

voices

Special-needs housing still a dream

Two years after the finalisation of a special-needs housing policy, it is yet to be tabled for approval

The housing sector is beset with challenges, most notably a severe housing shortage, a sizeable backlog in housing provision and severe overcrowding. Despite these challenges, government's efforts in addressing the housing problem must be acknowledged. Between 1994 and 2014, about 2.8 million state-subsidised houses and in excess of 875 000 serviced sites were delivered, benefiting around 12.5 million people. However, with the alarming state the housing sector is in, people with special needs who require access to housing bear an additional burden.

Although the state has taken steps to provide housing to vulnerable groups, particularly people with physical disabilities and the aged, a range of other vulnerable persons who require special-needs housing struggle to access state assistance. Some of these vulnerable groups include persons with intellectual and psychiatric disabilities, victims of domestic abuse, orphans, the homeless, persons undergoing substance rehabilitation and parolees, ex-offenders and juvenile offenders. The challenges facing these groups are illustrated by the recent Life Esidimeni tragedy in which an estimated 94 mental healthcare patients died at 16 nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and three hospitals from non-psychiatric related conditions such as dehydration.

TALK TO US

Which department should take the lead in the provision of special-needs housing?

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In June 2015, the department of human settlements, after extensive consultations with civil society organisations, developed the draft Special Housing Needs Policy and Programme, which was aimed at providing housing opportunities for persons who - for a variety of reasons - are unable to live independently in standard-type housing or require assistance in terms of a safe, supportive and protected living environment and who therefore need some level of care or protection, be it on a permanent or temporary basis. The main objective of the policy is to provide capital grants to approved and registered NGOs "for the acquisition or development of new and/or the extension of and/or upgrading or refurbishment of existing special-housing needs facilities for persons or households with special-housing needs".

However, two years after the finalisation of the policy, it is yet to be tabled for Cabinet approval.

A study by the SA Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) found that the policy had not been finalised due to a lack of consensus about which government department's mandate most appropriately covers the provision of special-needs housing. Human Settlements expressed

the view that while it bears primary responsibility for the implementation of this policy, it is concerned about who bears responsibility for oversight and funding for operational management of the housing post construction.

The report makes the argument that effective intergovernmental cooperation is essential for the execution of the special-needs housing policy. It also criticises the highly bureaucratic nature of the policy's decision-making structure and how this can cause delays in implementation. The report found that there was a severe burden on nonprofit organisations (NPOs) to assist government in its provision of special-needs housing. While this model has many advantages, the national housing policy framework does not currently make provision for capital grant funding to NPOs that provide housing to people with special needs.

In identifying potential solutions to ensure the finalisation of the policy, the report proposes the need for a clear division of roles. At a meeting which included the departments of health, human settlements and social development, and civil society representatives it was acknowledged that currently, NPOs are sent "back and forth" between various government entities and that these delays, due to both insufficient availability of suitable facilities and unaffordable spaces within existing facilities, mean that vulnerable persons are unable to access special-needs housing.

Other issues raised regarding the policy included the challenge of conducting a socioeconomic impact study of the policy, capacity building, operational and funding support to NGOs which provide accommodation to persons with special needs and the lack of costing for operational management in the policy post construction. For civil society, the main issues were accountability for the failure in providing special-needs housing and cooperative governance between national and provincial government.

In the interim, it is proposed that the scope of the provincial human settlements departments' decision-making authority is increased while clear norms and standards are set to ensure that NPOs are able to access institutional subsidies to fund their operations.

National and provincial governments need to work together in ensuring that the right to housing for people with special needs is upheld. Extended delays in the finalisation of the policy have real consequences for people with special needs, as the Life Esidimeni tragedy demonstrates.

Sinethemba Memela, Tatenda Muranda and Querida Saal are researchers with the SAHRC

What got you talking this week

Tweets and comments on... 'Mkhwebane has gone too far' - Banking association, Reserve Bank

One must not forget previous calls for political control of the banking system. Moreover one must take into consideration that this investigation was being used as a smokescreen to achieve that control. Now we wait for the political spin from the SACP and ANC on why this particular ruling is enforceable but oh so different to the PP's other findings and recommendations which were largely resisted by the ruling party members. - **Billiebee**

The PP must be commended for questioning the role of the Reserve Bank and the financial skulduggery that occurred at the time of transition to democracy. This is a separate issue from the Zupta scandals. It would appear that the Zuptas are mere pickpockets compared to the financial malfeasance by the private banks and conglomerates. - **Yaj Chetty**

