

MEDIA STATEMENT

RESPONSE TO REPORTS ON THE REFURBISHMENT OF KINGS HOUSE AND ALLOCATION OF ACCOMMODATION TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Public Works Minister Geoff Doidge has reacted with astonishment to certain weekend newspaper reports of “multi-million rand” renovations at the Presidential residence Kings House in Durban.

He noted as disturbing the use of unnamed people as sources on details or costs of the work being done at a Presidential residence, as the quoted figures were not supplied by the Department of Public Works.

The renovations at Kings House are but one of similar maintenance projects taking place at various prestige state accommodation buildings across the country as part of the R5,2 billion rand Public Works budget, hence the refurbishment cost of Kings House is R46 million. This project has been going on for the past five years. This includes security upgrades as required by state security agencies such as the National Intelligence Agency, South African Police Services and Crime Intelligence. Maintenance and renovation of buildings such as Kings House are carried out based on recommendations from these assessments.

The Department’s building programme is made up of thousands of construction related projects of varying sizes and extents, including prestige accommodation in Durban, Pretoria and Cape Town.

It is surprising to us that in such cases, the Democratic Alliance will be the only party accorded the chance to comment, which as history has shown the DA will in turn use the opportunity to attack the personality of any President including President Zuma. It was the same DA that led a malicious but ineffectual public relations campaign in 2006 about the security at the private

residence of former President Mbeki and Mrs Mbeki to a point of even unleashing their Parliamentary Chief Whip at the time, Mr Douglas Gibson to lead the media in invading the privacy of the former Presidential couple and thereby compromising their security.

The ministerial handbook dictates that the state is responsible for providing high level security for the Presidency (President & Deputy President) and Public Works has the mandate to do this as it has been doing for decades.

With regards to the recent media allegations related to the allocation of accommodation to current members of parliament let it be stated that the Six (6) MPs have asked for an extension to remain in their current residences, whereas the two (2) MPs who have changed political parties are refusing to vacate their residences. The law requires them to move out of their current houses to those allocated for their new political parties.

While we follow proper administrative and legal processes in this regard, it is important that we take into consideration that it is the Minister of Public Works' prerogative under the ministerial hand book to decide on a grace period given to outgoing MP's in terms of vacating premises in parliamentarian villages. Upon finalisation of these processes, we would then be in a position to move those members currently accommodated in hotels to their official residences.

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