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The dangerous and dilapidated state of the R522 between Louis Trichardt and Vivo. RAL confirmed this week that the upgrade of the road will be completed, but could not say when. Photo supplied.

## "We did not abandon R522 project, we're just waiting for money" - RAL

BY ANDRIES VAN ZYL

**R**oad Agency Limpopo (RAL) stated this week that the upgrading of the busy R522 road between Louis Trichardt and Vivo has not been abandoned, despite recent reports claiming that, due to severe cuts to RAL's budget, the project had been "uncontracted".

"The previous contractor's Service Level Agreement (SLA) lapsed and was not renewed due to slow performance, which left the project incomplete. Following this, RAL initiated a process to secure a competent contractor," said Mr Danny Legodi, RAL's senior manager communications, on Tuesday. He was responding to questions from the newspaper enquiring about the status of the rehabilitation project.

Last week, the *Zoutpansberger* reported on the major cut to RAL's annual budget, as highlighted by Ms Marie Helm, Member of Parliament and the spokesperson for the Democratic Alliance (DA) for Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure, in a recent press release.

Helm states that RAL is currently facing significant challenges regarding road maintenance and upgrades in Limpopo, including the R522. The R522 project in the Makhado municipal area has, according to her, been completely abandoned, with no contractor appointed as of July 2025, despite previous promises that maintenance work would start on 1 April 2025. This abandonment is largely attributed to severe budget cuts for RAL, with its funding reduced from R2.886 billion in 2024/25 to under R1 billion in subsequent years, impacting its capacity to maintain and improve roads effectively.

Regarding the R522, South African taxpayers are already nearly R8 million poorer, with little to show for it except a dangerously degraded stretch of road. The R522 was earmarked for rehabilitation in April 2024, but work ground to a halt after the appointed contractor, Tycofield, delivered just 15% of the project. RAL terminated Tycofield's contract in November last year, leaving the road in worse condition than before and with no clear indication of when construction will resume.

tion will resume.

"The agency is ensuring that a capable contractor is appointed through a transparent process that safeguards public funds," said Legodi in his response this week.

But while RAL is looking for a capable contractor, motorists have to endure dangerous conditions on the half-complete stretches of the R522. RAL acknowledges these dangers. "RAL recognises the dangerous state of the R522 and the risks it poses to motorists. In the medium term, urgent remedial works will be implemented to stabilise hazardous sections, while the main upgrading contract is being finalised," said Legodi.

As for a long-term solution to the deplorable state of the R522, Legodi said they had contingency plans on the table. "In the long term, RAL has prioritised the R522 within its multi-year Infrastructure Programme, ensuring that once funding is fully secured, the road will undergo comprehensive rehabilitation to restore it to a safe and durable standard," said Legodi. But exactly when this will materialise, remains uncertain.

## Hawkers and self-employed women host business shower for upliftment

BY VICTOR MUKWEVHO

**S**treet hawkers and self-employed women from the Vhembe District, who formed their own organisation to uplift women, hosted a business shower at Makonde Shadani on Saturday, 16 August.

The group, called Entrepreneurs in Town and Business

reduce financial dependence on their partners.

Spokesperson Vuledzani Nevari said the organisation, launched in May last year, had already supported at least 16 members. "One of the causes of gender-based violence, which affects women more than men, is financial dependency. Creating a platform that allows women to

and equip them with the skills to start their own businesses," Nevari said. She added: "It is unfortunate that we live in a country that does not seem to care about the poorest of the poor in our communities."

Asked about their contribution to Women's Month, she said the initiative was also a way to honour women who had advanced empowerment