



An angry crowd turned the Akasia EPWP lottery on its head.

**‘The angry crowd chased Msimanga away, not only because they felt disrespected by his failure to be on time, but also because they felt the programme was simply not doing enough.’**

# Mayor Solly is sent packing

**Keitumetse Maako**

An angry “flash mob” chased mayor Solly Msimanga out of a neighbourhood in the north of Pretoria this week.

He went there in connection with a project by the metro to alleviate poverty.

This happened on Tuesday afternoon at the community hall in Akasia.

Msimanga, metro councillors and selected ward members were at the hall to attend a “lottery” to select 1 350 people in the area who would benefit from a public works programme.

However, a mass SMS sent by an unknown sender told would-be beneficiaries to also be at the community hall.

People in the crowd apparently thought the SMS to be genuine and grew angry when Msimanga was late in showing up.

“They sent us messages telling us to be here at 14:00 and an hour later we are still standing here in the sun,” a resident told *Record*.

“Where is Solly? He does not know what it is like to put your faith in something which might not materialise.”

“We need employment desperately; this system takes too long,” another resident,

Kedibone Magane, said.

Magane said she borrowed money for the taxi fare to attend the lottery in the hope that she would be one of the lucky beneficiaries.

Another resident, who asked not to be named, said he felt “disrespected” by the way the city went about the programme.

“We did not say people must come here,” Msimanga told *Record*.

“We heard that people are being rounded up somewhere to come here and ensure that this (lottery selection) does not happen.”

Faced by an angry crowd, Msimanga’s body guards decided it would be prudent if he left the scene and he was whisked away in a Nyala police vehicle.

The lottery selection for the Akasia – and a second lottery scheduled for Temba in Hammanskraal on Wednesday – were also postponed out of safety concerns.

But the public works project would forge ahead as planned, the metro said.

Called the expanded public works programme (EPWP), the project is aimed at creating job opportunities in townships across Tshwane.

It involves jobs such as security guards at sporting events, cleaning up of neighbourhoods, the painting of public

buildings and door-to-door information campaigns on AIDS and other topics.

The EPWP was criticised for alleged nepotism and cronyism under the previous ANC administration.

Under the new lottery scheme, city officials and councillors are excluded from influencing the recruitment process.

This is to ensure the programme is not abused for political purposes, the DA said.

Msimanga described this approach as “fair and transparent”.

The scheme seems woefully inadequate though. More than 120 000 people have already applied for the 23 000 jobs it would create.

Since the DA administration decided to reform the system in September of last year, a vocal group calling themselves Vat Alles has been attempting to derail the metro’s efforts.

The so-called Vat Alles group is said to have benefited from the old system and has been accused of resorting to violence.



Mayor Solly Msimanga.