

**Deputy Minister of Public Works
Ms BM Nzimande
10 March 1999**

[Back](#)

Budget Speech

Madame Speaker

INTRODUCTION

Whilst fulfilling its mandate of provision and management of State property, working accommodation to national departments and parliamentary office bearers, the Department of Public Works has made great progress towards the democratisation and restructuring of government processes in this country since 1994. The latter has mainly been achieved, as indicated by Minister Radebe, through the application of the National Public Works Programme with its constituting activities, of which not the least is the procurement reform and transformation of the construction industry.

This Department, as the Minister has so carefully articulated, delivers a variety of services, with Prestige Accommodation, which is my main responsibility, featuring prominently within the activities of the Department.

Honourable members, let me assure you immediately: It is of the utmost importance to the Department of Public Works to provide and maintain the accommodation at your disposal to the highest possible standard - as everybody else in the country, we want you to be able to work as productively as possible. Your comfort, however, needs to be balanced with affordability and sound investment practices in the interest of the State. If only one fifth of the planned budget for maintenance on prestige accommodation is funded, I have hypothetically to deal with you as only one client out of every five whose needs would be fully met.

This highlights the fact that there are services that, as a result of fiscal constraints, cannot at present be dealt with, and of which most of you are well aware. These include for instance, the replacement of old water lines and burglar alarm systems to all the houses in Acacia Park.

Objectives of Prestige Accommodation

The objectives of Prestige Accommodation are to maintain, furnish, decorate and supply essential equipment, as well as supervise the gardens and land officially utilised by entitled official occupants as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible. It is in the areas of gardening and cleaning services that we are focusing on outsourcing.

Prestige accommodation services are rendered to the President and Deputy President, Cabinet members, Deputy Ministers, and in Cape Town, heads of departments and other sessional officers, official residences for the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, the President and Deputy President of the NCOP and residential accommodation for members of Parliament.

Aspects involved in prestige accommodation that are currently underway,

that one can mention, are the renovation and upgrading at the Union Buildings. As is the case with many government buildings now aging, no maintenance planning was done when it was erected. The Union Buildings, for example, which was constructed in 1914 by Sir Herbert Baker, has only been maintained on an ad hoc basis since then. Consequently, the current upgrading is done at a cost of approximately R40 million, merely to bring it up to an acceptable standard before future maintenance planning can be contemplated. Once this has been done, it should bring the maintenance cost to not more than R7 million annually.

An interesting development is the review of the gardens at the Union Buildings to be more water wise. This includes not only irrigation, but also selection of species and locations for the plants to optimise water usage. Much more use is to be made of indigenous plants in the flowerbeds. It is a pilot project on waterwise gardening, and should be of great value in the development of models for gardening that meet the challenges of the new millennium in South Africa.

Maintenance and urgent repairs at the Brynterion Estate in Pretoria are dealt with within budgetary constraints. It has been indicated that an additional amount of plus minus R20 million would be required for renovation of this estate, which, if left unattended at an escalation rate of 15% per annum, would unavoidably necessitate an increase of R9 million per year.

Kings House in Durban is dealt with within budgetary constraints.

Eight prestige maintenance projects are currently under construction in the Western Cape, totalling a contract value of plus minus R4 million. These contracts include, amongst others, work on the upgrading of the Rygersdal flats in Mowbray and external repairs and renovations of the houses in Laboria Park. For the 1999/2000 budget, planned maintenance has only been allocated one fifth of the indicated requirements.

Fifteen capital works projects are currently under construction to a total contract value of more than R31 million. These contracts include, amongst others, the following:

- Upgrading of security surveillance installation at the Parliamentary complex
- Upgrading of air-conditioning and fire protection at 120 Plein Street
- Security measures at houses Outeniqua, Gydo 1, Vrijzee and Highstead.

The annual upkeep of prestige accommodation in the Western Cape, including gardening, planned and unplanned maintenance, interiors, furniture and cleaning services are totalling more than R41 million per year.

Smaller repairs and new work are also being done on a continuous basis at the houses and Parliamentary complex. This is done on a quotation basis. At present there are 33 such quotation services in process, totalling more than R100 000 of work. In accordance with Departmental policies of empowerment and promotion of small, medium and micro enterprises, and to enhance participation by the previously marginalised individuals and firms, almost all the quotation work is awarded to emerging contractors.

Emerging Contractor Development Programme

As the honourable Minister has indicated, the Emerging Contractor Development Programme of the Department has really got off the ground and it is reaping in contributions to a wider mainstream economic participation. Its institutionalisation mainly addresses supply-side constraints facing emerging contractors such as access to information, training, finance and credit. An important development is borne within the Black Construction Industry, which has effectively utilised the programme not only for its economic stimulation, but equally for its facilitation and integration of Black people in this sector, which has led to the consolidation and forming of a single Black Construction Council.

Art and craft

In tandem with the African Renaissance and in support of many rural women and rural communities, in general, as well as struggling local artists, the Department has embarked on a process of changing the nature of art pieces exhibited in ministerial residences and offices from the traditional Western cultural expression to an African ethnic expression.

The large number of photographs and slides collected by my predecessor, the former Deputy Minister of Public Works, Ms EEN Nkosi-Shandu, of art and craft from the rural areas of South Africa, need to be catalogued and sorted by ethnic art specialists. This will facilitate future acquisitions and promotion of ethnic art pieces, not only by the Prestige Accommodation section of Public Works, but also for export and tourism purposes.

We have approached the University of Cape Town, the South African Arts Museum and the Arts Department of the Cape Town Technicon for assistance in this regard. Although no formal reaction has been received, it would seem from verbal indications from these institutions that they would be positively inclined to assist the Department in this endeavour. Cost implications to the Department need to be resolved, but the matter is being taken up with these institutions so as to expedite the compilation of the catalogue.

The arts and crafts, obtained mostly from the deep rural and most poverty stricken areas, not only provide a means of income generation to the women, but it also ensures that traditional practices are conserved to build on our rich heritage. It is further intended that local markets created in rural areas under the Community Based Public Works Programme, could also benefit from selling the products.

Expertise cost

Finally, I do need to stress that particularly on prestige accommodation, aspects of renovation and maintenance often are more expensive than on other accommodation, because some of the most valuable, in terms of location as well as historic and artistic value, State properties are included in this portfolio.

Very often extremely specialised work is required, and it is of the utmost importance that we ensure that the necessary training and skills transfer takes place when work is done on contract. Not only may some skills become extinct, but most of our young entrepreneurs or emerging contractors have never had the opportunity to participate in restoration work of buildings that could be classified as heritage. It is important for us to apply

the Affirmative Procurement principles and requirements on all prestige accommodation contracts. This programme is critical to the economic empowerment of those sectors of the country's population who were previously excluded from the mainstream economic activities. As a mechanism, the Affirmative Procurement Programme, enables project managers to cope with employing smaller contractors on government construction projects, and the participation rate of Affirmable Business Enterprises on construction contracts for the Department of Public Works, has increased from less than 5% to 28% since its application in 1996. A very low premium was paid for training. This could also be happening in the prestige accommodation sector.

Madame Speaker, Honourable members, I trust that you will join me in support of this budget vote.

[top](#)