

# Second local eyesore

**Yaseen Gaffar**

**Following a public outcry over the problem building on the corner of Main Road and Dummer Street in Somerset West, and the consequent action taken to have the issue resolved, attention has now shifted to another abandoned house situated just a few hundred metres away, at 110 Andries Pretorius Street.**

The property was declared a problem building by the City of Cape Town three years ago but continues to be plagued by illegal occupation, by people living in putrid conditions that have raised concern among the public and social workers.

According to a local social worker who asked not to be named, the house is life threatening to children. Her pleas to the City, the mayor and owners of the property – identified as the Department of Public Works

and Infrastructure – have fallen on deaf ears.

“I removed a seven-month-old baby in April 2018 and in May this year, I removed siblings, a two-month-old baby and six-year-old, from the same abandoned house,” the social worker said.

“In the very same house the two-year-old sister of the siblings died in 2017.”

It becomes a child protection issue when people live with their children in such a place, the social worker pointed out.

“The police have to accompany me to the house, as it is derelict and otherwise occupied, and not safe. How many times must I remove children from the same unsafe house, from the same mother who sees nothing wrong with living there with her children?”

The social worker suggested the house be demolished or closed up, as it is a danger for any person to live in.

Ward 15 councillor Gregory Peck said he entered the

building with Law Enforcement and the police about 18 months ago, and found the house has been stripped of all its water pipes, electrical wires and conduit. The kitchen, bath and toilet had been removed, as were many of the ceiling boards.

“It is a health hazard with absolute filthy conditions inside. In terms of the law, it is the owner who must obtain an eviction order,” Peck said.

“When it is government-to-government – in this case, local government vs national government – an inter-governmental dispute must be declared to enable the matter to be followed up and resolved. This has been done with no reply from the national public works department.”

Wayne le Roux, acting executive director for Safety and Security at the City, referred most of the questions on the issue to the public works department. He confirmed the property was



**This problem building in Andries Pretorius Street, which belongs to the national Department of Public Works, has been occupied unlawfully for three years and continues to be a risk factor to the community.** Photo: Yaseen Gaffar

first declared a problem building in 2016.

“The Problem Building Unit (PBU) has fulfilled its mandate in terms of the bylaw,” he explained. “We are aware the landowner has not complied with the bylaw and the PBU has taken the necessary action. The criminal activities taking place on or around the property needs to be addressed by the police.”

According to Department of Public Works spokesperson Thami Mchunu, there are plans for the dwelling to be allocated

to another department to “accommodate its officials”.

“Inspections have been conducted to determine the extent of the repairs that will be required to restore the house,” he said.

“Once the vagrants are removed, cleaning and repairs will be initiated.”

Mchunu did not elaborate on the steps that would be taken to have the vagrants evicted. “The department cannot be held responsible for any injury or any death due to unlawful occupation,” he said.