

OPERATION CLEAN-UP IN SUNNYSIDE

Power theft: mayor shows no mercy



TOUGH STANCE. Tshwane mayor Solly Msimanga yesterday in Sunnyside tackles electricity non-payers.
Picture: Supplied

Virginia Keppler

If you confess to tampering with your electricity meter box, you will be excused – but if the city of Tshwane sniffs you out on its own, you will have to pay a massive fine of R21 140.

That was the warning from Tshwane mayor Solly Msimanga to residents during his clean-up campaign yesterday in Sunnyside in Pretoria.

Msimanga said he will target Mamelodi, Soshanguve, Hammanskraal and other areas next.

Three buildings in Sunnyside were identified for having extremely high municipal bills. One of the buildings is Nuwavelde, which houses SA police officers and their families, and is owned by the department of

public works. It owes R2 million in property rates and taxes.

Some of the spouses of the officers said R1 900 is deducted from the breadwinners' salary for rent and they pay their own water and electricity. They also complained the owner of the building does not fix burst pipes and said some flats were flooded.

But they were happy about the clean-up operation saying police officials are turning a blind eye to young people smoking drugs on the corner of the flats.

"There is no security and when we have meetings, some of these officials are drunk and loud. We get nothing done and we solve nothing," they said.

The clean-up follows after law-abiding residents called on the city to address problems of crime, drug abuse, prostitution,

and illegal connections.

The Tshwane Metro Police Department (TMPD), emergency service and building inspectors closed a spaza shop at the Tambotie Flats. The shop was operating on an fake licence and selling expired food.

According to Msimanga, 90% of the residents at Tambotie Flats are undocumented. "We also got information today that there is a huge problem with drugs and prostitution," the mayor said.

The Veldt building, also occupied by police officers and their families, was also targeted.

Msimanga said they have seen significant success through these clean-ups. In Pretoria West a number of people are now paying their bills and many approached the city asking that their meters be reconnected.