

**MEDIA RELEASE:** **PSA applauds MEC's bold action to reclaim and transform hijacked Palm Beach building in KwaZulu-Natal**

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**EMBARGO:** None

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) commends the decisive intervention by the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Public Works and Infrastructure for spearheading the reclamation and rehabilitation of the hijacked Palm Beach building in Durban's Central Business District.

This decisive action is the kind of leadership KwaZulu-Natal has been yearning for to address dereliction and urban decay that impact in public safety and progress. For years, the Palm Beach building, like many other buildings in Durban, has been a reminder of government neglect and urban decay, with shattered windows, severe water damage, and crumbling infrastructure. Occupied illegally for over two decades, the building became a haven for crime, undermining the wellbeing of residents and the surrounding community. The PSA has consistently advocated for urgent action to reclaim hijacked buildings, which have been allowed to deteriorate under successive administrations.

The MEC's firm resolve to break this cycle of neglect is a turning point. The PSA supports MEC's mission to reclaim and restore these buildings, turning them into assets for the people of KwaZulu-Natal. The PSA is encouraged by the ambitious plan to transform the Palm Beach building into much-needed student accommodation. This vision reflects a forward-thinking approach that addresses the current crisis and ensures a productive future for neglected spaces. It is a clear demonstration of proactive governance by repurposing disused, hazardous buildings to meet critical societal needs, such as student housing and revitalising urban centres.

The MEC's stance is a welcome declaration of accountability and a rallying call for a new era of governance in KwaZulu-Natal. It is intolerable for government to allow its properties to decay, effectively surrendering them to lawlessness and neglect. The PSA emphasizes the urgent need for collaboration between the MEC's Department and other critical governmental stakeholders, including the Mayor and local law enforcement, to ensure that this revitalisation plan is fulfilled. The success of this project will set an important precedent for reclaiming urban spaces from criminals and repurpose these to benefit the public. The transformation of the Palm Beach building is not just about infrastructure, it is about restoring dignity, safety, and economic vitality to Durban.

By addressing the issue of hijacked buildings, the MEC Meyer and the Department are taking a stand for the rule of law, proper management of public assets, and the long-term welfare of communities. It is an example that other departments must follow if the province is to turn the tide on years of governmental inertia. The PSA remains unwavering in its support of initiatives that prioritise the welfare of public servants and the people of KwaZulu-Natal. The PSA urges the KwaZulu-Natal government to ensure that the momentum generated by the MEC extends beyond the Palm Beach building.

The PSA stands ready to support the continued efforts of the MEC and the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure in this critical task and calls on all stakeholders to prioritise the needs of citizens by ensuring the safe, swift, and efficient completion of this vital project.

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