

MINISTERS CLASH OVER HOUSING

S'THEMBILE CELE

sthembile.cele@citypress.co.za

Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia de Lille has found herself caught between ministers and former ministers feuding over their allocated housing.

City Press has learnt that De Lille grew frustrated with former ministers and deputy ministers - and some current office holders - who were refusing to leave their former homes or move into the houses allocated to them.

According to insiders, De Lille wanted to approach President Cyril Ramaphosa to get him to help force the perpetrators to comply.

City Press has learnt about a number of the feuds that have been ongoing since the new executive was appointed by Ramaphosa.

In one instance, a minister who had been allocated a house in Cape Town was shocked to find one of their colleagues in Cabinet had swooped in and moved into that house, and had even changed the locks.

In another instance, a former deputy minister has been refusing to vacate their allocated housing, forcing a newly appointed deputy minister to stay in hotels.

The “homeless” deputy minister told City Press anonymously that staying in hotels was “inconvenient” and amounted to “wasteful expenditure” for their department.

When asked if she had approached the president to intervene, De Lille’s office told City Press that “the minister has consulted with the director-general in the presidency for advice to ensure that she has followed the correct protocol”.

Outlining the process of reshuffling the allocated housing with each new administration, De Lille’s office said that, in the past, members of the executive spent up to six months in hotels.

“Every five years, with the end of term, there is a movement of MPs and the executive out of parliamentary villages and houses. People have until the end of July to move out. People are, however, moving at different times.

In the process, those who are waiting for the houses to be emptied by non-returning MPs and the executive live in hotels. We are trying to conclude this process by the end of July, where all non-returning MPs and the executive must have moved out so that we save money on hotel accommodation.

“In the past, some ministers had to stay in hotels for up to six months. But, for this administration, we are determined to have every MP and the executive settled in their accommodation that they are entitled to.”

De Lille’s office said that the departments of the respective ministers and deputy ministers were footing the bill for the hotel stays.

While her office could not account for the cost involved for the other departments, it said that, for the period of June to last month, the minister had incurred expenditure of R138 100 for her travel and accommodation in Cape Town and Pretoria. Deputy Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Noxolo Kiviet’s bill was R148 722.