

**STREET PEOPLE:** VARIOUS INITIATIVES TO RESTORE DIGNITY

# Hope for the homeless

**CARINA ROUX**

**T**o be homeless is not a crime, says Lorraine Frost, the City of Cape Town's programme manager for vulnerable groups, who was the guest speaker at the Goodwood Ratepayers' and Residents' Association meeting last week.

Frost's unit deals with all street people matters across the city. Their aim is to restore dignity among those living on the streets. Services include relocation, putting people in shelters, assistance with IDs and grants, assistance with substance abuse and

rehabilitation, and providing Expanded Public Works (EPW) opportunities. They are currently assisting about 800 people.

Frost says her team of 50 field officers are responsible for the first point of contact after complaints have been received through C3 notifications and the 107 call centre. There is a dedicated team of eight officers for the Goodwood area.

Frost says it is important to understand that Social Development does not have any legal mandate. "The services we offer are voluntary to accept. We have no mandate to force them. Our hands are tied by national

government and by constitutional rights."

Many people are on the streets through fault of their own, she says. "Some have been on the streets for 30 or 40 years – 60- and 70-year-old people." Frost says they do however work with Law Enforcement (LE) whose function is to deal with bylaw infringements such as fires, messing on the streets, urinating in public and so on. These matters are LE's responsibility – they can serve someone with a Section 56 notification whereby they can be fined or taken to court.

They work hand in hand with LE and will go to the street people before there is a huge

operation to ask whether they will accept assistance. Frost says they have visited the homeless living around Cloete Street many times. Eight out of ten will refuse their services. What will happen then, she says, is that they will arrange operations with all role-players – including Solid Waste, the Anti-Land Invasion Unit, police, neighbourhood watches and city improvement districts (CIDs). Social Development will then also be on hand to offer services to those who want to be relocated, but breaking down structures is not their responsibility, she says.

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