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## Ray Nkonyeni Municipality stripped of power to manage South Coast properties

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The Ray Nkonyeni Municipality has been stripped of its powers to manage 15 prime coastal properties along KwaZulu-Natal's South Coast after years of mismanagement, ownership disputes, and complaints from local businesses about unfair lease practices.

Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Dean Macpherson yesterday formally handed over control of the properties to KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Public Works and Infrastructure Martin Meyer — effectively ending the municipality's long-standing role in administering the sites along the Admiralty Reserve between Hibberdene and Port Edward.

The decision follows the termination of a 20-year management agreement signed in 2016 between the national Department of Public Works and the municipality.

According to the department, the municipality failed to manage leases consistently and transparently, leaving many businesses on month-to-month contracts and discouraging long-term investment.

"The department had no choice but to intervene after receiving numerous complaints from local business owners," said Macpherson during the handover ceremony. "The Ray Nkonyeni Municipality's handling of these leases created uncertainty and frustration for investors who simply wanted fair treatment and security of tenure," he said.

By transferring management to the provincial department, Macpherson said the government aimed to ensure that state



Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Dean Macpherson (right) hands over the control of 15 prime coastal properties along KwaZulu-Natal's South Coast to KwaZulu-Natal Public Works and Infrastructure MEC Martin Meyer yesterday. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

land served public benefit "not bureaucratic inefficiency".

"This move will allow for long-term leases that give businesses the confidence to expand, create jobs, and grow the local

economy," he said.

The handover marks the latest in a series of interventions by the Department of Public Works to reclaim underperforming assets from municipalities and turn them

into productive ones.

Similar transfers took place in the Nkandla and uMngeni municipalities earlier this year.

Meyer welcomed the move, saying it was a direct response to the concerns of local entrepreneurs who had been unable to rebuild or invest due to insecure leases.

"This is not just about property; it's about jobs. With unemployment in Ray Nkonyeni sitting at 37%, the tourism potential of the South Coast must be unlocked — and that requires stability and transparency in how state properties are managed," he said.

Meyer said the provincial department would now begin drafting new, long-term lease agreements to attract fresh investment and revitalise the region's tourism economy.

"The days of uncertainty are over. We are restoring trust, order, and opportunity along the South Coast," he said.

However, the Ray Nkonyeni Municipality yesterday criticised Macpherson's decision to hand over the properties to the provincial department without consultation. "As in any contractual relationship, if the department has concerns about how the municipality is managing these properties, the proper course of action would be to engage with the municipality — and, if necessary, invoke the provisions of the agreement to address or terminate it.

"Only once such legal and procedural steps have been followed can the issue of handing over properties legitimately arise," the municipality said.

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