

ACTis provides risk analysis and early intervention recommendations against state capture and corruption in South African government institutions

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

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KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works and Infrastructure

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About the Institution

The KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) is a provincial department responsible for building, maintaining and managing public infrastructure on behalf of the provincial government, as well as managing the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in KZN. The KZN DPWI coordinates with the national DPWI. The KZN DPWI reports to the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Public Works and Infrastructure. Its administrative head, the Head of Department (HoD), is the accounting officer. In 2024/25, the KZN DPWI’s expenditure was R2.1bn.¹

Flag Status

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
								
Improper appointments	Co-opting key functions	Climate of fear or favour	Corrupt awards	Financial malpractice	Obstructing accountability	Manipulating perceptions	Private gain	Shadow network

ISS Analysis

- ACTis has raised two flags for the KZN DPWI and placed one under monitoring.
 - The Department is undergoing a period of reform, driven by a new MEC. The removal of senior executives allegedly involved in corruption shows a commitment to accountability. Improved financial management and controls will help to build resilience against corruption.
 - There are concerns going forward. The Department is demonstrating resilience
- in pushing back against organised criminal groups that have corruptly benefited from past contract awards. Attempts at intimidation against MEC Lukas Martinus (Martin) Meyer demonstrate that there is a shadow network of individuals or groups who do not want to lose financially if the reforms succeed. These attempts have been unsuccessful thus far.

 - The political will to expose likely state capture relies on MEC Meyer’s sustained



focus on addressing the problems, especially in the wake of many senior executive vacancies. This, in turn, relies on the current political configuration keeping him in office in the provincial government.

- Corruption at the KZN DPWI has incurred significant opportunity costs, including under-delivery in the refurbishment of schools, clinics and hospitals.²

Findings

Flag #1

Improper Appointments

Findings indicating resilience have been observed under the flag.

- MEC Martin Meyer, who has been in office since June 2024, has taken decisive steps against corruption in the Department by conducting investigations and removing implicated officials. In September 2024, MEC Meyer announced that all staff recruitment interviews and tender meetings would be audio- and video-recorded going forward.³
- At least five former senior executives in the KZN DPWI were implicated in corruption in 2025, including the previous HoD, Director in the Office of the Head of Department, Director of Supply Chain Management (SCM), Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and the Chief Director of Infrastructure Programme Coordination. These individuals have been fired, suspended, or are under investigation.⁴
- Dr Vish Govender was appointed HoD in March 2026. He had been acting HoD since August 2024.
- A contender for the post, Dr Thulani Madani, a former HoD in the Gauteng Roads and Transport Department, is challenging Govender's appointment in court. Madani reportedly believes he was the candidate recommended to Premier Thami Ntuli from the selection committee's short-list.
- Madani reportedly also claims that Govender is facing a criminal complaint related to his previous tenure as acting Municipal Manager of Newcastle Municipality. However, the Newcastle News reported in January 2023 that Govender was found not guilty on all charges of corruption and maladministration.
- MEC Meyer has refuted Madani's allegations, stating in a letter to the press that Govender's appointment was the outcome of a free, open and fair selection process conducted by officials not connected with Govender, and did not involve Meyer. Meyer further stated that since becoming acting HoD, Govender had instituted the findings of all previous investigations into the Department, which had been ignored by his predecessors, including disciplinary hearings against accused and suspected officials. Meyer also claimed that under Govender, the department had obtained its first clean



Flag raised



Flag lowered



Under monitoring

audit in many years, had reversed their tendency of late payments to contractors, and formed a rapid response unit that had resolved legacy stalled projects.⁵

Flag #3

Climate of Fear or Favour



The flag is being monitored for a pattern in which organised criminal groups intimidate Department officials.

- Attempts have been made to intimidate MEC Meyer. A bullet was found next to Meyer's official vehicle in July 2024, according to Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Dean Macpherson. This was shortly after Meyer publicly announced plans to establish a task team to combat organised criminal groups in the province, known as 'construction mafias'.⁶ A second bullet was found on Meyer's office doorstep in February 2025 after the KZN government hosted a construction conference at which Meyer emphasised that the event would not be an 'envelope exchange platform for underhanded deals'.⁷
- The national and provincial DPWIs have pushed back against intimidation by 'construction mafias' in the province. In July 2026, Minister Macpherson reported that the number of disruptions to construction sites by 'construction mafia' in KZN had fallen from 60 per month to fewer than 10. These disruptions involve intimidating workers and preventing work from taking place, resulting in delayed infrastructure projects and inflated costs. Minister Macpherson stated that, since launching a national strategy to combat these groups in November 2025, 770 cases had been reported nationally, with 241 arrests and 176 convictions. These results were attributed to stronger law enforcement, contractor blacklisting, enhanced monitoring and structured community engagement.⁸

Flag #4

Corrupt Awards



The flag is raised due to indications of repeated favouring of a particular supplier and infiltration of procurement by organised crime syndicates.

