



MEDIA RELEASE

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KNYSNA MUNICIPALITY ADDRESSES HOUSING ISSUE

Knysna's Ward 5 Councillor and Executive Mayor, Eleanore Bouw-Spies, Western Cape Human Settlements MEC, Bonginkosi Madikizela visited Rheenendal on Sunday, 27 May.

Following a meeting with the Rheenendal Housing Committee on Thursday, 25 May, the Mayor, accompanied by the committee members Knysna municipal manager, Kam Chetty and the Manager for Integrated Human Settlements Mawethu Penxa, once again visited the sites on which community members had erected illegal houses.

"After discussions with numerous residents during these site visits, I phoned the MEC and asked that he and his officials visit the area. A visit would allow him to assess the situation for himself, making it easier to formulate a plan of action," said Cllr Bouw-Spies.

After the Minister and his officials were shown the various illegal housing settlements, he briefly addressed the community and told them that the Provincial and Knysna Housing Officials would meet to discuss the way forward. He promised to return in two weeks to give the community an update on those meetings.

He explained that Province was looking at accelerating the installation of emergency infrastructure and asked that the community refrain from building any further illegal structures. Any further illegal structures will hamper access to the sites, resulting in delays in the installation of these emergency services.

"During our meeting with the Provincial Department of Human Settlements on 21 May it was agreed that the draft plans for plots on the municipal land would be considered for approval of conditions."

These conditions included that;

- I. The Municipality be given access to the land to demarcate the plots
- II. Beneficiaries for the plots be confirmed in terms of the Human Settlement Policies
- III. Community refrain from building any further illegal structures
- IV. Interim services will be supported by the Provincial Department of Human Settlements
- V. Further housing phases in Rheenendal must be developed and planned jointly

In the interim Cllr Bouw-Spies ensured that an Operational Centre was established at the Rheenendal Community Hall. Here residents are able to check if their names appear on the updated Rheenendal Housing Waiting List.

The Knysna Municipality applies its selection criteria for this waiting list as set out in its Approved Housing Allocation Policy. The preliminary selected households' information is then captured from the subsidy application forms into the Western Cape Provincial housing Subsidy System (HSS). The HSS then performs checks against the Population Register, Deeds Office, the Unemployment Insurance Fund (IUD) and other Government systems to ensure that applicants still qualify. Several rounds of beneficiary selection may take place, removing applicants who do not qualify, until all the housing opportunities have been allocated.

The Knysna Municipality agrees wholeheartedly with Section 26 of Chapter Two of the Constitution that states: "Everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing". It must be noted that it is set out that the National Department of Human Settlements is tasked with implementing this mandate.

The Constitution further states that "everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing". In this regard the "State must take reasonable legislative and other measures within its available resources to achieve the progressive realisation of this right". The Constitution creates the obligations for national government to take all reasonable actions to ensure that all people have the opportunity to acquire a home.

The Local Government Municipal Systems Act of 2000 put mechanisms and principles in place to ensure all of government moves towards social and economic upliftment and ensures access to essential services.

In closing Cllr Bouw-Spies said: "Irrespective of whether housing is legally and/or technically a Municipal function, it is important that the Constitutional rights of all our residents to adequate and sustainable human settlements are upheld."

ENDS

Caption 1: On the invitation of Executive Mayor, Eleanore Bouw-Spies, Western Cape Human Settlements MEC, Bonginkosi Madikizela conducted a site visit in Rheenendal on Sunday, 27 May. He assured the residents that he will return in two weeks time.

Caption 2: Rheenendal residents listening to Western Cape Human Settlements MEC, Bonginkosi Madikizela in Rheenendal on Sunday, 27 May.

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