



# Billions needed to fix courts, prisons and police buildings

With an annual budget of R3.27bn, it will take the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure two decades to eliminate the maintenance backlog on 56,000 government-owned properties, according to [public works minister](#) Dean Macpherson.

By [GroundUp](#) and [The Outlier](#) <sup>3 Oct 2025</sup>



Source: Pexels.

The government has about 81,000 properties in total, but only 56,000 have had assessments done to estimate maintenance costs. The current backlog will cost R30bn — money the department doesn't have.

The longer it takes to clear the backlog, the more it will cost as buildings grow older and their conditions deteriorate.

The departments with the biggest maintenance backlogs are those responsible for the country's safety and security:

- Buildings used by the South African Police Services require R8.8bn to maintain and repair.
- Those used by Correctional Services, including prisons, require R8.4bn.
- The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, including court buildings throughout the country, requires R4.6bn.
- The Department of Defence requires R4.1bn.

Of the government's 81,000 buildings, only 1% are in excellent condition. 13% are in a good condition, 77% in fair condition, and 9% in poor or very poor condition.

Chart produced by The Outlier in partnership with GroundUp.

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