also paid by taxpayers.

Schreiber said the most staggering case of all was in March 2019 when the Department of Human Settlements paid over R3 million for the purchase of two Audi S8 supercars for former minister Nomaindia Mfeketo and her deputy at the time, Zou Kota-Fredericks. — *The Citizen*.

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