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Plans to deal with housing backlog

Public Works MEC says backlog in KZN is over 740 000

KHETHUKUTHULA XULU

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works, Ntuthuko Mahlaba, says the housing backlog in the province is above 740 000.

In its “multi-pronged” approach in dealing with this problem, the department said it plans to upgrade informal settlements and decommission transit camps among other initiatives.

Mahlaba was speaking at the post-budget departmental vote media engagement session held in Durban yesterday.

According to Mahlaba, the multi-faceted approach included the provision of serviced sites, rental stock to enable people to live close to where they work and subsidies for the missing middle (those with a salary too high to qualify for social housing but too low to qualify for a mortgage).

He said this approach was already evident in the Msunduzi Municipality, where the department had already

started providing support to the community of Copesville.

In addition, Mahlaba said approval for eight more social housing projects like the Jika Joe units were being targeted for Consolidated Capital Grant in the next two years.

“In a few months from now successful residents will be taking occupation of the completed community residential units at Jika Joe along the N3 in Msunduzi.”

He added that close to 2 000 permanent homes planned to be built for the April 2022 flood victims, were not included in the already existing housing backlog.

“We know that many people in the province who are waiting to be allocated their homes may feel sidelined when those affected by disaster are provided with speed.

“We want to assure them that homes are being fast-tracked and no one will be left behind.”

Mahlaba said delays caused by the

April 2022 floods and unspent funds were being moved to fund bulk services in order to unlock blocked projects.

Mahlaba said following the global action plan framework on informal settlements and slums, which was introduced in October of last year, the department was steadfastly dedicated to seeing it through.

“We are taking methodical action because it is a national priority since we are aware that informal settlements are a direct outcome of the accelerating rate of urbanisation.

“We designated 20 projects for Phase 2 planning [servicing of sites] in 2022–2023 and 35 projects for phase 1 planning (upgrading of informal settlements),” he said.

He said the expenditures to date in Phase 1 and Phase 2 planning are R359 687 166,87 and R197 019 501,34, respectively.

The MEC said out of 72 transit camps that existed in the eThekweni Municipality, only 40 remained.

Mahlaba said the department said it was well on its way to eradicate all transit camps in eThekweni.

“We aim to offer permanent housing options to inhabitants of 14 of the remaining 40 transit camps in 2023, working closely with eThekweni.”

Mahlaba told *The Witness* that the remaining 26 transit camps in eThekweni will be dealt with in the next financial year.

He said residents in the Isiphingo transit camp, south of Durban, will be allocated to the Kanku Road Project which has 360 units.

However, he said these units will not accommodate all the 900 residents from the Dakota informal settlement that recently lost their homes in a fire and it will also not accommodate the flood victims currently in temporary accommodation.

“We will, however, ensure that everyone has a home, I reiterate that no one will be left behind.”

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