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CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Macpherson calls for overhaul of building regulations to fast-track infrastructure delivery

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PUBLIC Works and Infrastructure Minister, Dean Macpherson, has called for an urgent overhaul of South Africa's building regulations and approval systems to fast-track infrastructure development, saying bureaucratic red tape continues to delay projects and undermine economic growth.

Speaking at the 2025 National Construction Summit on Thursday, Macpherson said it was unacceptable that developers and government entities were still forced to wait up to two years for construction plan approvals.

He warned that such delays were slowing down the momentum required to boost economic growth and meeting the country's infrastructure needs.

With the summit attended by more than 2 000 delegates from government, business, and labour, Macpherson said consensus was emerging around one priority: accelerating delivery by cutting red tape. "We know that further work needs to be done to remove red tape facing construction projects. It simply should not take 18 to 24 months to approve development plans. That pace is incompatible with the urgency of our economic and infrastructure needs," he said. There is currently R14 billion in construction projects being designed, planned and constructed across all national and provincial Public Works and Infrastructure departments.

Macpherson proposed targeted exemptions within the National Building Regulations to accelerate the rollout of large, catalytic projects at municipal level, particularly where delays are purely administrative. He further argued that all legislation and regulatory authority governing South Africa's built environment should be centralised under the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) to ensure coherence, consistency, and flexibility. "This is why we must examine targeted exemptions within the National Building Regulations to fast-track large, catalytic projects at municipal level, especially where delays are unjustifiable or purely administrative," he said.

"It's also why we believe that all legislation and regulation governing the built environment should sit under one authority, and that being the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure."

Building regulations ensure safety, health, and sustainability by covering all aspects of construction, from structural integrity and fire safety to accessibility and energy efficiency.

They are currently governed by the National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act and are administered by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition.

"As the custodian of public infrastructure, the DPWI is best placed to ensure that building regulations are coherent, enforced consistently,



MINISTER of Public Works and Infrastructure, Dean Macpherson, speaking at the 2025 National Construction Summit on Thursday, said it was unacceptable that developers and government entities were still forced to wait up to two years for construction plan approvals. | SUPPLIED

updated when necessary, and, where appropriate, flexible enough to enable quicker delivery," Macpherson said. "I look forward to advancing these discussions so that South Africa can move towards a system where approvals are efficient, predictable, and aligned with the scale of construction our country needs."

The construction sector was crucial for employment in the third quarter as data showed that it created 130 000 new jobs, more than half of 248 000 new jobs created in the South African economy during that period. Macpherson also said consolidating oversight would not only streamline approvals but also strengthen accountability and coordination across spheres of government. The minister's comments come as government prepares to implement the South African Construction Action Plan (SACAP), a new national framework adopted by all nine provinces in October to fix chronic inefficiencies in public sector infrastructure delivery.

The plan lays out six core interventions designed to restore efficiency, accountability, and trust in the public construction system. These include accountability and budget ring-fencing, procurement reform and "procurement war rooms", digitised infrastructure tracking systems, strengthening audit outcome, and professionalising the built environment.

Macpherson said the first interventions under SACAP will be implemented as early as March 2026, with procurement war rooms expected to become operational in every province.

A national blacklisting database for delinquent contractors is also being developed, alongside a new ERP-based infrastructure tracking system to monitor project performance in real time.

In September, Macpherson announced the blacklisting of 40 contractors since July 2024, a significant jump from only one blacklisting in the past 20 years.