



Publication: Sowetan - Main

Title: Macpherson orders probe into 6,238 state houses

Publish date: 21 Jul 2026

Page: 7

Reach: 14959

AVE: R 54209.23

Author: SUGULETHU MASHININI

By **GUGULETHU MASHININI**

Public works and infrastructure minister Dean Macpherson has ordered an investigation into 6,238 state-owned residential properties allocated to government officials around the country.

Macpherson has asked the department's director-general, Sifiso Mdakane, to investigate the properties that are allocated to various user departments and occupied by officials and to draw up a strategy for disposing of those without a clear operational purpose. Of the 6,238 properties, 3,626 are in KwaZulu-Natal, 566 are in the Western Cape and 407 are in Gauteng, as well as other provinces. The department spent an estimated R39.6m on day-to-day maintenance during the 2025/2026 financial year, though this figure only covers 108 of them.

Mdakane has been given 30 days to submit a comprehensive report to the minister detailing who occupies each property, why it was allocated, whether it is still needed and whether it should be kept, repurposed or sold. The report must also look specifically at homes occupied by public works and infrastructure officials to ensure the same rules have been applied to everyone.

Macpherson orders probe into 6,238 state houses



Minister of public works and infrastructure Dean Macpherson.

/Sandile Ndlovu

The investigation will also examine: the legal basis for leasing out state-owned homes, including whether the Government Immovable Asset Management Act, the Public Finance Management Act and National Treasury regulations have been followed; whether the rentals charged are

in line with the market and whether approval was obtained for any exceptions; whether officials living in work or official housing qualify for it under their conditions of employment and whether the correct fringe benefit tax has been applied; and whether departments have

handed back properties they no longer needed and whether any surplus properties should be repurposed, redeveloped, sold or released from the state's portfolio.

Macpherson said the government should not continue carrying the cost of maintaining thousands of residential properties when many officials already receive housing benefits as part of their employment packages. "The state should not own more than 6,000 residential properties for government officials. Unless there is a clear and compelling operational reason for the state to retain a residential property, it should be sold."

Macpherson said properties no longer needed should be sold through a transparent and lawful process. Selling these properties would reduce government spending, generate value for the public and allow the state to focus its limited resources on infrastructure and assets that directly support service delivery. "This is central to our commitment to use public assets for the public good and build a better South Africa." — TimesLIVE