

**Publication:** Cape Argus Early - Main

**Reach:** 10459

**Title:** Justice minister explores infrastructure, technology improvements for court safety

**AVE:**R 49167.12

**Publish date:** 17 Sep 2025

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SECURITY GAPS

# Justice minister explores infrastructure, technology improvements for court safety

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DEPUTY Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Andries Nel, in collaboration with the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) Cluster, is exploring technology-based and infrastructure solutions as regular oversight visits are set to continue at vulnerable courts.

Nel carried out a recent visit to the Athlone Magistrates' Court following a shooting which left a man facing assault charges dead and said they were committed to modernising safety systems.

Police have since arrested a suspect.

This includes infrastructure at the Wynberg Magistrates' Court following a murder inside the courthouse earlier this year as concerns were also raised about non-functioning security devices such as scanners.

MEC for Police Oversight and Community Safety, Anroux Marais said she also met with Premier Alan

Winde, the provincial police commissioner, and others to enhance judiciary safety issues: "Last Friday, I met with the Premier, the Judge President of the Western Cape and Lieutenant General Patekile to address the critical need for enhanced collaboration between SAPS and the Department of Justice. The focus of our discussions was on strengthening safety measures in and around our courts, ensuring that they remain places where justice can be administered without fear or disruption."

Following his visit at Athlone Magistrates' Court, Nel saw that metal detectors were swiftly deployed and they were fully functional.

Terrence Manase, ministerial spokesperson, said Nel called for more police visibility and reinforcement to strengthen on-the-ground security at courts.

"The Deputy Minister reported that the Department, working closely within the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) Cluster, is actively

exploring technology-based solutions such as video remand hearings to reduce risks associated with prisoner transport, while also improving efficiency," he stated.

He said Nel emphasised the need for closer collaboration with the minister of Police, the Judge President, and other stakeholders such as the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to accelerate infrastructure improvements and modernise safety systems in our courts.

"He also reported on the need for regular joint oversight visits to ensure that progress is monitored and that solutions remain responsive to the needs of communities and court users."

Manase added that Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Mmamoloko Kubayi, would be addressing oral questions in the National Assembly today.

"This will provide an opportunity for her to update Members of Parliament and the public on progress in strengthening access to justice, includ-

ing interventions from her recent court oversight visits, measures to protect prosecutors handling high-profile cases, steps to make the National Register for Sex Offenders accessible in a lawful and responsible manner, and advances on urgent security upgrades," he stated.

At Wynberg Magistrates' Court, Kubayi said 43 prosecutors' offices would receive steel security gates, remote buttons and peepholes following a visit in June.

Complaints regarding a broken electronic scanner was also addressed when a scanner was utilised from the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP's) office.

She said they were preparing for a new multi-purpose scanner- detecting metal, copper, drugs, steel and plastic which was to be received.

Murder-accused, Dingalomoyo Chintso was shot dead on the premises following a court appearance in April and several arrests were made thereafter.