



**MINISTRY
HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Minister Buti Manamela sets bold targets for University of Ekurhuleni

MEDIA STATEMENT

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Responding to questions in the National Assembly, South Africa's higher education minister, Buti Manamela said that construction on the long-delayed Ekurhuleni university will realistically begin in 2029 but has set an earlier target: registering the institution's first student before a permanent campus is built. The minister indicated that the goal is not construction commencement, but it is about registration of the first student.

On the issue of construction Minister added that the minimum time required for remaining feasibility work, a Budget Facility for Infrastructure application to National Treasury, as well as design and procurement processes amounts to approximately three years from now. Minister Manamela told Parliament, that following a meeting with the Executive Mayor of the City of Ekurhuleni, the two parties had agreed to revive the feasibility process with renewed commitment. The city has offered land and infrastructure options, and the department is exploring whether temporary facilities or blended academic delivery could allow students to enroll ahead of the 2029 construction date.

The university was first announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa in his 2020 State of the Nation Address and was reaffirmed in the national budget. Six years on, Minister has confirmed a location study, which is a component of the feasibility process that will determine the site, has not commenced due to a budget shortfall of R19.5 million. Steps are underway to resolve the shortfall through reprioritisation of existing infrastructure grants.

A significant change in the project's financial outlook came in the February 2026 Budget, in which National Treasury indicated willingness to allocate infrastructure funding for both the Ekurhuleni and Hammanskraal universities through the Budget Facility for Infrastructure. In previous administrations, no additional funding had been made available, forcing consideration of a public-private partnership model that National Treasury itself had never approved for university infrastructure.

On strengthened controls on student accommodation

The minister confirmed the Special Investigating Unit is conducting an active investigation into NSFAS student accommodation under a Presidential Proclamation. NSFAS has commenced paying accommodation providers directly, removing Solution Partners from the disbursement chain. A national audit of all accredited accommodation is underway.

On differentiated intensive monitoring for high-risk universities

Responding to questions about disruptions at Walter Sisulu University and the University of Fort Hare, the minister acknowledged structural causes including NSFAS payment delays, accommodation shortfalls, and multi-year financial deficits, and said the department was implementing differentiated intensive monitoring for high-risk institutions. "Our assessment is that early detection framework successfully identified risk conditions at both Fort Hare and WSU in advance of disruptions, but that structural

drivers need to be resolved within the registration period.” The gap between identification of risks and intervention requires sustained remediation rather than short-term crisis management.

On supporting large numbers of learners through SETAs

Asked how many people SETAs trained over the past decade and how many found jobs, the minister acknowledged that consolidated cross-SETA data does not exist as a single figure. The department committed to publishing a baseline report by end of the 2025/26 financial year and establishing a Skills Observatory coordinated independently by the HRDC. The Minister further reported that the figures are available and published annually through the SETA Annual Reports and reflect the programme performance across the skills development system.

On the PSET war room for academic year commencement

A War Room, established and chaired by the Minister, was convened weekly during the registration period to provide focused oversight of the process across the PSET sector. The War Room reviewed institutional and sector-wide reports, enabling the monitoring of developments in real time, and allowing for swift, evidence-based responses where necessary. Through the War Room, emerging risks were identified early and addressed through coordinated interventions.

Where challenges were cross-cutting in nature, responses were implemented simultaneously by the relevant institutions, with actions aligned and coordinated through the War Room structure. This demonstrated that a single, coherent PSET that is coordinated can be responsive to the needs of students.