

IPPO's Breytenbach dismissed: Is this another case of politicking?

The head of the Independent Power Producers Office (IPPO), Karen Breytenbach, has been given her marching orders. Apparently to make way for a separate entity to handle public-private partnerships across a number of sectors that built infrastructure, not just electricity.



Karen Breytenbach

The Joint Implementation Committee (JIC), which comprises the Department of Energy (DOE), National Treasury and the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), said that it had asked Breytenbach to leave, spinning a vague argument about "issues of instability".

"The Department of Energy, as the chair of the JIC, requested a meeting to address issues that were creating operational instability at the IPP office. These matters had a negative impact on the IPP office and if unresolved as a matter of urgency, had potential to destabilise operations and affect personnel negatively," the JIC said.

The JIC said it had unanimously agreed that the environment at the IPPO was unstable and sought to take action.

"This decision is taken approximately five months after the expiry of the contract of the head of the IPP office. Since the expiry of the contract, it has become clear to the department that it is not possible to resolve the appointment of the head of the IPP office under the current circumstances," said the Department of Energy.

Breytenbach, however, says no reasons were given for her dismissal. Considering that she has overseen one of the most successful renewable independent power producer programmes in the world, getting rid of her seems disingenuous.

Energy expert Chris Yelland told *Fin24* that he had it on good authority that the DBSA wanted to set up a bigger procurement platform. This was to be headed by the DBSA, and would include banks, the Association for Savings and Investment South Africa and government.

"It took several years and a lot of painstaking work to set up the IPP office and it is something that really works. What worries me is if DBSA is going to build this new procurement platform to handle all sorts of other infrastructure, it will take years and years. In the meantime they will take their eye off the ball of the renewable energy programme, something which exists and which is working," Yelland said.

"Instead of building on what works, they want to start all over."

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