- Reports continue to emerge that the KZN DPWI irregularly awarded contracts in previous years. Some of these contracts were facilitated by senior executives (see Flag #1: Improper Appointments). The corruption includes overlooking irregularities in procurement processes, favouring certain companies for contract allocations and making payments despite under-delivery on contracts.⁹
- According to an internal investigation report, while he was Director of SCM between 2022 and 2025, Musa Zondi reportedly abused his power by awarding 29 contracts



Flag raised



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worth more than R1.1bn to a single company, Ukuza Consulting. The Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI) is investigating the matter.¹⁰

- Allegations of corruption against the former Director of SCM, CFO and Chief Director of Infrastructure Procurement Coordination were investigated by disciplinary panels, and the officials were fired in early 2025 on the panels' recommendations.¹¹ The previous HoD resigned in August 2025 while facing a disciplinary process, and the DPCI is investigating the allegations against him.¹² The companies involved in the corruption have been blacklisted, and the KZN DPWI has publicly stated that corrupt and non-performing contractors will be held accountable going forward.¹³ Between May and December 2025, a Contractors Imbizo roadshow was undertaken to engage with and strengthen relations with compliant contractors.
- In June 2026, the Durban High Court set aside a R7bn contract award for the construction of a government precinct to house provincial government departments, finding that it had been irregularly awarded. The KZN DPWI had identified irregularities in the contract award process and sought legal action to halt the award. The Department stated the procurement process will be restarted and the project will continue.¹⁴

Flag #5

Financial Malpractice

Findings indicating resilience have been observed under the flag.

- The Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) has made findings of poor asset management, irregular expenditure, weak supply chain management and inadequate financial controls since at least 2014/15. However, the 2023/24 and 2024/25 audits show a significant reduction in findings, with the AGSA commending significant improvements and the implementation of internal controls. The only finding in 2024/25 related to the non-payment of suppliers within 30 days. However, in September 2025, the department announced that the R1bn debt owed to contractors had been fully cleared.¹⁵

Flag #9

Shadow Network

The flag is raised due to indications that criminal syndicates have been exerting informal control over Department officials.

- There is concern that 'construction mafias' hold deeply vested interests in the Department. In November 2024, MEC Meyer said that the department would not work with anyone 'engaging us in criminality'. In November 2025, he told the media that he had established a task force to combat 'construction mafias' in the province and said he would not 'negotiate with criminals'. Progress in reducing the influence of 'construction



Flag raised



Flag lowered



Under monitoring

mafias' at construction sites in the province has been reported (see Flag #3: Climate of Fear or Favour).¹⁶

- Many individuals in the previous KZN DPWI senior executive appear to have colluded in the corruption, but at least five have been removed (see Flag #1: Improper Appointments and Flag #4: Corrupt Awards).



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Recommended Actions

	DUTY BEARER	ACTION(S)	ASSOCIATED FLAGS
1.	Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation	Investigate organised criminal groups operating in the province's construction sector.	Flag #3: Climate of Fear or Favour Flag #4: Corrupt Awards
2.	KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature Portfolio Committee on Public Works	Seek regular reports from the KZN DPWI regarding reforms and specific actions to combat corruption.	Flag #4: Corrupt Awards
3.	Civil society organisations	Assist in exposing the activities of the 'construction mafias' and officials who collude with them through investigations with published reports.	Flag #3: Climate of Fear or Favour Flag #4: Corrupt Awards



Flag raised



Flag lowered



Under monitoring

The 9 Flags

Flag #1

Improper Appointments

Improper appointments, dismissals or failure to remove individuals in senior positions may be used to drive a corrupt agenda.

Flag #4

Corrupt Awards

Contracts, licences, partnerships, loans and/or investments may be awarded irregularly and repeatedly benefit the same actors.

