

**DA offers solutions to speed up housing delivery: Solly Malatsi MP DA Shadow Minister of Human Settlements**

Many of us here today can relate to the English adage that 'home is where the heart is' because we are fortunate to have one.

For the privileged, their homes are in secure enclaves of gated communities and secure apartments. For the Minister and her deputy, it is in the comfort of luxurious accommodation funded by the State.

It remains unconscionable that for many others who, like me still live in a village, our homes are based on tribal land disconnected from centres of economic activity where basic services are a luxury rather than a right. Regardless of where our homes are or how they look, they are spaces that should reaffirm our dignity.

However, a roof over one's head alone does not inspire an environment where one can live comfortably and ultimately thrive in society. We all need homes in safe communities with reliable access to water and electricity to just get on with our daily lives.

We all want our children to grow up in environments where there they have access to worldclass social, educational and recreational amenities. We all want to settle in areas with decent roads and a functional, affordable, and integrated public transport system that will connect us to centres of economic opportunities.

While many South Africans have been afforded access to quality basic services and housing opportunities since 1994, far too many poor people have been waiting too long for their turn to enjoy similar services. The DA believes that it is grossly unfair that millions of poor South Africans, mostly black, remain without houses and live in communities without water, sanitation and electricity 24 years after the birth of our democracy.

In November 2017, my colleague, Honourable Bara and I, conducted an oversight visit in an informal settlement in Middelburg. There, we met 83-year-old Ntate Mahlangu who broke down in tears as he told us that he has still not been allocated his house despite registering on the housing waiting list in 1996. "I still remember the day I went to register for a house. I was with my wife. My wife died while we were waiting for our house. At this age, I will also die without having been given my house. How is it possible that someone my age who registered for a house many years ago can't get a house yet there are youngsters as young as my grandchildren who have a house?"

Ntate Mahlangu's painful story is not an isolated one. There are many others like him who have been robbed their opportunity to own a house. This is why the DA believes that we need a single, national

housing list to ensure a fair, transparent and credible system of identifying beneficiaries and allocating houses. As part of our efforts to build caring administrations where we govern, the DA-led coalition government in the Nelson Mandela Bay launched Operation Buyisa Isidima.

Operation Buyisa Isidima seeks to prepare an audited and verifiable list of beneficiaries, identify those who still need title deeds and establish instances of illegal occupation in order to return the houses to the rightful owners. The campaign is implemented by a Housing Task Team under the political leadership of the MMC for Human Settlements, Nqaba Banga, to ensure an 8-month turnaround time, from when ground is first broken at a housing project to when the rightful homeowners receive their verified title deeds. This DA-led approach leverages innovation in governance to speed up housing delivery.

Honourable chairperson, we are mindful that as urban migration intensifies, the 30% portion of the Urban Settlement Development Grant (USDG) dedicated for the upgrading of informal settlements will not be sufficient to transform the ever-rising number of informal settlements into liveable human settlements.

And yet, House chairperson, even as we acknowledge the need increased funding, we must also acknowledge the challenges around the spending of allocated funding. The DA understands the need for government to explore creative solutions in order to provide our people with more options for access to affordable housing, options which necessarily involve individual agency. To this end, a DA national government will establish a Home Voucher Scheme which will give qualifying residents R150 000 home vouchers that they can use to build their own home on a serviced site or use it as deposit towards buying an already existing house.

House chairperson, the DA believes that one of the most powerful ways of creating inclusive property ownership is to remove obstacles that hinder potential first-time buyers, mostly young and black, from affording property.

To this end, DA proposes the total abolition of transfer fees for first-time buyers below 35 years on properties valued under R2 million. This will remove additional costs associated with the purchase of a property that can often determine the affordability of the property or otherwise.

In addition, we are advocating for amendment of Section 10 of the Housing Act of 1997 to reduce the waiting period for selling a government-built housing unit from 8 years to at least two years to diversify the range of options available for beneficiaries of state housing to leverage their houses for economic empowerment.

Honourable Minister, you seriously need to review the size, mandate and performance of all these entities that are accountable to you and your departments. Many of these entities have bloated boards, wasting taxpayers' money on meaningless meetings without tangible deliverables.

House chairperson, we must all play our part in speedily restoring the dignity of our people without homes. We must ensure that the houses entail appropriate shelter with access to basic services we can proudly call a home.

