

# MEC rejects request to buy hijacked Aloe Ridge section

**CLIVE NDOU**

HUMAN Settlements MEC Peggy Nkonyeni has slammed the door in the face of an embattled Pietermaritzburg social housing entity facing financial ruin after MK Veterans hijacked several flats at the organisation's Aloe Ridge rental housing complex.

The organisation, Capital City Housing (CCH), which is currently incurring losses to the tune of R400 000 a month due to the illegal occupation, had requested that the department purchase the 262 flats that had been hijacked by the war vets.

However, Nkonyeni told *The Witness* that the department will not entertain the organisation's request. "As far as I know those houses are rental housing stock and not for sale — I don't understand how the department can be expected to buy them. Buying such houses will defeat the whole purpose of developing the much-needed rental housing stock," she said.

The non-profit organisation, which rents out the more than 900 units at the complex to low income people as part of the government's social housing programme, is at risk of losing the complex after defaulting on its bond.

"Should that happen then everyone, including contractors currently working at the complex and the war vets themselves stand to lose," CCH chief executive Ivor Caldecott said.

Should the department buy the section of the complex that has been taken over by the war vets, Caldecott said, the funds would assist the organisation to pay off the arrear bond repayments.

The war vets, who have been on a house-grabbing spree around the city in recent months, have threatened to declare war on anyone who attempted to remove them from the hijacked flats.

Moses Mabhida Mkhonto we Sizwe Military Veterans Association (MKMYA) regional chairperson Mzo Kheswa said the occupiers were not going anywhere.

"The former soldiers who are currently occupying those flats have nowhere to go — they have been waiting for several years for government to build houses for them.

"The government has an obligation to provide services such as housing to the former soldiers but has so far failed to assist them. Even the law does not allow anyone to throw a poor person onto the streets — the former soldiers are prepared to die rather than live on the streets."

One of the biggest social housing programmes in the country, Aloe Ridge has also fallen prey to various community groups, with some demanding cleaning, security and other contracts at the facility.

Two weeks ago a group demanding maintenance work at the facility invaded CCH offices in Peter Kerchhoff Street.

The group, whose members have since been identified as members of the Westgate business forum, is among many others that have been demanding a share at the facility. This despite Premier Sihle Zikalala's announcement that the provincial government would act against any group or individual disrupting business operations in the province.

The DA has criticised the provincial government for failing to intervene at Aloe Ridge.

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