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TOILETS WITHDRAWN

Health fears for Paint City refugees

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THE more than 500 refugees at the Paint City Bellville camp are once again fearing for their health after their toilet facilities were withdrawn nearly a month ago, following the expiry of the contract to provide them.

Meanwhile, the City and officials from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) have all denied responsibility for the situation, with each claiming the responsibility lies on the shoulders of the other.

Asked for comment, DPWI spokesperson Thami Mchunu said: "Please note the property in question belongs to the City of Cape Town, and Home Affairs is the responsible department for matters pertaining to refugees. Kindly refer this enquiry to these entities."

However, City spokesperson Luthando Tyhalibongo said: "The City neither owns, operates nor bears the costs of the mentioned refugee site. This is the responsibility of the national government, specifically the owner of the land – the Department of Public Works and the Department of Home Affairs (DHA)."

Meanwhile, nearly a week after the *Cape Argus* sent queries to the Department of Home Affairs, no response has been forthcoming at time of writing.

In November last year it was reported that the mobile toilets had been removed after being vandalised.

The toilets were later returned, but



BELLVILLE refugees camp have been without toilet facilities for more than a month. | AYANDA NDAMANE African News Agency (ANA)

in early April the service was withdrawn. The refugees say they have no details of the service provider except that the service was previously the responsibility of the DHA.

A spokesperson for the refugees, David Azezh, said a worker for the company contracted to service the portable toilets at the site had told him they were no longer able to service the 10 mobile toilets on a daily basis.

Azezh said: "In a 17-day period they only managed to service two toilets. This is a very bad situation we

are facing. It is unbelievable that 500 people including women and children are forced to use makeshift toilets."

Another refugee spokesperson, Hafiz Mohammad, said until March the servicing of the toilets had been a daily routine, but in April the contract went to a different service provider whose worker did not do the job as he claimed not to have been paid.

Meanwhile, last week the Cape Town Refugee Reception Office (CTRRO) officially reopened after more than 10 years of delays and legal action

against the DHA which closed the CTRRO in 2012, forcing asylum seekers to apply for asylum only at the existing, fully functional refugee reception offices in Durban, Musina or Pretoria.

In May 2021 the matter was heard by Western Cape High Court Acting Judge Alma De Wet. She proposed a "case management" system wherein the court would have direct judicial supervision over the process. Legal Resource Centre spokesperson Thabo Ramphobole said it was this action that had ensured the reopening.