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Slippery creatures send government staff fleeing from two premises

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An invasion of slithering snakes and other creepy critters has so spooked government employees that they have abandoned two office premises in the Eastern Cape.

Provincial social development department officials decided recently to close the service office in Mthatha amid a reptile rebellion.

The department's Mqanduli office, meanwhile, has been closed for four years, ever since staff complained they felt under threat from creatures whose homes were disappearing.

The department's provincial spokesperson, Mzukisi Solani, said the Mqanduli service office had been closed since 2019 be-

cause of an influx of unwelcome visitors.

The Mthatha office, situated near trees and a river, had more recently taken a decision to close after staff encountered a similar problem.

"The temporary closing of the two service offices has resulted in alternative arrangements being made after negotiations between King Sabata Dalindyebo municipality for sharing office space in Mqanduli while a permanent infrastructure project is still under way," Solani said.

"In Mthatha, social worker services are provided from the district offices at Botha Sigcau building while discussions are under way with the landlord, which is the department of

public works, to relocate the staff."

An official at the department's Mthatha office, who spoke to the Dispatch on condition of anonymity, said the building was located a few metres from the Mthatha River in the old prison area.

The area was characterised by a large number of trees, which attracted snakes.

The staffer said scared employees had taken a video of a "blackish snake" which they believed could be kind of puff adder, and which was caught in one of the offices.

A monitor lizard was also once caught by a staffer inside the building.

"People were really scared. They showed the video to the

manager and a decision was taken to temporarily close the office."

Solani said the department had procured the services of snake catchers and purchased anti-snake chemicals and bush-clearing materials.

In the interim, people in need of social services in Mthatha can visit office No 12 on the 10th floor of the Botha Sigcau building, call 047-531-3093 or contact Ms Magwentshu on 066-412-8768.

For similar services in Mqanduli, they could contact Ms Mavumengwana on 063-685-7119.

"The department wishes to convey apologies to all affected KSD clients for the temporary inconvenience," Solani said.

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