

The Weekly

MLAMLELI CRACKS WHIP ON SLOW HOUSING DELIVERY IN KESTELL

February 1, 2013



Miffed about mess ... MEC, Oly Mlamleli

The MEC has instructed the contractor and the local councillor to ensure that the right beneficiaries receive their houses

The MEC for cooperative governance and human settlements, Oly Mlamleli, has expressed shock at the non-completion of houses for victims of a tornado that left several families homeless in Kerstell last year.

The tornado battered the small town, leaving more than 60 families homeless and the entire community without electricity.

The department of human settlements then pledged to rebuild the destroyed houses and a team of experts was promptly put together to assess the destruction before a contractor was appointed to kick-start the completion of the houses.

A steering committee was appointed oversee the process in collaboration with a local councillor.

However, a mix-up occurred that saw the contractor building houses for wrong people, thus prompting Mlamleli's second visit on Wednesday this week.

"I came here because I heard people expressing their anger on the radio. This is another disaster in Kestell. I was not aware that houses were being built for unintended people. How could that have happened? There is no way a contractor can come into a community without a councillor's permission. He is the one responsible for his area and must guide the contractor. These houses that were built were not in the disaster management budget," said the fuming Mlamleli.

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Mlamleli said it was unfortunate that the actual beneficiaries of the houses are yet to have their houses completed. Some had re-roofed their houses from their own pockets. The MEC said government cannot compensate people who used their own money to do repairs on their houses.

“You rebuilt your houses knowing exactly that natural disasters are government’s responsibility. I cannot change the budget now, we have decided on the number of houses we are going to build and how much we are going spend.”

However, the MEC has reiterated her department’s commitment to finish building the remaining houses. She instructed the contractor and the municipality to fix the housing waiting list and ensure that the right beneficiaries are prioritised. She said the list must be publicised at the local municipality offices. Mlamleli promised to address the general housing problem in the area once the current relief programme is completed.

Up to 100 houses were supposed to be rebuilt. The contractor laid 92 foundations, but only 83 houses were completed.

Ward 3 councillor, Lesole Mokoena, has been accused of not holding regular ward meetings with the community. There also is miscommunication between him and the project committee, which left residents in this ward in the dark about the project. Mokoena has in turn blamed the contractor for the mix up.

“The consulting company that was appointed to do assessment has let me down. They made mistakes and did not consult with me, this is not my fault. The committee that was appointed to oversee the project also died a natural death.

“Under the circumstances, all I can say is that as a first time councillor, I have learned my lesson. There are opportunistic people with hidden agendas. I will use my judgement and discretion to decide who to trust,” said Mokoena.

One of the residents, Mampoi Moloi, is happy that her house was rebuilt.

“I am a single parent of three children. When the tornado struck, I was devastated and did not know what to do. But my faith in the government has been restored and I am grateful,” Moloi told The Weekly.

Meanwhile, a strong storm swept through Kroonstad in Lejweleputswa district on Wednesday this week. According to reports, the windstorm left a person injured and several houses flattened.

This weather pattern has been becoming increasingly common in the province since last year, when hurricanes obliterated more than 300 homes in Harrismith, before Bethlehem, Deneysville, Oranjeville and Reitz had similar experiences.

[Source: www.theweekly.co.za]