



public works
& infrastructure

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MEDIA STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE, PATRICIA DE LILLE

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE TRANSFERS LAND FOR LONGSTANDING RESTITUTION LAND CLAIM WITH TRANSFER OF 1 199 HECTARES OF LAND FOR MPUMALANGA CLAIMANT COMMUNITY

It gives me great pleasure to announce that I have approved the release of 1 199 hectares of land, valued at approximately R7.4million to assist in settling a land restitution claim by the Kaapsche Hoop Community in Mpumalanga.

Under the land reform programme, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), as the custodian of national state-owned land, is often requested to release land to settle land claims for restitution where claimants filed claims before the 31 December 1998 deadline.

Land reform is one of the key pillars of redressing the legacy of the apartheid regime which saw people of colour dispossessed of land and forcibly removed from land.

Land redress is also one of the key drivers to towards achieving spatial and socio-economic justice and ensuring that public land is used for public good.

As a democratic government, our role is to reverse this legacy of the apartheid regime by returning land to dispossessed communities who lodged claims and have had these claims verified under the restitution process which is under ambit of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD).

We are therefore pleased that we can finally release the property on the part of DPWI for DALRRD to ultimately transfer the land parcel to beneficiaries.

The latest approval of release of land to DALRRD by DPWI for the Kaapsche Hoop Community relates to a property measuring 1 199 hectares and valued at R7.4million in the Mbombela Municipality.

I have written to Minister Thoko Didiza informing her of this progress by DPWI.

DPWI has granted approval of the release of the land to DALRRD in terms of Section 2 of the State Land Disposal Act.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESTITUTION CLAIM:

A restitution claim was lodged with the Mpumalanga Regional Land Claims Commission on behalf of the Kaapsche Hoop Community on 17 December 1998, before the 31 December 1998 cut-off date for claims to be lodged in line with the provisions of the Restitution of Land Rights Act of 1994.

The land which the claim was lodged for was under the custodianship of DPWI.

The Kaapsche Hoop community occupied the farm and its surrounding areas around 1910 and their land rights were lost due to the establishment of an Asbestos Mine when they were relocated.

There was also an establishment of a forestry plantation by the South African Forestry Company Limited (SAFCOL).

The establishment of both the Asbestos mine and the plantation created employment for the community and only those community members who worked for both companies and their families were allowed to reside on the farm.

The community was removed from the houses built by SAFCOL in 1973 and when the Komati Land Company took over from SAFCOL, the houses of the community members not working for SAFCOL were demolished.

Notices for the demolition were not issued to the community and as a result, their livestock was left behind during their relocation.

DPWI PROGRESS ON LAND REFORM

The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure is often requested to release national land for the land reform programme, including releasing land for human settlements development, land restitution and land redistribution.

Since June 2019 to date, DPWI had made the following progress in this regard:

- Land for Human Settlements Development: DPWI has released 2 560 hectares of land (44 parcels) to the Housing Development Agency (HDA).
- In addition, DPWI has released 18 Land parcels measuring 533 hectares for the purposes of accommodating communities, including those displaced by floods in the KwaZulu-Natal Province.
- **Land for socio economic purposes:** In support of infrastructure development, 15 hectares (11 land parcels) were approved for registration of servitude for roads, water, electricity and gas pipeline servitudes in this past financial year.

In addition, DPWI has released 28.0055 hectares (7 land parcels) which was approved for registration of Eskom servitudes in December 2022.

- **Land for Restitution:** Since May 2019 to date, DPWI has released 218 land parcels measuring 31 439 hectares for restitution. Last year's target for restitution was 10 000 hectares and this was exceeded.

In November 2022, 23 families in the Chris Hani District who had been forcibly removed by the apartheid regime, received title deeds to the land they were removed from in the area known as Thornhill in the Eastern Cape. Five properties were returned to the families who were all issued with title deeds for the properties with an estimated municipal value of R10million.

Land for Redistribution (Land Tenure):

- Since May 2019, DPWI has released 25 549 hectares of agricultural land (125 parcels) for the Redistribution Programme.

DPWI will continue accelerating the land reform work by working hard to finalise land release requests for land restitution, redistribution and land tenure so that we can bring closure to many communities waiting for their land claims to be finalised and achieve a greater level of land reform and spatial justice.

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