

Unfulfilled housing targets exacerbate the hardship for the 13 million South Africans who live in informality

By **Emma Louise Powell MP** - DA Shadow Minister of Human Settlements

Chairperson,

Every year at this time, Members of this House are subjected long lists of promises from incompetent and compromised Ministers on what they intend to do.

Yet so little attention is paid to what they have done, because in reality, year after year, the ANC's achievements in government amount to so very little.

Human Settlements, one of the country's most crucial, front line service delivery Departments, is no different.

Chairperson, we engage in these lofty, high level debates in Parliament that so few South Africans even bother paying attention to anymore, while the reality on the ground sees South Africa sinking into an ever deepening abyss of poverty, malnutrition and despair.

(Unless of course, you're an ANC tendpreneur with a housing contract and penchant for fast cars and Johnny black – THEN, you're in the fast lane).

But for the 13 million South Africans still living in informality, the suffering continues. For everyone other than the ANC, the conditions in which our nation's poorest citizens live are simply impossible to ignore.

Despite a triple junk rated economy; a failed government staffed by incompetent cadres; and, the systemic looting that now defines our state, the ANC continue to deny any involvement in the cause and effect of the dire conditions that our people live in - evident to all but those charged with changing things.

Let's use a recent example:

Whilst the President stands before Parliament and promises the Nation that rigorous systems will be put in place to guard against more looting of disaster relief funds – this time in KZN - the so called RET "business forums" in eThekweni are already rubbing their hands in glee at the prospect of another billion rand headed their way. A billion rand that will be divvied up between incompetent cadre contractors and spent on little other than lamborghini's.

Honourable Members, this situation will abound for as long as the ANC remains in power.

And despite the list of more hollow promises for the upcoming year, recited before this House today, the delivery targets promised during Human Settlements Budget speeches in previous years have yet to be fulfilled.

In the 2020/21 financial year:

- Against a target of 229 537 of title deeds, only 17 200 were delivered – a 7% achievement. This, compounded by the fact that the Title Deeds Restoration Grant has been abolished;
- 40 347 fully subsidised houses were delivered against target of 85 898;
- 1856 rental housing opportunities were delivered against target of 6000;
- 997 social housing opportunities against target of 3870; and
- And only 3161 FLISP opportunities provided against target of 6685.

Honourable Members,

What these figures mean, is that despite the pomp and ceremony of our ruling party elite, less than half of the Housing Departments targets were achieved.

At CSOS, the entity that millions of people living in complexes across South Africa rely on for dispute resolution, only 38% of referred disputes were adjudicated within 90 days. Some residents waited in excess of a year to have their issues attended to.

Only R61m of the R300m transferred for rental housing relief was spent by the National Housing Finance Corporation – not because desperate South Africans did not need assistance during the Covid lockdown, but because the department took an entire year to finalise the disbursement policy. That's right, it took a Department of thousands of staff a full year to write an emergency relief policy – so the funds weren't spent.

Only 42ha of the planned 1000ha of land was rezoned for human settlement purposes.

The 14000 ha of land before cabinet has still not been released for development.

The National Department has also instructed provinces to provide evidence of measures taken to downscale the delivery of units, encouraging Provinces to move towards a site and service approach. In the Western Cape, this rapid land release approach is coupled with pre-approved plans, bulk infrastructure, pattern books and wet cores – but in places like the Free State, unserviced land without any infrastructure in place is simply handed over to desperate beneficiaries. Why – because the ANC simple does not care.

The HDA – the subject of gross corruption and mismanagement, which has incurred in excess of R150m in irregular expenditure in recent years - only registered 825 title deeds against a target of more than 7000.

Despite the millions lost to fruitless and wasteful expenditure, the on-going investigations, and the big shot talk of our DG and DDG's about consequence management when hauled before Parliament – only 1 single official was disciplined and dismissed across the entire Department last year, whilst a second individual spent over 700 days on suspension at a cost to the tax payer of more than R3.4 million.

And despite the 40 units resembling tin shacks handed over in Talana last year at a cost of more than R64 000 per unit, the National Portfolio Committee is yet to receive the investigative reports and make recommendations.

Honourable Members, NO ONE must come before Parliament and talk about consequence management until we start to see corrupt officials in orange jump suits!

Thankfully, a silver lining has appeared in the form of a new Minister that has so far been true to her word in her genuine attempts to rid the Department of her predecessors corrupt patronage network, and right-size many of our most crucial Entities. Time will tell if her fist is firm enough to stand up to the nefarious and dangerous characters that sit behind – not opposite her – on our Parliamentary benches. She confronts a lion's den of greed-obsessed cronies on the inside and empty stomachs on the outside.

The knives will soon be out.

I thank you.