

Task team to bust Gauteng slumlords

A task team will be set up by the Gauteng Provincial Government to deal with the illegal occupation and hijacking of buildings.



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The Gauteng Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta) MEC, Paul Mashatile, on Monday, 10 July 2017, described the trend as a “breeding ground for crime and grime”.

MEC Mashatile also condemned the neglect of buildings.

"I am angered by the squalor that has gripped our cities and towns, as these hijacked and neglected buildings are not only an eyesore but are a den for criminality.

"The state of this and other illegally occupied or neglected buildings is appalling and it is unfathomable that people can live in conditions where there is no running water, no lights and even more disgustingly, no ablution facilities."

The MEC has directed the Head of the Cogta Department to establish the provincial task team. It will include officials from all municipalities in Gauteng, the Department of Home Affairs, law enforcement agencies and the Gauteng Housing Rental

Tribunal (The Tribunal), to establish the safety compliance of all buildings across the province.

Legal practitioners will also be brought on board to facilitate an agreement on the best possible way of implementing the cities' regeneration plans.

The team will also work with the Department of Home Affairs, since a significant number of those affected are foreign nationals. Their status, MEC Mashatile said, needs to be verified, as this will impact on the nature of the assistance that can be provided.

Landlords to provide occupation certificates

The department has called on all rental property owners to submit, within three months from today, occupation certificates to the Provincial Disaster Management Centre (PDMC) for safety compliance purposes. Failure to submit means the onus will fall on them, should any disaster strike.

The department said submission of these certificates will assist to identify the rightful owners of properties and even hijackers, where they exist.

“Our priority is the citizens and their plight is what we are concerned about and we will ensure that they stay in safe places,” said MEC Mashatile.

Should it be determined that these buildings are inhabitable, the department will get legal advice on how to get them either expropriated or condemned.

Occupation certificates should be handed to Dr Elias Sithole, the Head of the PDMC, at the Bank of Lisbon Building, 10th Floor, 37 Pixley ka Seme Street, Johannesburg. Alternatively, they can be emailed to Elias.sithole@gauteng.gov.za.

Taking action against slumlords

Meanwhile, the department said the occupants of these hijacked and neglected apartments, who are being exploited by unscrupulous landlords, should report their experiences to the Gauteng Housing Rental Tribunal.

The Tribunal is located at 4th Floor, Ikusasa House, 129 Fox Street, Johannesburg and submissions should be handed to Ms Betty Kgobe or Betty.kgobe@gauteng.gov.za

Law enforcement agencies have confirmed that several criminal activities, including drug peddling, theft and rape, are taking place in these buildings.

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