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OUR VIEWPOINT

STATE OF POLICE BARRACKS

It is a telling example of the state of our society when police officers, after fighting crime all day, return home to become victims of it.

As reported in Monday's *Witness*, police officers living in the Alexandra Police Station barracks are subjected to appalling conditions and are regular victims of crime by vagrants who have hijacked the living quarters.

As one officer who spoke to *The Witness* said,

"One would think that we feel safe and secure living in a police station, but that has not really been the case."

It is appalling that officers who put their lives on the line in their efforts to protect society, must return home to living conditions consisting of overgrown grass, persistent water and electricity outages and uncollected refuse, and then still deal with vagrants who are staying in the derelict quarters strip-

ping pipes and breaking into their cars and stealing car parts.

Despite reporting these issues to their police station, the officers say no action has been taken.

The question remains, how can citizens be expected to trust the SAPS's crime-fighting capabilities when it cannot protect its own members on police premises? Not to mention how demoralising it must be for officers to feel their employers do not care

about their wellbeing.

Instead, the buck is being passed from pillar to post, with SAPS saying the matter is the Department of Public Works' responsibility, and Public Works in response claiming that the barracks fall under SAPS management.

Regardless of whose jurisdiction the issue falls under, SAPS should be expected to show more concern and commitment to resolving the matter that is di-

rectly impacting its workers.

Equally, the Department of Public Works should pay more attention to the matter in as much as it deals with hijacked government buildings — a key area the department has directed its attention to.

The solution requires collaboration and not a blame game. More must be done to boost the morale of our thin blue line. Treating officers with dignity is a start.