

'I want a brick toilet'

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By Luvuyo Mjekula



INLSA A Makhaza girl knocks on the door of the only functioning public toilet in the area plagued by the ongoing toilet battle. Picture by: Gareth Smit

A number of Makhaza residents have vowed to reject the City of Cape Town's new offer to consider an alternative enclosure to corrugated iron for their toilets.

This is their response after the city yesterday called on the residents to accept one of three options in its attempt to end the impasse.

The residents had to either accept a corrugated iron structure or suggest an alternative structure or one that would be accessible to disabled, old or sick people.

However, the cost to the city would be the same for all the structures - at R2 800.

As a Cape Times team arrived in Makhaza's Themba Mazibuko Street yesterday afternoon, city workers were distributing documents including a letter, an application form and Judge Nathan Erasmus's court order.

Last Monday Judge Erasmus ordered the city to reinstall toilets it had removed following a clash with Makhaza residents and to erect corrugated iron enclosures as a temporary measure pending a final ruling in March.

But some residents barred city workers from entering the area and putting up the toilets, saying they had not been consulted.

Asked yesterday if they realised they were going against a court order, the residents said all they knew was that they did not want zinc toilets.

They had until today to submit their choice to the city.

However, a number of other residents who spoke to the Cape Times vowed to fight until they received proper toilets.

Themba Mazibuko Street resident Vusumzi Qobosha said he would not accept the offer because “I don’t want a zinc toilet”.

Said Qobosha: “Even if I choose another enclosure for my toilet, I know I will still get a poor quality toilet.”

He said he would rather keep his collapsing structure covered with ceiling boards and pieces of corrugated iron.

“I want a brick toilet,” said Qobosha.

Another local, Noxolo Khonza, 27, said she would accept the alternative but would not accept anything shoddy.

Currently without a toilet, and relying on public ones in the middle of the street, she stressed she needed a proper toilet.

“The two alternatives are a bit of a relief but if (the city) does not keep its word, the residents will go back to dolo phezulu (knees up),” said Khonza.

In its new offer, the city stated all 1 316 beneficiaries of the Silvertown Upgrade Project (toilet project) would get a corrugated iron and timber structure, including a polyurethane door, which would be suspended on a steel bar and could be locked from both the inside and outside.

The space inside the toilets would not be less than 2.5 metres in height, 1.5 metres in depth and a metre wide.

A complete toilet would cost the city R2 800.

“So as to ensure that it applies its resources equitably and in an even-handed manner, this offer extends to all 1 316 beneficiaries in the project and not only to those residents who previously were unable or refused to enclose toilets ... in terms of the agreement reached in November 2007”, a letter to the residents reads.

Meanwhile, Anglican Archbishop Thabo Makgoba has again offered to mediate in the impasse.

Makgoba has been to Makhaza twice with the Social Justice Coalition and has met with residents, community leaders, members of the ANC Youth League and mayor Dan Plato but his offer has not been accepted.

He hoped the city and residents could reach consensus before the festive season, “to allow for residents to enjoy this holy period with their family and community”. - Cape Times

luvuyo.mjekula@inl.co.za

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