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GEORGE BUILDING COLLAPSE

Call for accountability and reform in construction

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PUBLIC Works and Infrastructure Minister Dean Macpherson has received the final report from the Council for the Built Environment (CBE), through its body Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA), surrounding the tragic George building collapse.

The tragedy claimed the lives of 34 people and injured 28 others on May 6, 2024.

Macpherson's office said the report marks a critical step in the department's commitment to uncover the truth behind the preventable disaster, and to ensure those responsible are held accountable.

"As the department, we will now carefully study the report to develop a pathway forward to ensure that a tragedy such as the George building collapse never happens again. As I have previously committed, after studying the report, I will personally return to George to present the findings of this report to the families affected by this tragedy. They deserve to hear directly from us, not through the media, about what went wrong and how we intend to rectify it," Macpherson said.

James de Villiers, spokesperson for Macpherson, said the minister emphasised that the collapse was the result of systemic failures across various regulatory bodies and a lack of cooperation among key stakeholders.



THE final report on the George building collapse reveals systemic failures and calls for accountability. | AYANDA NDAMANE Independent Newspapers

"He reiterated that accountability cannot be optional when human lives are lost due to human error," said De Villiers.

"Therefore, the department will continue to work with the South African Police Service (SAPS), the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), and other relevant regulatory bodies to ensure accountability."

Macpherson added: "As I have said before, the collapse of the George

building was entirely preventable, and we will therefore work towards accountability and address any errors which may have been identified. By working together, we are ensuring a safe and secure construction sector for all stakeholders."

Earlier, the George Municipality confirmed that the final report involving the independent structural investigation of the site, which was commissioned and undertaken by the Engineering Design Services (EDS), has been handed over to the police.

Human Settlements Minister, Thembi Simelane, previously said via a report that the municipality was at fault for approving the apartment block's plan when it was already in the process of construction.

The municipality clarified that they were audited with no significant findings and the plans were approved in line with regulations and they did not have evidence that the construction went ahead despite the approval being processed.

On April 8, Simelane revealed that five officials from the National Home Builders Regulatory Council were suspended and could face criminal charges including that of the developers behind the construction, Neo Victoria Developments.