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**The ANC government consistent in its failure to restore the dignity of our people: Mbulelo Bara MP DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Human Settlements**

Section 2 of the Housing Act compels all three spheres of government to prioritise the needs of the poor in respect of housing development. Millions of poor South Africans are looking to the Government to provide them with adequate housing to restore their dignity and that of their families. Shelter, a basic human right, is the very area in which the ANC government is failing dismally.

Human Settlements departments in most provinces are crippled by corruption, fraudulent housing allocations and the mismanagement of public funds. The money spent does not match the number of houses built.

At a housing project in Thabong (G- Block) in Welkom, Free State, no work has been done except for digging of trenches for a contract which was awarded in 2014 at a cost of R220 million. People were moved from the site to create space for construction. They were settled in a space where there are no toilets, no water and without electricity where they remain to date. This project was awarded to Mrs Nozuko Mbalula and Hlaudi Motsoeneng through their Mbuma and MM Development Trusts. Imali yona imkile ngexa abantu abahluphekileyo besajonge enkalweni ukuza kukaNxele.

In the same province, in Vogelfontein in Bethlehem, an RDP Project remains incomplete without toilets and electricity. Residents, including children, are exposed to serious health hazards while R70 million was paid to Unital Holdings, linked to Ace Magashule's daughter, by the Provincial Department of Human Settlements.

The DA has laid charges with Bethlehem SAPS for an investigation to be undertaken. We now bring these issues to the attention of Minister Mfeketho so she can act. Aba bantu batya imali karhulumente ebimele ukuxhamla abantu abangathathi ntweni kufuneka baphoswe kwesimnyama isisele.

Performance of the department in dispensing title deeds is shocking. The Western Cape Government is the front runner in giving its citizens title deeds. On the 09th May 2018, we attended a ceremony

wherein the people of Delft could not hide their joy when their dignity was respected through the handing over of title deeds by the Western Cape Human Settlements Department.

We however cannot say the same about 84-year-old Maome Makgala from Ficksburg, Free State, who has a title deed which indicates that her house was built in 2004. Guess what, akanayo indlu uhlala emkhukhwini. Ndinayo iaddress yomkhukhu ahlala kuwo.

There is a need for a credible National Database of housing beneficiaries which is transparent and accessible to the public. In its current form, it is manipulated and helps only those with money and those who are connected. In Unit P, just outside Mdantsane in the Eastern Cape, RDP houses are sold by officials known to the community. Others paid money but never even got those houses. In the same project izindlu zakhiwe emgxobhozweni. Xa kunetha amanzi ayangena ngaphakathi.

Elsewhere in the Eastern Cape, opposite Phakamisa Township, the ward councillor is giving houses to friends and relatives. Rightful beneficiaries from Zwelitsha have been crying with no help. We are in possession of a list of these individuals whose dignity has been sold off by the elite. This all points to the flawed housing beneficiary lists which do not benefit the poor.

The North West Province voluntarily returned R300 million which they felt they would not be able to spend. They went on to claim that they had no beneficiaries to build houses for. This is despite the fact that South Africa has a housing backlog numbering in the millions. In certain projects, units stand unoccupied for so long that renovations are necessary before the units can be occupied. Kutheni abantu benganikwa izindlu zabo xa zigqityiwe ukwakhiwa? There is simply no political will or commitment to serve the poor in the North West province. The resignation of Supra Mahumapelo unfortunately won't be enough to address the depths of the rot in the government of that province.

In Mpumalanga, Steve Tshwete Municipality, we visited Rockdale housing project where houses stood vacant so long they were eventually vandalised. Beneficiaries like 43-year-old Ms Sipiwe Nhari took occupation of her house forcefully with no basic services. She had to pay money for water connection which is not up to standard. Some houses are occupied by employees of the contractor while rightful beneficiaries are still waiting in shacks with no basic services. Certainly Ms Sipiwe Nhari is one of those who do not have a good story to tell.

Where we govern in the Western Cape, we deliver. Even though we chase a moving target of informal settlements to formalize, we do our best to provide citizens with respectable houses. No wonder the Western Cape got the Govan Mbeki award as a top performer. We will continue on this path until all South Africans are able to benefit from our DA's service excellence.

