

# Herald South Coast

## Staff locked out of Marburg vehicle crime unit over rental dispute

The total rent outstanding reportedly exceeds R90-million.

Those who visited the Port Shepstone SAPS vehicle crime investigation unit in Marburg on Wednesday this week would have noticed that the gates were locked and staff were not allowed to enter the premises.

The 'lock out' was due to the Department of Public Works' alleged failure to pay rent, and problems with the lease agreement.

Late yesterday, (Wednesday) the National Department of Public Works said they were well aware of this matter.

"In fact the department went to the High Court yesterday for an urgent application to restore the premises to our client, the South African Police Services," said spokesman Thami Mchunu.

The SAPS pound was re-opened this morning.

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Mr Mchunu added that the landlord had illegally barred police officials from the pound, which DPW is leasing on their behalf.

"Last year, the Special Investigative Unit (SIU) found out that the landlord had fraudulently overcharged DPW by some R30-million. The department was then instructed by the SIU to withhold the extra payments as they were illegal. In fact, the SIU and the department are pursuing a fraud case against the landlord, which is set to begin in April."

Yesterday afternoon the department was granted an interdict by the High Court instructing the landlord to open the premises.

Last year the premises was locked in February and landlord Sean Naidoo of Silver Moon Investments 145cc erected a signboard stating: 'The South African Government's first land grab in new South Africa. This property has been hijacked by the Department of Public Works for the SAPS'.

The massive premises houses the Port Shepstone vehicle identification unit and the SAPS tactical response team unit.

**Problems with the lease and rent date back a number of years and the building has been locked on numerous occasions in an effort to get the department to**

**pay outstanding rent. The landlord has written, on numerous occasions, to the Department of Public Works to address the issue of the unsigned lease agreement, but the matter has dragged on.**

“Is my building compliant? If not, why is the Department of Public Works forcefully occupying a building that does not have an occupancy certificate?” asked Mr Naidoo.

The rent for January and February 2018 remains unpaid.

Mr Naidoo says the total amount outstanding for 2018 is R7 989 000 (R3 500 000 plus VAT per month). The rent outstanding for 2017 exceeds R29-million. The total rent outstanding for 10 years exceeds R90-million.

“Their occupation of my building is unlawful and leaves me with no recourse other than to lock my client out of my building,” said Mr Naidoo.