

Dipuo Peters names interim Prasa board

By [Karl Gemetzky](#) and [Khulekani Magubane](#)

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Transport Minister Dipuo Peters named former Sanral CEO Nazir Alli to chair the board of the Passenger Rail Agency of SA (Prasa), after unceremoniously firing the previous board last week.



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Former Sanral head Nazir Alli steps in as chairman, while Popo Molefe and other former board members seek to overturn their removal.

The decision to remove the board as well as accept the removal of former acting Prasa CEO Collins Letsoalo had been prompted by public spats damaging the image of the agency, Peters said on Monday when naming the new board.

But it was also motivated by their repeated failure to focus on the business of the agency, Peters said at a briefing in Pretoria.

"I have on numerous occasions requested a focus on pertinent issues.

"The board [was] preoccupied with other things ... and the public spats continued," she said

"Despite my laudable and persistent plea to the board and the CEO to not bring the organisation into disrepute, the spats continued unabated in the public. This contributed to a continued breakdown in trust and it was unavoidable that we act," she said.

The department would defend against attempts to overturn a decision to remove them, believing the agency would not be prejudiced, Peters said.

Seven former Prasa board members, including former chairman Popo Molefe, were expected to lodge an urgent application in the High Court in Pretoria on Monday to reverse their removal.

In a notice of motion, the former board members charge that the decision to move them was unlawful and irrational.

They say they were not given proper notification of their removal, and that the decision will prejudice ongoing court cases and investigations into corruption and maladministration.

"Any replacement board would have no relevant knowledge, be unable to give instructions and would completely removed from the litigation strategy," the court papers read.

Prasa is pursuing civil claims seeking to overturn multibillion-rand contracts, including against Swifambo for trains subsequently determined to be too tall for the rail system.

The removal of the board earlier in March followed their decision to terminate the secondment of then acting Prasa group CEO Collins Letsoalo - a Department of Transport deployee.

The board cited a broken working relationship with Letsoalo and his irregular 350% salary increase.

In firing the board, Peters citing a need to restore governance and stability.

Peters and current acting Prasa group CEO Lindikaye Zida said on Monday the agency had the institutional memory to continue both the investigation and the civil proceedings.

The other interim board members, expected to be replaced by a permanent board in July, include:

- Frans Baleni
- Ronny Mkhwanazi
- Tiyani Rikhotso
- Natalie Scheepers
- Constance Maleho
- Xolile George

A representative from the National Treasury will also be appointed.

The new board assumes its duties on Monday.

Source: Business Day