

# Education department blames transport department for scholar transport fiasco

By [Joseph Chirume](#)

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Hundreds if not thousands of learners in the Eastern Cape have been left stranded with no scholar transport since schools opened for the new term on 17 January.



Hundreds of learners and parents attended a meeting on Monday in the Kyga Community Hall, Gqeberha, to get answers about why there is no scholar transport for 750 children in the township. Photo: Joseph Chirume.

In Kyga in Nelson Mandela Bay hundreds of learners are not in school prompting a community meeting on Monday with education officials.

The Department of Education officials blamed the chaos on the Department of Transport. They said they had given the transport department the names of the learners and their schools timeously.

Thozamile Qushani, of the governing board for Rocklands Secondary, told the meeting that 384 learners at the school were not in class as they had no transport and in total about 750 children in the township were stuck at home.

“We have one primary school in this township so most of the learners are [meant to be] transported to six other primary schools in surrounding areas,” she said.

Parent Iviwe Mangcu said private transporters charge about R700 to transport one child per month.

An official of the education department, who did not give his name because he said he may not talk to the media, told the meeting there had been issues with allocation. For example, Van Stadens Primary School was allocated scholar transport for 523 learners instead of 126, while Walmer High School had 60 learners who qualified but only 11 were given transport.

Spokesperson for the Department of Transport Unathi Binqose told GroundUp that the previous year's contracts had lapsed and the challenge now was to contract new operators and include new routes and new schools. He said the process had encountered more delays than anticipated.

He said the departments of transport and education and the provincial government "are working together to solve some of these problems".

Binqose said 91,000 Eastern Cape learners were provided with scholar transport with an annual budget of almost R700m.

However, in a media statement of 10 January, the Democratic Alliance said: "In response to parliamentary questions MEC Nqatha (for transport) confirmed that the total budget was R695m, and R230m of those funds had to be used to pay off an old debt, leaving just R465m for scholar transport for the financial year."

Spokesperson for the Department of Education Mali Mtima said schools are being encouraged to make catch-up plans for learners who have been stuck at home.

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