

**MEDIA STATEMENT:**

***“Public Works – strengthening cooperative governance for service delivery”***

- *replacing mud schools*
- *black-listing non-performance*

**ISSUED BY: Department of Public Works**

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The Minister of Public Works met with MECs of provincial Public Works Departments in Johannesburg over the weekend to develop joint programmes and strategies to enhance service delivery.

High on the agenda were the following issues:

- The need to address the lack of professional and technical skills – understanding that Public Works is a highly technical department of government. Public Works has to invest in developing in-house technical capacity – which in the long-run will save money which is currently paid to consultants. This means recruiting from the private sector, as well as inserting clauses into construction contracts to require contractors to train young engineers and artisans. The Department will determine the minimum basket of skills required – nationally and for provincial departments.
- Developing and capacitating emerging black construction contractors; whilst strengthening sanctions against non-performing contractors to

enhance service delivery. This includes blacklisting. In this respect, the meeting was assisted by the Construction Industry Development Board (CIBD) – a public entity which reports to the Minister of Public Works. CIBD is concurrently reviewing the regulatory framework to ensure it enhances rather than inhibits contractor development.

- Exploring the use of Alternative Construction Methods (ACMs) to tackle the scandal of mud schools. Pilot schemes have been completed in the Eastern Cape and North West provinces. These methods produce buildings that are in many respects superior to conventional buildings - more sustainable, cheaper and quicker to erect. There are also important gains in terms of job creation and skills transfers to local communities. The Independent Development Trust (IDT) is the implementing agent, whilst CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research) presented research findings on the quality of the new school buildings. The materials used were quality assured by Agreement South Africa. Agreement and IDT report to the Minister of Public Works.
- The implications of the recently announced national infrastructure roll-out plans were explained by Minister Thulas Nxesi: “The effective roll out of Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) 12 and 13 – the revitalisation of health facilities and the national school building programme – require that Public Works, nationally and provincially, together with client departments, local authorities and implementing bodies - work closely together to ensure effective delivery. This means maximum coordination, and changing the way we work to reduce delays and cut through the bureaucracy. The roll

out of health and education infrastructure will also stimulate further economic activity in communities and job creation.”

- Professor Shadrack Gutto, constitutional law expert and public policy commentator, was invited to present a legal opinion and research findings on the application of cooperative governance and concurrent mandates – concepts which are central to improving coordination between the spheres of government. He concluded that whilst minor legislative or regulatory changes might be necessary, much could be done administratively to strengthen coordination between the spheres - including developing a memorandum of understanding to clarify roles and responsibilities. “In the end it is down to us to make this relationship work to enhance service delivery”, said Minister Nxesi.

The meeting therefore resolved:

- to request Professor Gutto to undertake further research, whilst joint structures are established to identify the areas that need to be covered in a memorandum of understanding; and
- concretely, to encourage greater cooperation and inter-action between provinces to share experiences and best practices. As examples, the MEC of the Eastern Cape – where ACMs have been used to replace mud schools – invited other provinces to visit these schools, whilst the Western and Northern Cape provinces discussed cooperation to address skills deficits. The national department will also coordinate with provincial departments to further enhance reliability of the Immovable Assets Register of state assets.