

Department of Public Works entities are in a state of shambles

By **Madeleine Hicklin MP** - DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure

Minister de Lille, the PFMA dictates that you are responsible to provide leadership to the DPWI. This department's mandate is to promote growth, create jobs and transform the construction and property industries across South Africa. Yet in May 2021, we are presented with a rudderless DPWI, beset by serious leadership deficits. This is reinforced by Councils and entities tasked with leading transformation and job creation who, themselves, are grappling with governance challenges, significant senior leadership vacancies, and even bigger trust deficits than the Department itself.

Senior leadership deficit challenges are currently hampering the work of the CBE, CIDB, PMTE, Agrément SA and the IDT, to name a few - with the Registrar and other senior Councillors of the South African Council of Architectural Professions are being investigated for improper appointments of senior members, sexual harassment, bullying, intimidation and the marginalisation of black female Councillors. Minister de Lille, it is your responsibility to provide leadership to this department. You did not.

You tell us you are not responsible for how the Boards and Councils perform and that your oversight responsibility in terms of SACAP, for example, is limited by the Architectural Profession Act (Act 47 of 2000) but you fail to make use of the DPW Women Empowerment Forum established to represent all women organisations within the construction and property sectors, and to chart a way forward for the continued empowerment of women under your leadership. The truth is not told.

Minister, the DPWI has an incomplete, non-functional Immovable Asset Register that has already cost the Department in excess of R68,3 million over the last seven years. The contract to digitise the IAR using ARCHIBUS software ended in 2018. Despite it being a 10-module software system, eight modules have been completed but only three are active - and there is a complete inability of the SAGE and ARCHIBUS systems to communicate. This is a Department in crisis.

The slow progress in establishing a credible, legally and financially-compliant IAR delays the PMTE's ability to unlock the value of the State's immovable assets. It renders the Property Management Trading Entity into a Property Management Entity – because it cannot trade, it cannot collect outstanding revenue, it cannot manage user department's baseline expenditure, resulting in significant refurbishment backlogs and a deterioration in the condition of the portfolio it is supposed to manage. Without a solid turnaround strategy, the PMTE WILL FAIL. The truth is not told.

A digitised IAR should document where and what land and property is owned by the DPWI across South Africa, and upon which budgets and social constructions projects are determined. This IAR could also determine which land and buildings could be MADE AVAILABLE to needy

South Africans for human settlement, agriculture and recreational purposes as currently mandated by Section 25 of the Constitution. Minister de Lille, South Africans are crying out for land. Land upon which to live, farm, flourish and contribute to economic growth and job creation. But because the IAR is not digitised and is non-functional, this lazy ANC government has opted rather to force the Expropriation Bill on the South African public. The truth is not told.

Let me categorically state that the Democratic Alliance is 100% committed to land reform and land restitution. We firmly believe that the country's existing land reform policies are not the reason that the land reform process has failed. The current land reform initiatives have failed because of those who perpetrate and perpetuate corruption and maladministration. The Expropriation Bill 23 of 2020 will not solve South Africa's land reform question. The truth is not told.

One of the DPWI's biggest potential assets - Agrément SA – is the country's best kept secret. It is the perfect vehicle through which the DPWI could grow the acceptance of innovative Green Economy interventions. Innovative building methods and products could help to create mass public employment interventions through the social construction projects and the EPWP. But there is no action plan, no marketing strategy to make this innovation hub the money-spinner it could be. Instead, it receives an annual government grant of R31,1-million in an annual transfer from Programme 4 of the DPWI. It is unsustainable. It is doomed for failure. The truth is not told.

Minister de Lille, we often hear you refuting your own Administration's plans to perform. You abdicate responsibility in terms of the PFMA. You have failed to ensure that corporate governance is key to all the boards of the BEPCs. You have failed to ensure the transformation of the Built Environment. The DPWI cannot fulfil its mandate of aggressive infrastructure investment as advocated by the ERRP. This is not the norm. This is a disaster. A disaster created by a department corrupted by deficient leadership, and an ANC leadership who will certainly stare defeat in the face in the up-coming local government elections.