



Publication: Herald, The - Main
Title: Mabuyane upbeat after province receives 14 clean audits
Publish date: 29 Sep 2023
Page: 6

Reach: 10949
AVE: R 17827.58
Author: Staff Reporter

Mabuyane upbeat after province receives 14 clean audits

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Eastern Cape premier Oscar Mabuyane has lauded his administration for improved audit outcomes after the province received 14 clean audits.

The provincial legislature has also received a clean bill of health from the auditor-general's office for the 2022/23 financial year.

Mabuyane said the outcomes were an indicator that "we are moving forward".

The premier's office improved from an unqualified with findings status to a clean audit.

The provincial treasury and the co-operative governance & traditional affairs, economic development, environmental affairs & tourism, rural devel-

opment & agrarian reform, community safety and sport, recreation, arts & culture departments all received clean audits.

The East London Industrial Development Zone, Coega Development Corporation, Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency, Eastern Cape Government Fleet Management Services, Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council, Eastern Cape Liquor Board and Eastern Cape Gambling Board also received clean audits.

"I am happy ... the ANC for this sixth term of this democratic government, among the seven priority areas of its manifesto, which were later turned into the electoral mandate of this government, was that we must build a capable, a devel-

opmental and an ethical state," Mabuyane said.

"You can only be ethical if you are fully accountable and responsible for the public purse and the only way that you can be assessed on that is through that assessment by the AG.

"So that's the first start of doing right things because if you are given money by [the Treasury] and you are not able to account for that money properly, there is something wrong with that," he said.

He warned that the private sector was discouraged by unaccountability of the government.

He was speaking on the sidelines of a golf challenge in Chintsa which preceded the launch of the Provincial In-



GOOD NEWS: Eastern Cape premier Oscar Mabuyane

vestment Council last night.

The council is meant to facilitate investment in the Eastern Cape, mainly by the private sector.

Its launch was part of a two-day programme which ends today with an investment conference held at the East London ICC.

"We started with five [clean audits]," Mabuyane said.

"We started with two government departments [with clean audits] versus three entities in 2019.

"Today you talk about 15 — seven government departments, the legislature [and] seven public entities, all on clean audit.

"It's unprecedented, it's something to be celebrated especially for those workers and employees who have been having sleepless nights to ensure that the image of the government is improved."

Mabuyane said he would have been happier to have more clean audits, especially in the departments of public works, human settlements and social development.

"They have been on unqualified for a couple of years.

"They should have been in that league of clean audit by now, so I should be talking 10, 11 government departments [with clean audits.]

"Yes I have a challenge [with] three departments — education, health and transport."

He said his government now knew the challenges facing the three departments and was putting together a team in his office which would work with the provincial treasury to ensure they turned the departments around.

He said the image of the government was important because it gave hope that the government was in safe hands and it was a confidence booster

also to the private sector which he would be charming to invest billions in the province.

Asked about the target for investment commitments, Mabuyane said: "We want as many billions as possible.

"There are people who are coming, there are people who have committed, let's wait to actually see that."

Mabuyane said 400 people were expected to attend the conference and the provincial government was expecting positive outcomes from it.

The DA, however, criticised the province's performance, saying it painted a bleak picture.

Vicky Knoetze, the party's finance spokesperson, said: "The truth is our province is in deep trouble and in dire need

of rescuing. The provincial department of health has still not resolved its issues surrounding the keeping of medical records, resulting in the department being unable to defend itself against litigation."

She said her party reaffirmed its stance that the department "urgently needs to be placed under administration".

"The state of education is just as abysmal, with the AG flagging the R100m infrastructure funding returned to the National Treasury.

"Residents in small towns across the province are also on their own.

"Cogta was found to be severely lacking in support and implementation," Knoetze said. — *Daily Dispatch*