

■ COMPENSATION

Airport land claim still grounded

Family to take legal action after 20-year wait

BULELWA PAYI

AS PLANS to expand Cape Town International Airport gain momentum, a family who were forcibly removed from hectares of land near the airport is still waiting for restitution more than two decades after lodging a claim.

The Adriaanse family agreed to compensation for 19ha of alternative land for the “good of the country” after they were told that the land was needed for the expansion of the airport runway.

The family were shown alternative pieces of land, but each time, their hopes were dashed as they were told the land was earmarked for another government department’s use.

Now the family is considering taking legal action as the matter had reached a dead end, with authorities unable to commit to a time frame for a resolution.

One of the claimants, Daniel Adriaanse, said: “This has been dragging on for far too long. It’s affected our families in economic and social terms. We are in the twilight years of our lives, we suffered under apartheid and with the dawn of democracy we hoped that the past wrongs would be corrected.

“We are in dire straits and are fast losing hope in the political will of our leaders. It’s painful. Actually, it’s cruel.

The land, which stretches to the N2 and covers parts of Delft and Blikkiesdorp, was purchased by Airports Company South Africa for the international airport’s expansion plans.

The airport has several key infrastructure projects planned over the next five years. In 2017, it com-

missioned a realigned runway that would in the future allow for, among other things, the handling of new-generation large aircraft such as the Boeing 747-800 and A380. The project was expected to cost R4 billion.

Adriaanse said when they initially opted to receive financial compensation for the ancestral land, they were only offered R2 million.

A letter from the Department of Public Works dated June 2016 informed the acting provincial chief director of restitution that it was “unable to assist with release of alternative state land for the Adriaanse land claim settlement due to lack of resources”.

Several generations of the Adriaanse family lived on the land, and made a living out of it. “My great-grand grandfather and his descendants farmed on the land. We even had our own borehole water system and livestock.

“My grandfather told me he planted rye on the land. Driftsands and also quarried limestone for the cement factory in Lansdowne. He also told me he kept beehives. We did well until the despicable law came into effect and broke our family apart.”

The family was first accused by authorities of encroaching on to adjacent land before some pieces of land were taken from them. They were later told to vacate the few remaining pieces of land that they owned in late 1969 because authorities wanted to build the N2 freeway.

The tight family structure was broken as a result of the dispossession, with some members finding themselves homes in the townships.

The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform did not respond to questions.