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THE JOHANNESBURG
ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION

MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE JOHANNESBURG ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION

OPEN LETTER TO THE DEPARMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Attention :

The Minister of Public Works
The Honourable Thulas Nxesi

The Deputy Minister of Public Works
The Honourable Jeremy Cronin

The Director General of Public Works
Advocate Sam Vukela

Dear Minister,

Justice Mlambo, the Judge President of the Gauteng Division, addressed the inaugural meeting of the Gauteng Attorneys Association, on 29 August 2018, and brought to the attention of the invited guests and attorneys present, that the Judiciary is very concerned about the state of the various buildings and other infrastructural projects in the buildings which the Judiciary operates alongside the attorneys, advocates and general public.

He made mention of the fact that the Judiciary is helpless with regard to the issues regarding the maintenance and operations in the buildings and is completely reliant on the Department of Public Works for these issues.

The Johannesburg Attorneys Association has been complaining bitterly to the Judiciary at numerous forums about the state of disrepair of the buildings and the consequent health and safety issues and has now engaged with the office of the Deputy Minister of Justice in this regard.

The very clear message that is being received is that the Department of Justice and the Office of the Chief Justice have no ability to address these issues and that the Department of Public Works is solely responsible.

The fatal fire yesterday, which fire continues to burn, in the Johannesburg CBD, at 37 Sauer Street, Johannesburg, a government building which is shared by the Departments of Health, Human Settlements and Cooperative Governance, has raised the concern that the state of disrepair and lack of maintenance in the various Court buildings across the City may have the same tragic results in other government buildings if the situation continues unabated and the Department of Public Works continues to fail in its obligations to repair and maintain these buildings.

At this time the Johannesburg Attorneys' Association would like to extend its deepest condolences to the families of the deceased fire firefighters.

Whilst there is speculation regarding the initiation of the fire, the state of disrepair of the building and the contravention of the Department of Labour's instruction regarding the condition of the building, cannot be ignored and the Johannesburg Attorneys Association is adamant that the situation in the various Court buildings must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The Johannesburg Attorneys' Association demands that the Department immediately engage with them regarding the state of disrepair of the various Court buildings and invites the Department to attend at a meeting with the objective to formulate a process to address the issues of the Judiciary, the various Attorneys Associations and the General Council of the Bar.

We trust that the gravity of the current situation will be urgently addressed in order to avoid any further loss of life, public funds and access to justice.

THE JOHANNESBURG ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION
Per : Katherine Gascoigne – Treasurer
Yusuf Wadee - Chairman