

DAILY MAVERICK

MAVERICK CITIZEN

EASTERN CAPE

Cradock's streets still riddled with potholes despite R14m spend on a 1.4km road



The condition of roads in Cradock after repairs of millions of rands. Photos: Supplied)

Despite the municipality awarding a R14.6-million contract for the repair of two streets, covering less than 1,500 metres, in Cradock, Eastern Cape, residents are still fixing their crumbling roads themselves. Councillors and members of the provincial legislature have promised to ask how a road that was repaired at a cost of more than R14-million can still be riddled with potholes.

Politicians have vowed to get answers from the Inxuba Yethemba municipal manager after the municipality spent R14-million repairing 1.4km of road in the town that is a transport hub in the Eastern Cape.

Despite repeated requests, municipal spokesperson Kuhle September refuses to comment on the matter. It has also not been possible to find the tender register showing which company was awarded this contract.

The town's roads take a daily beating by thousands of trucks, many carrying manganese to Gqeberha, that use the N10 running through the town.

The Democratic Alliance's Kobus Botha said they were able to obtain a breakdown of the expenditure on the project.

Frere Street, which runs for 380m, cost R8.3-million to repair.

Adderley Street, at 550m, cost R6.3 million.

And a R20-million project to repair Cawood, Sprigg, Durban and Victoria and Albert Streets is due to start soon.

Botha said despite the high cost of repairs, an inspection of work done revealed road-mounted fire hydrants had been tarred, storm water drains were blocked, paving was uneven and road markings were already faded.

“It is inconceivable that R14.8-million has been spent on two streets that are still falling apart – where is the value for money? The municipal manager must give detailed feedback on the process of appointing the construction company and what led to the shoddy workmanship.”

He said if the municipal manager's reply is not substantive, he will ask the MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Zolile Williams, to intervene.

The chairperson of the Cradock Community Forum, Lou Venter, said there were civil engineering firms in town, but that companies from Gauteng were appointed to do the project.

“A few thousand trucks drive through Cradock every day. They drive wherever they want to. The traffic department can't keep up. The secondary roads in town are simply not made to carry traffic like this.”

He said residents were fixing [potholes](#) themselves now.

“It is a massive undertaking because there is not a road in this town without a pothole. Some of the roads have completely disintegrated.”

He said apart from potholes, they were also cleaning the town, putting up rubbish bins and looking after gardens.

“We will keep fighting for Cradock.”

In 2021, an [investigation](#) into the goings-on at the Inxuba Yethemba municipality referred several matters to law enforcement for investigation. These included a tender to fumigate the municipal offices, a PPE tender and allegations of the theft of RDP building supplies by councillors.

Other findings included that the previous council had decided in June 2020 to use R7-million in Covid emergency funds to renovate the council chambers. They had to be convinced that the Treasury would not allow it.

A fumigation contract for Covid for the municipal offices was referred for criminal investigation. And investigators found tender fraud where bank details were changed after tenders were granted.

A sudden and unexplained R7-million price drop in the construction costs for a community hall will be investigated by the provincial Treasury.

The provincial Cogta department had given the municipality three months to fix the countless potholes in Cradock and Middelburg. It is now 18 months later. **DM/MC**