

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 154.

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154. Mr E Nzimande (Gauteng: MKP) to ask the Minister to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

Non-complaint school ventilated improved pit latrines

(1) Whether she will provide the details regarding the ventilated improved pit latrines that are (a) meeting the necessary specifications, given the unsafe ones in Eastern Cape schools (details furnished) and (b) being paid up on completion; if not, why not; if so, (i) what actions will be taken against the supply chain and/or project officials who authorised such project as being compliant and (ii) what are the reasons behind the payments of unsafe latrines;

(2) whether her department will recover any monies from the contractors; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

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Response

In terms of the South African Schools Act, read with the Government Immovable Asset Management Act, provinces are responsible for the provisioning, management and maintenance of public school infrastructure.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is responsible for setting norms and standards for public school infrastructure. The DBE also provides support and oversight to PEDs and, in some instances, implements identified projects through programmes such as the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI) and Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) initiative.

As MECs for Education and their respective Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) are responsible for the provisioning of public school infrastructure in their respective provinces but do not report directly to the Minister and Deputy Minister of Basic Education or the DBE, heightened collaboration and oversight between the national and provincial education departments is required to ensure that national priorities are effectively implemented at the provincial level. PEDs should not be returning funds to the National Treasury while public school infrastructure backlogs persist.

The Regulations Relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure require PEDs to include their annual progress reporting information on how infrastructure backlogs will be addressed. PEDs are finalising infrastructure plans that identify outstanding backlogs and outline strategies to address them.

Plans for infrastructure improvement are prioritised based on available funding and urgency. The timelines for implementation are determined by PEDs based on their respective infrastructure delivery plans.

The Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement now outlines the integration of multiple conditional grants, including the Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG) and the School Infrastructure Backlogs Grant (SIBG). While this reform aims to streamline resource allocation, it reduces the ability of the DBE to directly influence infrastructure delivery at a provincial level. Consequently, provinces will play an even greater role in the implementation of public school infrastructure projects.

Under the EIG, PEDs have submitted infrastructure plans that include the upgrading of existing facilities. These plans consider population growth, urbanisation and the distance learners travel to school.

The Provincial Infrastructure Programme implemented by Provincial Departments of Education is funded from two sources of funding, namely Equitable Share and EIG and is focused on:

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- New and Replacement schools
- Maintenance
- Repairs, Renovations and Rehabilitation
- Upgrading and Additions

Given the above, the questions relating to ventilated improved pit latrines in the Eastern Cape fall under the executive authority of the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education in the Eastern Cape. The Honourable Member is therefore kindly requested to refer the questions to the MEC for Education in the Eastern Cape as per section 92(3)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 and Rule 134 (5)(b) of the National Assembly Rules.