

# Merlewood families still in the dark

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Families living in the Merlewood Mixed Income Housing project have spent more than a year without electricity.

Some 78 two-bedroom houses were handed over in August last year, but the occupants are still without basic services.

“We appreciate the houses, but they have not been completed.

“Living in the dark for over a year is difficult and heart-breaking, especially for our children,” said a tearful mother of two.

“My children always ask why we are living in the dark, and why we must eat in the dark when other houses have lights.”

There is also no storm water drainage, no

street lights, no ceiling boards and occupants have reported broken taps, wash basins and toilets as well as leaky roofs.

Lack of proper drainage means that when it rains, water flows into many of the houses, causing much damage and, in some cases, health problems.

Some have resorted to digging trenches to divert water from their houses, but this in turn affects neighbouring properties, causing a knock-on effect.

“As a community we have tried everything. There are too many lies and too many stories and too much sacrifice on our part, with no positive changes from the municipality,” said resident, Theo Goldstone.

“Earlier this year during a municipal imbizo we were told funds were available for this area. What happened to those funds?” he asked.

Chairman for the RDP housing committee in Merlewood, Mervin King said the committee had written to Ray Nkonyeni Municipality mayor Cynthia Mqwebu about their grievances.

“The letter, in which we sought clarity on issues including electricity, retaining walls and roads, was forwarded on October 11. We now await a response.



Some Merlewood families have been living without electricity for more than a year. 3949SN

“We were told by the municipality to move into the houses as a safety precaution because of criminal activity. So we did, and since then the houses have received no attention.”

Earlier this year the Department of Human Settlements and Public Works said there were “issues with budgets” to complete the work but it was hoped that a solution could be found so that the “residents who have been patient are not inconvenienced any further”.

Ward councillor, Ajith Rajaram said this project started in 1994 and after all these years, residents were still fighting

for their rights. “The poor construction is of great concern. Residents and I have submitted letters and list of issues, and nothing happens.”

Ray Nkonyeni Municipality spokesman, Simon April said the municipality acknowledged receipt of the memorandum and committed to ensuring a response within 21 days.

“I wish to state that the issue of 21 working days is meant to ensure that you receive a well-researched, informative and correct response on any issue that have been raised,” he said.