



public works
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**STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE,
PATRICIA DE LILLE**

**APPROVAL OF LAND RELEASES ONE STEP CLOSER TO FINALISING LAND
RESTITUTION FOR CLAIMANT COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES**

The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), as the custodian of state-owned land has an important role to play in government's efforts to bring about land reform and reverse the injustices of our past.

As a result of the Natives Land Act of 1913 and the Group Areas Act of 1950, many families and communities were disposed of their property, their rights to property and forcibly removed from their land.

At the advent of democracy in 1994, government opened the land restitution claims process allowing disposed families and communities to lodge claims for land they were dispossessed of under colonial and apartheid laws.

The 1994 restitution claims process gave claimant communities until 31 December 1998 to lodge claims which would then be verified by the various Regional Land Claims Commissions.

As part of the restitution process, DPWI is often requested to release vacant and unutilised land parcels to the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development for ultimate transfer to the claimant communities to enable to the finalisation of land restitution claims. This happens when the original land is no longer restorable or available or when the land which a claim has been lodged for is registered in the name of the State.

DPWI regularly finalises its role in the process and approves land under its custodianship for release to finalise restitution claims.

Once DPWI signs off the release of the land, the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform finalises the claim and facilitates the ultimate transfer of the land to the beneficiary or beneficiaries.

Over the past two financial years, the DPWI has made good progress in finalising its processes to approve the transfer of land for restitution claims demonstrating our commitment to reversing the legacy of apartheid.

During the 2019/2020 financial year, I signed off the release of 161 land parcels measuring around 17 552 hectares valued at over R185million to finalise restitution claims.

For the 2021/2022 financial year, I have so far signed off the release of 32 properties, measuring more than 10 000 hectares valued at over R91million for restitution purposes.

In total, since 2019 to date, I have approved the release of 193 land parcels for restitution purposes, measuring over 27 594 hectares and valued at more than R276million.

This past month, I have signed off the release of various parcels of land in the North West, the Western Cape and the Mpumalanga provinces for three claimant communities.

North West claim

I have signed off the release of 7 properties with 234 hectares valued at approximately R 4, 7 million in the Madibeng municipality to settle the restitution claim for the Mekgareng claimant community.

This claim was registered before the December 1998 cut-off date and was confirmed as valid by the North West Regional Land Claims Commission.

The Mekgareng and Rebotswe communities were forcibly removed from their properties under the Natives Land Act of 1913. The land was previously used by the community for various purposes such as residential, livestock farming and grazing.

Western Cape claim

For the Western Cape claim, I have signed off the release of 13 state-owned properties measuring 0,6529 hectares in Strand to settle the claim of the Muhammed Haron family.

The family lodged claims on various parcels of land in the City of Cape Town which they were dispossessed of under the Group Areas Act. The claims were verified as valid by the Western Cape Regional Land Claims Commission.

However due to the original properties no longer be available for restoration purposes, the Western Cape Regional Land Claims Commission opted for available properties in Strand which are under the custodianship of DPWI.

The value of land is worth more than R2.9 million and will be transferred to the family by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform.

Mpumalanga claim

For the Mpumalanga claim, I have signed off the release of just over 9 807 hectares of land valued at approximately R83.4million for the restitution of the claim by the Ngwaritsi community.

The land parcels are situated in the Thaba Chweu municipality. The claim was lodged before the December 1998 cut-off date and confirmed as valid by the Mpumalanga Regional Land Claims Commission which also requested the various properties from DPWI to finalise the restitution claim.

The community consisted of around 126 households at the time of the dispossession and used the land for residential, ploughing and grazing before the dispossession.

The community was removed from the land due to the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970 and were dumped in areas designated for native occupation.

All of these land parcels are being released on a gratis basis as part of DPWI's role in advancing the work of land reform and redressing the imbalances of our unjust past.

DPWI will continue to expedite all other land claims to ensure that we move faster to finalise the claims for claimants who have waited too long for their land to be returned to them and have their restitution matters finalised.

I have written to Minister Thoko Didiza informing her of the approval for the release of these land parcels for these claimant communities. The remaining processes and the ultimate transfer of the land to the beneficiaries will now be completed by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform.

ENDS

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