

Minister briefs NCOP on Info Bill

State Security Minister Siyabonga Cwele says the Protection of State Information Bill is aimed at stamping out rising espionage cases as well as the business of peddling state information. Yesterday Cwele briefed the National Council of Provinces' ad hoc committee, which is handling the Bill.

By [Francis Hweshe](#) 25 Jan 2012



(Image: GCS)

He said it sought to protect valuable state information, promote the handling of sensitive information in the hands of the co and fight corruption.

Cwele said the Bill would curb increasing "company hijacking", whereby criminals falsified information in the company registry and end up owning shares and becoming company directors.

He was accompanied by the department's acting Director General Dennis Dlomo.

Cwele highlighted that the leaking of state information as well as hiding corruption by officials was "a bad thing". "Corruption eats from the heart of the poor. No official should hide corruption through classification (of information)."

He said information peddling was "a growing cancer and we don't have a legal statute to deal with it".

Independent Classification Panel planned

Dlomo took the house through some of the important tenets of the Bill. He said it provided for conditions on which state information may not be classified.

Such information, he said, pertained to corruption, maladministration, incompetence and inefficiency in government.

He said that an independent Classification Panel would be constituted to deal with the classification, reclassification and declassification of information.

The panel would have the power to set aside wrongful classifications, he said.

Cwele said that if a request is made for information, which in turn happened to be classified, the request must be referred the concerned minister in the department for a review of its classification status.

That minister would have to declassify the information if, among others, it posed "imminent and serious public safety or environmental risk".

Such information should be given out within 14 days after the request was made.

The committee was being briefed on the Bill before it starts public hearings across the country's nine provinces next week

Public hearings in the Western Cape are set to start on Monday before the process moves to other provinces.

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