



agriculture, land reform & rural development

Department:
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

MINISTER DIDIZA ANNOUNCES IMPROVED OPERATIONS OF DEEDS OFFICES

12 AUGUST 2020

The Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza (MP), has met with the Chief Registrar of Deeds and all provincial registrars, to put a concrete plan to address challenges of backlogs in all deeds offices.

The minister's meeting follows numerous complaints from various stakeholders regarding backlogs and constant closure of deeds offices. Minister Didiza appreciates the important role deeds offices play in the property sector and in the recovery of the economy post COVID-19.

"While I appreciate all that, I want to guarantee all stakeholders that the safety of our employees will not be compromised and we will all work very hard to address backlog as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown, which affected the operations of these offices," said Minister Didiza.

The following measures will be put in place as matter of urgency, to ensure that deeds offices address the entire backlog while continuing to attend to new lodgements:

Examination of Deeds

All examiners will be allowed to do examination of documents at home, to fast track the examination of documents. Registrars have the authority to manage this and should do so, taking all appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the documents as well as steps to avoid fraudulent transactions. There is 30% attendance of staff in the Western Cape deeds office.

The minister has instructed the department to ensure that the adjusted level three (3), which no longer requires that there should be 30% of staff be at the office, is implemented with immediate effect. Labour and staff will be part of the decision-making process, to ensure inclusivity and ownership of this process.

Re-arrangement of offices

All deeds offices will rearrange their offices, to ensure social distancing and safety of staff, even those with co-morbidities.

Tools of trade

All officials will be provided with all relevant tools of trade to allow them to work from home. However, it is understood that, in some instances, this may not be possible, due to various factors such as where offices are in rural areas and where it is not safe to do so. Registrars must ensure that, despite these challenges, service delivery continues unhindered. Upgrading of deeds offices' IT system to respond to the 4th Industrial Revolution to be prioritised despite budget cuts due to COVID-19.

Closure of offices

The department will ensure that the closure of deeds offices is minimised and it is done under extreme circumstances. Various options will be undertaken, which are not limited to ensuring that decontamination is only done in affected areas and not in the whole building and also to ensure that all officials continue to work while at home.

"We will ensure that all health and safety measures, as stipulated by the departments of Health and Employment and Labour, are adhered to," said Minister Didiza.

The minister will like to urge all stakeholders to work together to ensure smooth running of all deeds offices in the country.

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