Flag #7

Manipulating Perceptions

A public narrative that frames misconduct as innocence may be promoted.

Flag #2

Co-opting Key Functions

Informal control may be established over critical functions within the institution to abuse them.

Flag #5

Financial Malpractice

The institution's financial management practices may be abused to advance a corrupt agenda.

Flag #8

Private Gain

Illicit gains may be distributed to benefit the same actors.

Flag #3

Climate of Fear or Favour

The working culture favours loyalty over duty; alignment with a corrupt agenda is rewarded, and resistance is punished.

Flag #6

Obstructing Accountability

The institution's internal operations might be deliberately obscured to hide potential misconduct.

Flag #9

Shadow Network

The same public and private actors may collude to gain control over an institution's assets and functions, benefiting repeatedly.

About ACTis

What is ACTis?

The Anti-Corruption Tracker Information System is an initiative of the Anti-Corruption and Accountability Project at the Institute for Security Studies. It provides analysis on corruption and state capture in South Africa, to inform early intervention and enforcement. It utilises a system of indicators and an AI-driven data-collection and analysis tool, validated by human experts. It identifies risks within individual government institutions and produces actionable recommendations to address them, with a view to disrupting patterns of state capture and corruption.

Findings are shared directly with government and other duty-bearers, civil society organisations, the media and the public, empowering authorities to intervene, strengthening accountability, and enabling citizens activism.

Links to ACTis Information:

Further project information may be found at the following links:

[Terms and Definitions](#)

[Project Methodology and Analytical Framework](#)

[About the Anti-Corruption and Accountability project](#)

[About the Institute for Security Studies](#)

Contact us:
actis@issafrica.org

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References

- ¹ The KZN DPWI acts as the custodian of provincial fixed assets, providing infrastructure development, construction and property management services to other KZN provincial departments (known as client departments) – these include the Departments of Health, Education, Transport and Human Settlements, as well as various state-owned entities and local municipalities. In 2024/25, the KZN DPWI spent R1.7bn on infrastructure projects – this money came from the Department's budget allocations as well as project-related payments from client departments.
 - ² In 2023/24, the department refurbished 11 schools against a target of 39, 17 clinics against a target of 23, and seven hospitals against a target of 14. The Annual Report cited the inability to pay contractors as the reason for failing to achieve the targets. See: KwaZulu-Natal Province Public Works & Infrastructure, Annual Report 2023/24, https://www.kznworks.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Annual_Report_2023_2024.pdf, pp. 42–44. In 2024/25, the target of delivering two new construction projects (a 'cultural precinct' and a primary school) was not achieved. However, 24 upgrading projects were completed, against a target of 27. See: KwaZulu-Natal Province Public Works & Infrastructure, Annual Report 2024/25, https://www.kznworks.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/DPWI-Annual-Report-2024_2025-printing.pdf, pp. 38–39.
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 - ⁶ The term 'construction mafias' refers to organised criminal groups that infiltrate construction projects using extortion, intimidation, violence and site disruption to extract money, jobs or a percentage of the project value from contractors. See: M Webb, Overview of the construction mafia crisis in South Africa, January 2024, <https://www.inclusivesociety.org.za/post/overview-of-the-construction-mafia-crisis-in-south-africa>.
 - ⁷ TimesLIVE, KZN public works MEC Martin Meyer 'not afraid' after second bullet left at office, 6 February 2025, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2025-02-06-kzn-public-works-mec-martin-meyer-not-afraid-after-second-bullet-left-at-office/>; KZN DPWI, KZN SAPS investigates after bullet found on doorstep of KZN Public Works and Infrastructure MEC Martin Meyer's Durban office, 5 February 2025, https://www.kznworks.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Bullet_statement_PDF_250205_120412.pdf; TimesLIVE, KZN is a dangerous place, 30 July 2024, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2024-07-30-kzn-is-a-dangerous-place-dean-macpherson-on-mec-receiving-threats-and-construction-mafias/>; SABC News, KZN Public Works MEC declares war against construction mafia, 24 June 2024, <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/kzn-public-works-mec-declares-war-against-construction-mafia/>.
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 - ¹² News24, Suspended KZN HOD resigns amid criminal investigation, 22 August 2025, <https://www.news24.com/southafrica/news/suspended-kzn-hod-resigns-amid-criminal-investigation-20250822-0773>.
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