Thank you very much Mkhwebane for raising a very topical debate for everyone. Not even the Nkandla topic has generated so much heat. You've really touched some very powerful nerves and it's pinching a lot. - **Eromonsele Omphile**

If what he recommended will benefit South Africans, I'm all for it. - **FT Zulu**

PP is a chapter 9 institution, yet the advocate wants to amend the same constitution that governs her office... absurd and beyond overreaching. - **@Tumi191**

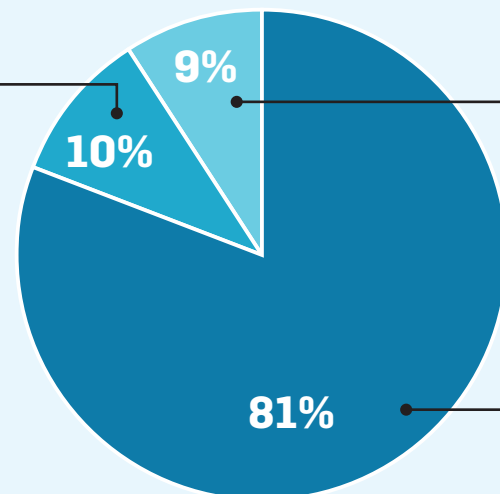
She has gone too far but in the right direction. That's part of her mandate. - **@WekwaMafukidze**

Poll www.citypress.co.za

How do you think Speaker Baleka Mbete will rule on the secret ballot in the vote of no confidence in President Zuma?

You said...

It can go either way

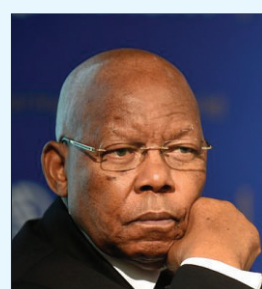


She will allow a secret ballot as she has an obligation to, according to the ConCourt judgment

She won't allow it as she is loyal to the President

Top talking points online this week

- 1 More questions arise for Gigaba and Home Affairs
- 2 Why Ben Ngubane quit Eskom
- 3 'He's blowing our cover': Spy boss faces interdict over move to police clusters
- 4 Municipalities won't improve if no consequences for officials - AG
- 5 South Africans to have a say on political party funding



Ben Ngubane

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Ben Ngubane: an angry man

Patrick Gauteng

I remember him as a belligerent IFP negotiator during the Kempton Park deliberations. He'll go into his grave with that belligerence.

Maxwell KwaZulu-Natal

Some four years ago, the country was subjected to load shedding on the pretext that there was lack of generating capacity. That was not true. Ben Ngubane and his cronies created a dire situation to set the stage for parastatal capture by the Guptas so they, the Guptas, could supply substandard coal to Eskom on an urgent basis after forcing the sale of Optimum Coal to the Guptas' Tegeta company. The rest is history. The shenanigans of Brian Molefe et al happened under Ngubane's watch. He may now rant and rave and be as angry as a tsunami at its most ferocious, but who cares? He must be held accountable.

Malatji Evans via SMS

It was time to put an end to the Ngubane-Molefe dictatorship at Eskom. It's now up to our so-

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- Letters must include the writer's full name and address, as well as a daytime contact
- No letters sent as email attachments will be accepted
- We do not accept syndicated letters
- We reserve the right to edit letters

Joe Gauteng

Ben Ngubane must be held accountable for his roles at the SABC, Transnet and Eskom. As chairperson, he appointed the proxies for the Guptas.

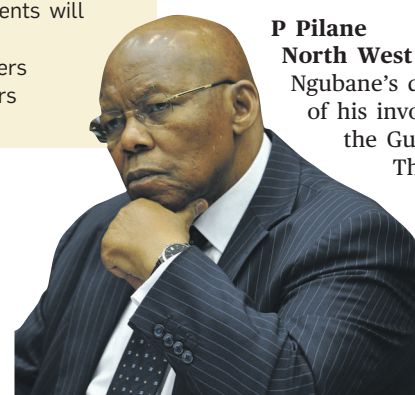
Thulani Nxele KwaZulu-Natal

Dr Ngubane must be held accountable for his role at Eskom. There are allegations for him to answer.

P Pilane North West

Ngubane's departure is a clear indication of his involvement in corruption with the Guptas at Eskom.

The fact that his yes man cannot replace his loyal friend in collusion, Brian Molefe, means that the mission to complete the capture of Eskom will not be accomplished. Let him go, to avoid further crisis.



called president, Jacob Zuma, to oversee the whole process.

