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■ POLICY MOVE

# KZN Public Works halts projects for departments that owe it money

■ WILLEM PHUNGULA

THE KwaZulu-Natal Public Works and Infrastructure has announced that it will not carry out projects for sister departments until they pay money owed to the department.

The move which may create an infrastructure backlog, particularly in Health and Education departments was announced by Public Works and Infrastructure MEC Martin Meyer in a sit-down interview yesterday.

Explaining his department's decision, Meyer said it was a known policy in government and it was important for his department to apply it as it is affecting the department's financial standing in the Auditor-General's report. Meyer cited the sister departments' failure to pay his department as a reason for getting a qualified audit outcome this financial year.

He said that as a result of the non-payment by sister departments, his department was failing to pay contractors on time - something that was beyond his control.

"Inter-departmental accounts are still an intricate and thorny issue that is unsettling. This cannot be the norm and cannot continue as is. In the 2025/26 financial year, the department will only accept new projects requests from client departments by considering progress made on settlement of claims. This aims to ensure that the department does not continue with new projects where there is a backlog on unpaid claims," said Myer.

He said the total value of outstanding payments to the department stood at a staggering R737.4 million, which



KWAZULU-NATAL Public Works and Infrastructure MEC Martin Meyer's said his department will not carry out projects for other departments that owe it money. | DOCTOR NGCOBO Independent Media

severely hindered other financial obligations that must be honored by his department.

Meyer said records pointed to the fact that there was a single client with an outstanding debt calculated in the region of R426,4 million, which accounted for 64% of the total debt.

"We are happy to say that as of the 10th of February 2025, through implemented measures, we have received over R71 million in payments, with more coming. We extend a word of appreciation to those who have paid us. To those who are yet to do so, we would encourage you to come forward and talk to us about a possible solution" said Meyer.

On cost-cutting measures, the

department has not procured any branding or images of the MEC, on any wall, structure, billboard, pamphlet, booklet or leaflet.

Also for the first time, the department did not distribute diaries and calendars and has done away with catering services for meetings and office refreshments. Employees were also ordered to use department vehicles to avoid travel claims.

The department further drastically reduced ministerial spending since Meyer took office last year. During the 2022/23 financial year, R6 million was accumulated in ministerial spending costs, however, since Meyer took office in July last year, he spent only R1.9 million for the year.