

MINISTER PATRICIA DE LILLE

30 JULY 2019

Deputy Minister for Public Works and Infrastructure, Noxolo Kiviet

Chief Justice, Mogoeng Mogoeng

DDG for Court Services, Adv. JB Skosana

Director General for Public Works and Infrastructure, Sam Vukela

Director General for Justice and Correctional Services, Vusi Madonsela

Various heads of our courts, regional heads in the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning, Dumelang, Goeie More, Molweni

- 1. We're here today to ring home a very important issue... how the state of our government buildings dictate the impression we leave on the very citizens we've been called to serve.**
- 2. Khawuleza! The patience of our people is running out!**
- 3. It's ironic that we're in this building today, talking about court issues. We've taken a clear decision not to host these events at hotels, but rather make use of government buildings.**
- 4. Far too often, citizens are forced to do their day-to-day business in dilapidated, outdated and rundown government buildings.**
- 5. When people use public spaces, that's their first impression of government.**

6. So, we need to ensure and make these public spaces a pleasant, comfortable experience with conducive conditions.
7. Our courts are but one aspect. So this is where we'll start.
8. After this, I'll be in talks with the Minister of Home Affairs, the Minister of Police and various other colleagues to see where the Department of Public Works can improve spaces.
9. Coming back to our courts...I've been receiving a series of complaints from across the country about the state of our court buildings.
10. In some cases, lifts and air-conditioners are not working.
11. In Pinetown, there are reports that rats are eating the lunch and snakes are eating the rats.
12. Coupled with this, there's a persistent stench of sewerage.
13. This has prompted court staff, including prosecutors and magistrates to threaten strike action.
14. In the Northern Cape, there's been little to no maintenance on mobile units.
15. These units, ladies and gentlemen, are meant to serve our citizens in the most remote areas of our country.
16. In Mpumalanga, court buildings are deteriorating to such an extent that they are a danger to people working there.
17. These buildings are the face of government.

18. And it's simply not good enough to say there are no funds to deal with the issues. We do have the money. We must learn to spend properly. Lscxk of capacity has become an excuse for inefficiency.
19. In some cases, client departments are setting up their own construction and maintenance programmes.
20. This could very well be because the Department of Public Works is not delivering on its mandate to maintain our courts and other buildings.
21. This has got to change and our department's budget needs to be reworked to maintain infrastructure.
22. We're going to move all the money that hasn't been spent to deal with repairs and refurbishment.
23. The Department has budgeted R2.5 billion for repairs and refurbishment during this current 2019/20 financial year.
24. For every R10 the department spends on maintenance and repairs – R1 goes to the maintenance of our courts and Department of Justice buildings.
25. The total budget for repairs and refurbishment for justice totals R260 million, of which R229 million has been allocated to repair and refurbish of 105 courts.
26. But what worries me is that the Department has only spent R24 million in the first quarter of this year.
27. Just around 10% when the figure should be at more than 25%. We must work harder and faster because the lives of our citizens are at stake.
28. We also need to remember. It is not just Public Works money we have to spend. The Justice Department has also allocated an additional R531 million for repairs and refurbishments from its own budget.
29. These spaces are a litmus test for citizens to be able to ascertain whether government is, in fact, working for them.
30. The onus is on us to give them the best experience possible.

- 31. We have also invited the Chief Justice here today, to drive home the importance of decent court buildings and the impact non-maintenance and repairs have on the administration of justice. I want all of us to remember what the Chief Justice is saying here today, so that when we fail in our duties, his words will echo in our ears. The impact is not just on the buildings. The impact is severe on the people who use the buildings.**
- 32. He is a man who pulls no punches and calls a spade a spade.**
- 33. My duty is to facilitate a discussion and implementation programme to fix and maintain our courts. The justice system must be able operate effectively in decent courts.**
- 34. Just last week, I launched an investigation into the failure of this department to pay its service providers within the stipulated 30-day period.**
- 35. We must do everything in my power to ensure the issue of shoddy court buildings is addressed as speedily as possible.**
- 36. I've been talking a lot about going back to the Batho Pele principles, aimed at putting the people first... the people who elected us into these positions of power.**
- 37. The Batho Pele principles dictate, among others, that Citizens should be told what level and quality of public service they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect, all citizens should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled and that citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration.**
- 38. That courtesy and consideration, ladies and gentlemen, undoubtedly includes being given access to government buildings that are not falling apart.**

39. Every day, several hundred South Africans use our courts...often having to face secondary trauma in the wake of violent crime.

40. Our duty is to give them some peace of mind and a safe space in which to deal with their issues at hand.

41. With this, I ask that we join hands and give the public what they deserve.

42. Let us create an enabling environment for our judges, prosecutors and police officers to work so our people can see justice is being done.

43. I will be engaging with various departmental representatives after this meeting to map the way forward.

44. Consequence and Contract Management Systems will be put in place so, believe me, there WILL be repercussions if there's failure that we could've avoided.

45. Regional officials in my Department will have to do monthly inspections of the courts and report back to myself and the DM. We will forward that report to the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services. We will design SOP with clear guidelines. We are now introducing term tenders.

46. We're instilling the President's message of Thuma Mina!

47. But let's take it one step further. We need to hit the ground sprinting.

48. Khawuleza!

I thank you.

