

Shoddy work angers residents

Thobele Nzama

WENTWORTH'S refurbishment project has allegedly caused residents more harm than good.

Initiated over 10 years ago, a number of residents said they have had enough of the shoddy workmanship and want its continuation halted until matters are resolved. Caved-in roofs, cracked walls, improperly installed geysers and electrical

faults are the most common issues the residents highlighted.

Spokesperson for the aggrieved residents, Marlon Nero, said they've had to endure decade-old problems.

"Prior to renovations, the residents said they had not experienced the problems they are dealing with now. Some of the flats are in a worse condition than before. Most issues are with plug points, voided geysers and cracks in the walls," he said.

He said four years ago the situation was

dire for a few families when their roof caved in. This occurred less than a year after they'd moved back.

"Residents who endured that now have birds in the ceilings and when they die, it attracts maggots. These then trickle down inside light bulbs. Because of the incorrectly installed geysers, they have had to incur the costs to either replace or buy geyser buckets. They have no geyser nor a warranty, so for the rest of their days, they are going to have to boil water," he said.

However, the project steering committee's (PSC) chairperson, Desmond D'Sa, said there is a procedure in place to deal with complaints and protocol should be followed.

"Each block of flats has its own minutes, stakeholder registers and housing policies. I have all these documents and letters to prove it," he said.

He said before residents move out of their flats, etiquette meetings are held. Residents have their say on what they want done in their homes. After that, documents are signed and the PSC ensures that the decanting units are clean before residents move in.

"We have meetings regularly and don't take our mandates from any organisations, but the people who live in the flats. Ninety per cent of those people, if they want their homes refurbished we go ahead. This project was built on the understanding that people in Wentworth wanted it. This is the only Coloured community that received R140m towards improving their houses. You can't go to a project and claim shoddy workmanship when the work is not completed," he said.

D'Sa added that the project will be finalised once stakeholders have done follow-ups to check the work standard. He

pleads with residents to issue complaints at the completion of the project.

"I'm not going to get the government to stop the project because the money will not be used and it'll go back to the treasury or elsewhere. It will not be kept in Wentworth and my job is to make sure that people get the money. I fight with government all the time, but there is a time to acknowledge when people are doing good. I'm not saying government does right in all they do, but if they're trying give them the credit that is due," he said.

Media liaison for the office of the MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works, Mbulelo Baloyi, said the block of flats were still under construction therefore it is a work-in-progress. He said the project is a 40 per cent local contract that is held with the main contractor and makes provisions for the engagement of locally-based contractors who possess the necessary skills and aptitude including compliance requirements for government related work.

"With regard to the shortcomings of the PSC and the project overall, this must be lodged with the ward councillor so that it can be ventilated at the monthly project stakeholder's meeting. A list of all outstanding snags on all the refurbished units to date have been compiled by the chairperson of the PSC and was submitted to the project team. The attendance of the snags and the progress thereof is being monitored and reported monthly at the project stakeholder's meeting.

Nero urged affected residents to come forward either by means of *WhatsApp* on 074-443-8222 or email austervillerectification@gmail.com.

Visit www.southlandssun.co.za for a full report from the Human Settlements and Public Works media liaison.



Spokesperson for the aggrieved residents, Marlon Nero.