

# Committee quashes hopes of inquiry into Prasa

By [Khulekani Magubane](#)

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ANC members of the parliamentary portfolio committee on transport dashed hopes of a parliamentary inquiry into the Passenger Rail Agency of SA (Prasa) in a bizarre about-turn on Tuesday, 14 March 2017, citing the dissolution of the agency's board.



Shosholoza Meyl - © Shan Radcliffe

At previous hearings, the committee was unanimous an inquiry was needed into ongoing issues at the parastatal.

The move strengthened speculation ANC heavyweights are stymieing attempts to investigate procurement breaches at the agency. Transport Minister Dipuo Peters has repeatedly denied the allegation.

The move left DA members suspicious Peters had pressured ANC members in the committee to shelve the inquiry.

During the heated committee meeting on Tuesday, ANC MPs argued there was no one to question as the board had been dissolved. Peters announced an interim board on Monday that includes former Sanral CEO Nazir Alli.

"Initially we agreed that we will look at Prasa, but we never anticipated that the minister would act as soon as she did. I don't believe this process is necessary anymore because this board has already been terminated," ANC member Mtikeni Sibande said.

Committee member of the DA Manny de Freitas said the ANC members' change of heart smacked of outside political pressure. The committee had agreed the probe would go ahead despite the dissolution of the board, De Freitas said.

"ANC members have been told to tow the line and be quiet. It is scary that we are allowing a minister to... tell us how to do our jobs... if this committee proves itself to be less robust than I thought it was last week, I will make a lot of noise about it," he said.

Another DA committee member, Christian Hunsinger, said the probe, on a broader scope than just the board, would have lent Prasa much-needed credibility in its rebuilding.

Portfolio committee chairwoman Dikeledi Magadzi suggested the committee calls Peters to explain the situation at Prasa. Magadzi cited a letter to speaker Baleka Mbete from former Prasa chairman Popo Molefe calling on Mbete to institute a probe into Prasa.

"The letter is not different from what the committee was dealing with in terms of investigations and the state of Prasa. Let us hold this ad hoc [inquiry] proposal," she said.

**Source:** Business Day

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