

Graveyards are sacred places and should be respected: Duma is accelerating the profiling of communities living in Seaview Cemetery in Ward 64 under eThekweni Municipality

Media and Public Statement by the MEC for Transport and Human Settlements, Siboniso Duma

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Seaview Cemetery, Coedmore Road: This morning, I requested the Head of the Department of Human Settlements, Max Mbili, working with eThekweni Municipality, to speed up the profiling of families living in Seaview Cemetery in Ward 64.

Approximately more than 400 community members are living in shacks, some built on top of graves.

It should be remembered that shortly after 1994, the democratic government under Nelson Mandela prioritized the construction of houses for communities in the area.

The priority was given to the families who had lived in the area since 1981.

Around early 2000, the late KZN MEC for Housing Dumisane Makhaye, former MEC for Housing, Mike Mabuyakhulu, former Mayor of eThekweni, Obed Mlaba, and Nigel Gumede, former Chair of the Human Settlements and Infrastructure Committee, presided over the relocation of families from the area to the newly built homes in Welbedacht, in Chatsworth.

It is unfortunate that despite having relocated communities, some came back to the area and others built new informal settlements in the same area.

While we understand that people are moving from far-flung areas to eThekweni in search of socio-economic opportunities and that there is a shortage of houses and land, we call on communities to respect the departed souls.

Cemeteries are sacred places where the dead must be allowed to rest in peace.

Meanwhile, we will continue to engage with Ratepayers Associations representing people living around state owned land where we are prevented from building houses for the needy communities.

Finally, the Department is undertaking three research studies focusing broadly on the total number and:

- Housing needs of households living in privately owned land and facing eviction;
- Households in both rural and informal settlements living in disaster-prone areas;
- Households living in graveyards such as Seaview Cemetery;
- Housing needs of farm dwellers.

This research will be done in collaboration with Moses Kotane Research Institute, National Home Builders Registration Council, Stats SA, Council of Scientific Industrial Research, and Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs

While the research gets underway, we have identified the Greater Kokstad Local Municipality for the piloting of the Agri-Village program. This will bring on board the Department of Land Affairs and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The focus is on improving the living conditions of farm dwellers by ensuring access to decent houses, access to basic services like water and electricity, access roads, and socio-economic opportunities.

Ends

Issued by the MEC for Transport and Human Settlements

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