

■ ASYLUM

Home Affairs says refugees will be helped

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PROGRESS reports given to the Legal Resources Centre indicate the Department of Home Affairs has identified a vacant piece of land in Maitland for a the new refugee reception office.

The department said the proposed date of occupation will be June 1.

Home Affairs initially decided in 2012 to stop processing new applicants at the Cape Town refugee reception office.

In a judgment delivered on August 30, 2012, the Western Cape High Court ordered Cape Town Home Affairs to again start serving new applicants. The judge said the cost to Home Affairs of assisting newcomers was negligible compared to the harm done to them.

Home Affairs previously disregarded a court order last year that instructed it to reopen its refugee reception office in Cape Town by March 31.

South Africa has five refugee reception offices; however, the department suspended the services to first-time applicants at two of these offices.

The office building is open for renewal permits for asylum-seekers who registered at the Cape Town office prior to its closure in June 2012.

In its defence, the Department of Home Affairs said it was waiting for the Department of Public Works to provide suitable office accommodation.

But advocacy groups are concerned about the opening after Home Affairs missed its initial deadline.

Home Affairs spokesperson Thabo Mokgola said: "Let me put it on record that the department has no intention to disregard the judicial directive and we will duly respect the judgment."