Allison Gauteng

He should be investigated. He's been badly compromised.

Is it tough being a single father?

Kholekile Batshise via SMS

Being a single father does not bother me at all. I am the father of a 24-year-old young man and a 19-year-old daughter. Their mother passed away in 2009. They were still young, but I never struggled because it is my responsibility to give them parental support. Even now, we still do things together. I listen to their views when they raise them. I thank God that they never gave me problems as far as discipline is concerned.



Tsiu via SMS

My son Tshitso is 18 years old and was home-schooled until December last year. I have been a primary parent since April 2011. Most friends became acquaintances as I assumed more responsibility. I was a moderate social drinker before then and converted to being a non-drinker. Fortunately, I had been a committed non-smoker for years before his birth. These traits helped me to be, hopefully, a good role model for him. When he turned 18, I introduced him to alcohol and smoking officially, but he declined the offer. My late father made the same offer to me at almost the same age. The experiment lasted for less than a year as I saw no benefits from those habits. The disadvantage of home-schooling is that socialising for him is almost zero. I now have the task of

gradually introducing him to the opposite sex. He is an Ebionite Nazirene, a vegetarian and keeps the spiritual laws. Single fatherhood is ok!

Richard Gauteng

I have been a single parent to my daughter Lisa since she was two years old and now she is 10 years old. Being a single parent has brought a lot of self-discipline and maturity into my life. I'm happy and so grateful that God gave me a close friend and an angel in my life. To all fathers out there, you must always be there for your children to give them support, teach them and show them love. Every man can be a father, but it takes a special man to be a dad.

Dan Bruwer Gauteng

It is extremely hard but very rewarding. I am my seven-year-old son's hero but spend many sleepless nights as a 52-year-old Caucasian unemployed male. My son is of mixed race, but when I apply at the SA Social Security Agency they deny me. I had a successful interview at Transnet only to be called back later and told they have a mandate not to employ white males. I'm often suicidal, but who will take care of my son when I am not there?

Too many agendas at play

Ronald Harris via email

The article "Housing: Help is at hand" (City Press, June 11 2017) refers.

There is a serious disconnect between the different tiers of government regarding the delivery of housing in Gauteng. To be fair, housing is a complex issue.

However, the processes are bedevilled by, in my opinion, a lack of political will to deliver, ANC vs DA cold wars and the inability of opinionated ANC branch-level deployees to implement some

excellent policies.

Gauteng is blessed with the majority of the catalytic projects. Most of these are allocated to white property developers. Their focus is maximum return on investment, rather than on delivery of housing stock. So much for "radical economic transformation".

If ever there is a department that needs a professional civil service, as per the National Development Plan, the department of human settlements is it.

Sadly, there are too many agendas prevailing for help to be at hand.

How the Proteas made losing an art

Densil Faure Western Cape

The problem in the Proteas team is the presence of AB de Villiers. When he was out and Faf du Plessis was leading the team, there was a greater spirit of unity in the team. How can Cricket SA allow him to be so arrogant as to dictate what format he will play? And how can he have the audacity to say he is the person to lead the team to victory in 2019? He could not even lead the team to the semifinal of the Champions Trophy. He is a disruptive influence, yet is constantly being portrayed as South Africa's best batsman by the media.

Andrew Gauteng

I believe that the senior cabal of Faf du Plessis, AB de Villiers and Albie Morkel has become beholden to Indian interests, given the extreme pay they get from the Indian Premier League (IPL) and related endorsements. Then, when they are needed to roll over, they do so. In the case of the June 11 match, India needed to progress from Pool B, and South Africa was forced to comply. Three run-outs, two thrown wickets.

John Penny Gauteng

Get rid of arrogant players such as AB de Villiers.

Stacey Naidoo Gauteng

The Proteas as a team lack self-belief and commitment. When it comes to knockout games, they panic. They have the talent and the potential. Choking is a psychological problem. Get a good sport psychologist as well as a coach to instill belief in them. The Proteas give up too easily because of psychological issues.

Theresse Gauteng

I do not think the Proteas lose or that they choke. I think they are so good at fixing matches - losing main matches and then receiving money through the IPL. An investigation into these matches is needed. The Proteas are so used to the fact that we are going to say they choked again that they do not feel anything. They do not show pride in playing for the national team.

Lila Nicholson Western Cape

The Proteas being the number one team in the world is good enough for me.

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