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PO Box 15 Cape Town 8000 Republic of South Africa

e-mail: alabrahams@parliament.gov.za

www.parliament.gov.za

www.da.org.za

ALEXANDRA ABRAHAMS, MP

DEPUTY SHADOW MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

1 November 2022

Honourable Lindiwe Zulu
Minister of Social Development
Per e-mail: AbramP@dsd.gov.za / JudyB@dsd.gov.za / minister@dsd.gov.za / ZamaK@dsd.gov.za

Cc: Mr. Linton Mchunu
Acting Director General for Social Development
Per e-mail: LintonM@dsd.gov.za

Dear Minister Zulu

RE: Intervention to open the six gender-based violence shelters in Gauteng Province

I write to you, the National Minister for Social Development, to urgently intervene and assist the Gauteng Provincial Department of Social Development to open the six vacant buildings meant for gender-based violence victims.

Minister, you will recall that between the period of December 2019 and March 2020 the Minister for Public Works and Infrastructure, Minister Patricia de Lille, handed over 12 buildings to the Provincial Department of Social Development in Gauteng and the Western Cape.

The handover was welcomed by all sectors of society as it was an action step in response to South Africa's second pandemic – gender-based violence – and the growing need for safe spaces for women and children who experience abuse and trauma.

In the Western Cape, the MEC for Social Development, Minister Sharna Fernandez, has successfully opened all six gender-based violence shelters with the first shelter having opened within just three months.

However, the Gauteng province which was also allocated six buildings - two in Johannesburg and four in Pretoria – remain vacant and closed.

In a written reply to myself, Minister Patricia de Lille confirmed "*the Department of Social Development has not yet occupied the houses reserved for victims of gender-based violence. The houses are still guarded by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure.*"

Minister De Lille further confirmed "*The Gauteng Provincial Department of Social Development has not yet signed the tripartite Memorandum of Agreement and further demands that the subject properties be permanently transferred to the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development.*"

All six buildings are yet to be completed and currently being 'safe guarded' by private security companies, at a current cost of R1 960 411.84 to DPWI and taxpayers, while vulnerable women and children desperately seeking refuge from abuse, struggle to find suitable temporary accommodation and as a result, often remain in abusive environments.

In my capacity as a member serving on the Social Development Portfolio in the National Assembly, I visited four out of the six shelters meant for gender-based violence victims on 27 and 28 October 2022.

Gardens are overgrown, holes in ceilings and vibracrete walls, cracks in walls and broken lights to name but a few problems. The longer government waits to repair and open these buildings, the more it will cost - a further burden on the taxpayer and shrinking government budgets.

While matters pertaining to the condition of these building fall under DPWI, the fact that the Provincial Department of Social Development are dragging their feet to sign the MOU is an oversight matter in which you can intervene as the National Minister for Social Development.

During the handover media conference in March 2020, Minister you said and quote: "*As we call on other departments, we are saying as the department of social development this burden we have in South Africa is a shame.*" "*The shame we carry must be a shame for everybody. It must be national shame that that calls us to action.*"

Minister, it is a shame that the Gauteng Department of Social Development has not done everything in its power to open these gender-based violence shelters.

On behalf of all victims and survivors of gender-based violence, I humbly ask for your intervention in the above.

Yours sincerely,

A.L.A. Abrahams

Alexandra Abrahams MP

Deputy Shadow Minister of Social Development

Democratic Alliance

Email: alabrahams@parliament.gov.za or alexandraa@da.org.za