



Democratic Alliance
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Budget Vote Speech: Public Works and Infrastructure

Chairperson,

This Department is personal to me. I joined it in 2010 through a bursary, and spent over a decade inside, from graduate to director, witnessing both its bureaucratic frustration and its immense untapped potential.

Last year, I stood here to support a budget inherited from the 6th administration. This year, we debate a budget shaped by new leadership, Minister Dean Macpherson's first true blueprint.

If the past year has been about clearing rubble and redrawing plans, then this budget is about pouring the foundation, strong, level, and fit to carry the future of a Department that can drive growth, create jobs, and restore public confidence.

Chairperson,

Under previous administrations, the Department's plans were cluttered, trying to chase all seven national priorities, and delivering on few.

This year's budget, under Minister Macpherson, narrows the focus to three priorities:

- Inclusive growth and job creation
- Lowering the cost of living
- Building a capable, ethical state

This is a structural change. It signals a department aligning itself to real-world outcomes.

The change is most visible in the Property Management Trading Entity, and importantly so because this entity which is responsible for the 80,000+ government building has been a mess.

For over 20 years, the PMTE existed more on paper than in practice. But under Minister Macpherson, we're seeing momentum:



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- R54.1 billion under management, with R3.9 billion (7.2%) allocated to maintenance, a welcome increase, though that ratio must keep rising minister
- 12,600 hectares released this year alone for infrastructure and development
- Over 55 state-owned properties released to the market, including land in Nkandla this Monday, unlocking billions in private investment, stimulating new economic activity
- Transfers of properties to capable municipalities, enabling local delivery and easing national costs

We support this trajectory. But we also urge the Minister to finalise the PMTE's registration with Treasury, fully unlock its commercial mandate, and sweat all unnecessary or underutilised state's assets.

On the Expanded Public Works Programme, change is also taking shape.

- Over 1 million work opportunities are targeted this year
- A full reform of the recruitment policy is underway

Minister Macpherson, we urge you: don't wait until June 2026 to finalise this reform. Speed is critical. If EPWP is to support fair economic inclusion, it must be transparent, fair, skill-generating, and produce market ready artisans.

Infrastructure delivery, too, is gaining traction:

- R11 billion committed to 24 major projects
- Infrastructure South Africa's R180 million Project Preparation Fund fully subscribed, proof of demand for well-planned, catalytic projects
- A new Special Projects Unit, borrowed from best practice in the Western Cape Provincial Government, now steers complex projects
- The Durban Declaration brings DPWI, SAPS, and Treasury together in the fight against construction mafia extortion

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We also welcome the launch of a private investigation into the R1 billion Telkom Towers disaster, but urge the Minister to conclude it swiftly, ensure accountability, and prevent any recurrence in this 7th administration.

Minister Macpherson has also moved to improve strategic oversight:

- A voluntary Construction and Asset Management Advisory Board has been appointed, bringing private sector insight into policy decisions
- The Department's digital transformation is underway, aiming to reach Digital Maturity Level 3 by 2030
- A new IT strategy and tighter cyber-security measures will reduce fraud, hacking and system risk

Just as importantly, we welcome the introduction of lifestyle audits, skills audits, and a long-overdue ghost employee audit. Ethical leadership is the bedrock of delivery, and Minister, these are the right signals.

On entity reform, the intervention in the Independent Development Trust (IDT) is commendable.

The restoration of a quorate board and Cabinet's approval of a new board from 4 July 2025 signals a reset. But this must now be the IDT's test: either it becomes a lean, delivery-driven entity, or it risks becoming part of the fat that must be cut.

CIDB, CBE, and Agrément SA are also showing signs of improvement:

- Better support for contractors, with enforcement and blacklisting where needed
- More targeted support for women and youth in the built environment

These institutions, their boards and executives, must keep evolving and be kept on their toes to meet the demands of a South Africa under construction.

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One of the most exciting developments is the Adopt-a-Municipality pilot, an initiative I hope to see in action in my own constituency in KZN.

It's a smart model. It links national expertise to local potential. It:

- Unlocks budgets
- supports basic services
- And creates jobs where they're needed most

Chairperson,

This Department is not yet perfect, but it is starting to work.

With a budget of R7.9 billion, and R937 million reprioritised for real impact, we are seeing what can be achieved when there is political will, clear focus, and ethical leadership.

Minister Macpherson, the DA stands firmly behind you. Stay the course. Deepen the reforms. Break down what must fall and build what must stand.

Because when Public Works works, South Africa works.

The DA supports this Budget Vote.

I thank you.