



**Publication:** People s Post Woodstock - Main

**Title:** NEWS

**Publish date:** 13 Jun 2023

**Page:** 3

**Reach:** 25000

**AVE:**R 28468.44

**Author:** Staff Reporter

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Public Works was advised accordingly in April this year.”

Calvyn Gilfellan, Chief Executive Officer of the Cape Castle of Good Hope, calls for “full intergovernmental cooperation” to resolve the matter.

“We also appealed that the rights of all affected parties be respected. This is my tenth year at the Castle, and the latter was always surrounded by small groups of homeless people.

We even ran joint programmes with some of the groupings. That is why we commend the fact that the City and the National Department of Public Works will now tackle the issue head-on. I am all too aware of the complexities and offer the 367-year-old Castle of Good Hope, the erstwhile symbol of colonial and apartheid oppression, as the venue of preference to have the hard conversations to resolve this matter.”

Gilfellan says for the year 2021-'22, they recorded visitor numbers of 33 452. He says unaudited figures for the 2022-'2023 financial year saw 66 996 visitors.

“We registered roughly a 100% year-on-year increase. Of course, we are pushing hard to get to an annual figure of at least 120 000 visitors (we are still 44,2 % shy of that target). However, if we look at the recovery of the industry in Cape Town, the Western Cape, and the country, the signs are good, and if the City, DPW and all affected parties can resolve the homeless challenges on our front-stoep, it will hugely contribute to our full post-pandemic recovery.”

According to the City, the occupants have to date refused its social assistance. The City says it currently operates two Safe Spaces at Culemborg in the east CBD, which offers 480 shelter beds across the facilities, with the outcome of public comment currently being analysed on a possible 300-bed facility at Ebenezer Road in Green Point. According to the City, since the start of the 2022-'23 financial year in July 2022, it has assisted 1 500 people off the streets around the metro.

Gakiem Bester and his wife Yumna have been occupying the land for about four years. He explains that he has been on the City's housing database for roughly 10 years.

Bester says he does not want to move into a shelter because “it is the same as living on the street”.

He says: “The only difference is your things are kept safe. There is no privacy. I like being able to do my own thing.”

Bester says if they are evicted they will have to find another spot to live.

Sibusiso Dalakodu has been living there for five years with his wife Kashiefa. According to Dalakodu, he has refused assistance from the City because they do not offer accommodation for couples.

Mohamad Mallay says he has been living on the street all his life. “My mom and dad lived on the street. That's where I was born too. I would accept help to move to a Safe Space or shelter, but I was never offered.”

Monique King also claims she was never offered alternative accommodation.

*People's Post* asked the DPWI for comment and had not responded at the time of going to print.

