



public works
& infrastructure

Department:
Public Works and Infrastructure
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Issued by Chief Directorate: Communications
5996

Enquiries: Zara Nicholson: 079 416

Issue Date: 9 May 2021

Media Statement

MINISTER PATRICIA DE LILLE VISITS GRABOUW COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO ADDRESS LAND INVASIONS AND COMMUNICATE DPWI EFFORTS TO RELEASE LAND FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PURPOSES

Today, I held a meeting with community members just outside Grabouw to address the community on land invasions in the area.

On 29 March 2021, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure's (DPWI) Cape Town regional office received a notification regarding forestry properties being invaded in Grabouw.

The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) is the custodian of these forest properties. These properties are allocated to the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) for plantation purposes.

DPWI and DEFF (first and second applicants) obtained a court order on 21 April 2021. On 25 April 2021, the court interdict was served on the unlawful occupants. The court gave the respondents until 19 May 2021 to give reasons as to why the interim order should not be made final.

The interim order of 21 April 2021 stated that the community members who invaded the property (respondents) are interdicted from:

1. Entering the subject property for the purposes of unlawfully occupying and/or attempting to occupy the properties; and/or
2. Intimidating, threatening, harassing, assaulting or in any way interfering with the applicants' officials, or any persons acting on its behalf or involved with law enforcement at the properties; and

3. Inciting or encouraging other persons to invade and/or attempt to invade the properties

The interim order also authorises the Sherriff to remove any person in contravention of the order, demolish any incomplete and/or unoccupied structures and/or structures that do not constitute the home of any person erected on the property after the granting of the order.

The court has made it clear that this interim order should not be construed as an eviction order and does not entitle the applicants to demolish occupied structures as at the date of the order, being 21 April 2021 and that the above order shall operate as an interim order with immediate effect.

The land parcels affected by the land invasions are part of the plantation areas that DEFF is planning to recommission for commercial forestry purposes. The recommissioning will result in the empowerment of local communities through partnerships with investors.

During 2014, the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries commissioned a study to conduct a situational analysis of commercial forestry. The study recommended replanting plantation areas sooner rather than later in order to shorten the already inevitable looming shortage in the country.

Communities living adjacent to commercial plantation areas were consulted by DEFF and have agreed to form a trust which will serve as a special purpose vehicle for a partnership with a strategic investor.

The land will remain State forest with the company in partnership with the communities leasing the land from DEFF. The DEFF is expected to advertise a bid to interested investors in order for them to form a partnership with the communities.

In line with the recommendations of the 2014 study which DEFF commissioned, the plantation areas will be divided into five business packages in order to promote participation by local forestry businesses.

DEFF will be taking this process forward to ultimately advertise the plantations and involve the local communities.

This is the history and plans for this land. It is there for plantation purposes and DEFF will use it according to its mandate and to bring economic activities for the local communities.

I conveyed to the community that we must respect these processes because as much as our people need houses, our communities also need jobs.

There are plans for housing and we must also respect and legal processes and do things the right way.

I shared with the community today that the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure is busy finalising the release of various parcels of land for human settlements purposes.

Since I became the Minister I have signed off the release of five parcels of land for human settlements purposes in the Western Cape alone.

In the Theewaterskloof municipality, processes are also being finalised for the release of various parcels of land from DPWI to the municipality for human settlements purposes:

1. Two portions of land, measuring 131 hectares were transferred from DPWI to the municipality in 2018 for affordable housing.
2. For another portion of land measuring 8.7 hectares in Grabouw for the upgrading of an informal settlement, this property is currently with the State attorney for transfer from DPWI to the municipality.
3. With another piece of land here in Grabouw measuring 129 hectares for the construction of affordable housing, the Permission to Occupy and Build was issued to the municipality in 2018.
4. With another parcel of land in Theewaterskloof for affordable housing, the department is finalising the processes to submit the request to me for Ministerial approval and we will work to fast-track this.
5. With regard to another parcel of land requested for affordable housing and business use, this request is also en route to my office for approval.
6. For another request for land for affordable housing here in Grabouw, this request is also set to reach my office shortly for sign off.

I conveyed to the community that DPWI will work with the relevant departments and spheres of government to expedite the approvals and transfers that need to be finalised.

However, I also conveyed to the community that national government is not the only sphere of government which owns land.

DPWI has to release land for human settlements across the country. The Western Cape Provincial government and the Local Municipality also owns land which they must also make available for housing.

We must not play politics with land. Every sphere of government has a responsibility and legal mandate to make land available for community purposes such as human settlements development.

I cannot fix in two years, since I became the Minister, what the DA government failed to do in 10 years.

I will work with provincial and the local municipality to see what each sphere of government is bringing to the table to respond to the community needs.

I will meet with Minister of the DEFF Barbara Creecy to get the dates as to when DEFF will start the plantation project and give feedback to the community.

The needs are great and every sphere of government must come forward and make land available from their asset registers.

I communicated to community members that DPWI understands the needs of our communities especially for housing but illegal actions cannot be condoned and the State has a legal obligation to protect its land from illegal land invasions or any illegal activity.

I addressed the community today to listen to their needs and concerns and map the forward on how we can work together with all relevant departments and spheres of government - the Western Cape Government and Local Municipality to find a legal and long-lasting solution to respond to your needs.

ENDS

Media enquiries:

Zara Nicholson

Media Liaison Officer to Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure: Patricia de Lille (MP)

Contact: 021 402 2284

Mobile: 079 416 5996

Zara.Nicholson@dpw.gov.za