

■ HOUSING

MEC's new five-year plan

Waiting lists, allocations and improving existing informal settlements are priorities

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HUMAN settlements MEC Tertuis Simmers has outlined the province's housing priorities for the next five years, as well as the housing-allocation criteria.

Since the end of May, when he took over the portfolio, there have been several protests across the province related to housing delivery, waiting lists and delays in improving the existing informal settlements.

"In our efforts to accelerate housing delivery to the people of the Western Cape, we have strategically focused our resources on directing more resources for the upgrading of informal settlements and the provision of basic services; increasing affordable/GAP housing through our social housing and finance-linked individual subsidy programme (FLISP); and prioritising the most deserving people for free breaking new ground (BNG) houses (formerly RDP)," he said yesterday.

Those to be prioritised include

the elderly; people with disabilities; single-headed households; those who have been on the waiting list the longest; and backyard dwellers.

The MEC said the province would be the first in the country to prioritise backyard dwellers.

"Whenever we identify beneficiaries from the housing waiting-lists, backyarders will also be given priority, as we are working on a 50/50 split within the other criteria. Backyard dwellers need to ensure that their names appear on the waiting lists.

"Many have applied once and assume that they are still on the lists. But they must check at least annually to see if they are still on the lists, because it is a human-driven system and errors do occur," Simmers said.

He pointed out that the provincial government had developed an App which people can log into by using their ID numbers to see exactly where they are on the waiting list. "I've instructed my department to incorporate technology, as we are in the 4th



Housing MEC Tertius Simmers

industrial revolution.

"Over the next few days, I'll be making an exciting announcement about a competition which we will be launching in an attempt to address the housing waiting lists."

The MEC reiterated his concern about reports that beneficiaries of provincial housing are renting out their homes, and returning to live in informal settlements in order to get a second chance of acquiring another house.

"I will not tolerate this, and condemn this type of behaviour in the strongest terms. There are a few cases that are being investigated. We will make the relevant announcements upon the completion of these investigations."

He accused Human Settlements Minister Lindiwe Sisulu of playing politics when she accused the province of stonewalling housing development plans.

"Minister Sisulu should rather encourage her colleague, the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Patricia de Lille to release the five tracts of well-located land in the city, which include Ysterplaat, Culemborg, Youngsfield, Wingfield and Denel for housing development," Simmers said.