

MARCH 2025

from the Desk of the

Minister

Dean Macpherson



DEAR TEAM PUBLIC WORKS,

Today, I am writing to you, amazed at the pace at which the year has progressed. We already find ourselves at the end of the first quarter of 2025 and, more importantly, nine months since the new administration took office. As mentioned at the meeting of the Minister and Members of the Executive Council (MECs) for Public Works & Infrastructure in Limpopo this week, it is now imperative that we shift from discussion and evaluation to implementation.

It is vital that communities across the country begin to feel the tangible impact of the work we are doing.

STRENGTHENING THE EPWP

The month of March brought many opportunities, chief among them the emphasis placed on the role the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) must play in achieving South Africa's developmental goals. This was reinforced through the community meetings we held and the Community of Practice gathering in Johannesburg.

At the start of March, we handed over certificates of participation to EPWP participants in Mpumalanga who helped construct four Welisizwe Bridges. I reiterated the critical role that the EPWP must play not only in poverty alleviation but also in empowerment. During the certificate handover ceremony for the 160 participants in KwaMhlanga, I emphasised how this embodies my vision for the EPWP: to empower participants with the skills and experience needed to find employment in the private sector.



Later in the month, during the next leg of our listening tour in Upington in the Northern Cape—following similar engagements in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal—it became evident that the EPWP provides a vital source of income to many. At the same time, the programme delivers essential services, such as cleaning, maintenance, and even library support, to numerous communities.

It is therefore essential that the EPWP is strengthened and expanded so that it can continue to offer these services and opportunities. However, the EPWP Listening Tour has also made it abundantly clear that there are serious concerns we must confront directly. In various areas, troubling allegations have emerged regarding EPWP opportunities being sold or distributed based on party loyalty.

This is why, during community meetings, I stressed that no one should be denied a job opportunity due to their political affiliation, race, or skin colour.



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Furthermore, I have made a firm commitment that, in instances involving criminal conduct—including serious allegations of sexual abuse—I will personally open cases at police stations.

It is my firm belief that the EPWP should be reformed into a pathway to permanent employment. In too many communities, people have become dependent on the EPWP for many years, despite it having originally been designed as a short-term intervention. I would therefore like to see the EPWP offering participants the necessary training to enable them to secure sustainable employment. In this regard, the EPWP could play a critical role in addressing the artisan skills shortage in the construction sector.

Additionally, I intend to partner with the private sector to provide EPWP participants with opportunities in companies that can improve their prospects of finding long-term employment. This can be achieved through internships and apprenticeship opportunities throughout the country.



LANDMARK RESTITUTION PROJECT

March also provided me with the opportunity to visit the Protea Village restitution project in Bishopscourt, Cape Town, where—after decades—the community of Protea Village is finally set to return to the area they once called home. I am proud of the role the Department of Public Works & Infrastructure played in providing the property to the land claimants and in working with the City of Cape Town to ensure the area received the required services and approvals.

During my keynote address at the sod-turning ceremony, I noted that this project demonstrates what is possible when commercial partnerships are leveraged to address the injustices of the past. At Protea Village, the sale of properties on a portion of the land made it possible to finance the construction of homes for the original families. I firmly believe that this model of cross-subsidisation can be replicated nationally.

FOCUS ON SMALL HARBOURS



Last week, I also visited the Saldanha Bay Local Municipality on the West Coast, where I witnessed first-hand how small harbours under the department's custodianship have deteriorated. Together with Mayor André Truter, we committed to addressing these harbours head-on and transforming them into engines of economic growth for their communities.

It is my belief that small harbours across the country—such as the one in Saldanha Bay—can be developed into economic hubs, much like the V&A Waterfront, driving tourism and supporting the oceans economy. To this end, we have initiated urgent discussions around critical infrastructure upgrades in Saldanha Bay to safeguard 4,000 jobs at a local fishing company.

CHANGES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT

We have also taken steps to strengthen oversight within the Department of Public Works & Infrastructure. Our engagements with the Portfolio Committee on Public Works & Infrastructure have remained consistent. During our discussions this month, I reiterated our commitment to professionalising the department.

To support this, I encourage all senior-level personnel to complete the ongoing skills audit to ensure we have the expertise required to fulfil our mandate. We have also partnered with the Auditor-General of South Africa to improve auditing processes and guarantee that not a cent of public money is wasted.

In addition, we have appointed new board members to the Independent Development Trust (IDT) to restore quorum and address serious allegations concerning the entity. I look forward to the findings of an independent PwC investigation into the R800 million oxygen plant tender, which will assist us in holding those responsible accountable.

We are also in the process of establishing a Special Projects Unit within the Department. This unit will focus on stalled projects—such as the Sarah Baartman Remembrance Centre in the Eastern Cape—to ensure they are completed as a matter of priority. I have high hopes for the Special Projects Unit, which I believe will be key to ensuring that projects are delivered on time and within budget.

THE MONTHS AHEAD

March also marked the beginning of the Ramadan fasting period. I would like to take this opportunity to wish our Muslim colleagues a blessed Ramadan. Over the past few weeks, I have been privileged to attend a number of Iftar events across the country and continue to be inspired by the generosity of the Muslim community during this sacred season. May we learn from them as we work together to build a better South Africa.

This month also saw the launch of our very first Ministerial Infrastructure Imbizo in Phoenix, KwaZulu-Natal. There, we listened to communities express their concerns about local infrastructure and ensured that senior officials were present to address them. It is this kind of direct service delivery and accountability that we aim to replicate nationwide in the months ahead.

As I mentioned, my focus in the coming months is to demonstrate tangible results from the work we are doing. I look forward to working alongside you to accelerate service delivery and ensure that our programmes truly benefit the communities we are meant to serve. I also look forward to making concrete announcements about our progress in the near future.

By working together, I have no doubt that we can deliver real results for our communities and build a better South Africa.

BEST REGARDS,
DEAN MACPHERSON
MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE