

Confusion over state land sold illegally

Public Works Department remains mum following illegal sale of land

SABELO NSELE

WHY is the national Department of Public Works not acting on the illegal sale of their land in Mpophomeni?

That's the question being asked after around 50 plots on their land have been "sold off" illegally by a family.

Now, those who "bought" the plots may lose the land despite the fact that some have already started building their homes.

The Witness first became aware of the sale of the land in the area in May.

The prices of the plots, which offer an amazing view of Midmar Dam, range between R10 000 and R25 000.

The sale of the land in May attracted a huge number of buyers who often frequented the area during weekends.

Buyers said the man who sold the plots to them said the land belonged to his grandfather. He gave them receipts for the money they paid.

While about 50 plots have been levelled and clearly marked with danger tape and wood, only four people have started building houses. Several attempts to get comment from the national department's spokesperson, Thami Mchunu, have been unsuccessful.

The Witness first contacted the department in May, and despite several follow-ups after that, the department has not responded to queries sent.

KZN Department of Public Works' Mbululo Baloyi confirmed that the land belongs to the national department.

uMngeni municipal spokesperson Thando Mgaga said they had alerted the department that structures had been built in the area.

DA ward 2 councillor Janis Holmes said the department's failure to act on the sale of land will have implications for uMngeni municipality.

"It is disappointing that Public Works is taking so long to act on it. When those houses are built, they will need infra-



Builders have started building houses at Mpophomeni, on vacant land that belongs to the national Department of Public Works.
PHOTO: NHLANHLA NKOSI

structure like water, storm water, waste water, roads and all the rest of it." She said with the municipality (uMngeni) and the district (uMgungundlovu) struggling to provide those services to existing areas, "it is going to be a problem",

When *The Witness* visited the area again yesterday, workers were building a four-bedroom house that is almost complete. "I know nothing about the sale of land. I am just here for work," said a worker who asked not to be named. The worker said he had also been of-

fered a job to build a double-storey house a stone's throw away on the same land. The buyer of a plot of land, who asked not to be named, said he was uncertain now whether to start building or not. "First we were told that the land belongs to Ingonyama Trust. Now it turns

out that the land belongs to Public Works. I do not want to build a house that will be bulldozed soon."

Numerous attempts to contact the family who allegedly sold the plots were unsuccessful.

· sabelonsele@witness.co.za