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Page: 3

NATION

Minister receives report on George building collapse

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THE George building collapse was the result of systemic failures across various regulatory bodies and a lack of cooperation among key stakeholders, says Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Dean Macpherson.

He reiterated that accountability could not be optional when human lives were lost as a result of human error.

The minister yesterday confirmed he has received the final report from the Council for the Built Environment (CBE), via its body the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) on the tragedy.

On May 6, 2024, a five-storey building collapsed in George claiming the lives of 34 people and leaving 28 others injured. Macpherson said the report marked a critical step in the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure's commitment to uncover the truth behind what he described as a 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.

He emphasised that the collapse was the result of systemic failures across various regulatory bodies and a lack of cooperation among key stakeholders.

He added that the Department will continue to work with the police,

the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and other relevant regulatory bodies to ensure accountability.

"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 that may have been identified.

"By working together, we are ensuring a safe and secure construction sector for all stakeholders," Macpherson said.

Last week George councillor, Chantelle Kyd resigned from the Planning and Development Mayoral Committee over what she said was the DA-led municipality's lack of transparency over the confidential tabling of reports on the building collapse.

The GOOD councillor tendered her resignation, saying it was not an easy decision but that she could not stay in an executive role where "truth is suppressed" and "accountability is avoided".

"It is unacceptable that the DA would choose to table critical reports behind closed doors, bar the media, and deny coalition partners the opportunity to address the public truthfully."

DA Western Cape leader Tertius Simmers said the position to table the item as confidential was a "collective decision".

"The position on the specific item in question was adopted by the Joint Coalition Caucus as all parties agreed to its recommendations.

"Furthermore, as GOOD communicated in recent weeks on the matter publicly, GOOD was informed that it could issue a party-political statement on the matter following the council meeting.

"So in no way were GOOD George sidelined, marginalised or censored while a member of the coalition government," said Simmers.