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THE BYRON Place Home Affairs centre is operational despite maintenance issues. | JACQUES NAUDE African News Agency (ANA)

Home Affairs centre still operating, despite some serious issues

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STAFF at the Department of Home Affairs centre in Byron Place in Pretoria continue to work, despite an incident that resulted in the collapse of a ceiling and shut down of the Smart ID section on Monday.

Yesterday, the department said the centre was operational and had already assisted 478 people after the incident.

DA public works and infrastructure shadow minister, Samantha Graham-Maré said after an oversight visit to assess the damage, that it was clear that maintenance issues were reported time and again but not enough intervention was taken.

She said this included issues with the sewerage system that cause overflows, rat infestations, and poor ventilation.

"It is a completely unacceptable environment for staff and citizens," she said.

The party has called on Minister of Home Affairs, Aaron Motsoaledi and Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Patricia De Lille, to urgently resolve this issue and ensure that an action plan was put in place for preventative maintenance at all Home Affairs offices.

"In a meeting with the portfolio committee this week, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure revealed consistent underspending on maintenance, repairs and refurbishment of state-owned properties. The appalling state of the Byron Place Home Affairs offices is a reflection of the dire consequences this underspending has had.

"A further contributing factor to the state of dilapidation of state-owned buildings stems from the lack of clarity, and consequent paralysis it results in, regarding the responsibility for maintenance, refurbishment and repairs.

"The Department of Public and Infrastructure and its client departments need to clearly demarcate roles and responsibilities in this regard," she said.

Graham-Maré has been recommending in the department committee that every single lease contract entered into between the department and its lessees must have a maintenance plan with enforceable provisions.

While this has been implemented recently, there remained far too many lease agreements without such a plan in place.

She said they would be requesting further details from the department in respect of the underspending for the first three quarters and monitor the spending for the balance of the financial year.

"The government has a duty of care to its citizens and staff and the DA will continue to fight for the human dignity of the citizens of South Africa," she said.