

Dawn breaks in deeds saga

BYRON PILLAY

It is nearly over... like waiting for the dawn... Cornhill and Colley Street residents are expected to finally have the title deeds to their state owned homes by the end of next week...

Human Settlements MEC, Ravi Pillay, has promised Dawn de Beer that he will come himself to hand out the last title deeds - ending a battle against red tape and inefficiency first launched by Dawn in April 2004.

While Dawn fought for title deeds to be given to all who have for years rented State owned houses in Dundee and Glencoe, ironically she is one of the last to receive her ownership papers.

In April 2011, 104 residents of Peacevale and Forestdale were given the deeds to their homes in an elaborate public ceremony hosted by then MEC for Human Settlements, Ms Maggie Govender.

Sadly, others were left wondering when they would be receiving their deeds; Dawn being one of them. Ms Govender did, however, promise that her office would make more deeds available in November that year.

The excitement building up to November was cut short in October when Ms Govender and her entire team were removed from their posts.

Once again there was no light at the end of the

title deeds tunnel, many unsure whether they would ever receive the much sought after documents.

Dawn then took up the mantle more vigorously and contacted Robert Sibiya, Acting Senior Manager for the Department of Human Settlements to assist. Mr Sibiya met with the municipality and tried to rectify the issue, but mysteriously the title deeds could not be found.

Ever persistent, Dawn traced the deeds to an attorney's office in Pietermaritzburg who refused to release them until the municipality completed payment for them.

April 2012 was earmarked for a possible hand over of the deeds. However, April came and went with still no sign of any promises being kept.

Residents were distraught - their homes were slowly deteriorating and there was nothing they could do about it. They could not carry out repairs to their homes without the deeds and the municipality could not carry out the repairs due to a lack of budget.

Tired of all the false promises, Mrs de Beer went straight to the big

shots; writing to Minister of Human Settlements, Tokyo Sexwale and even asking President, Jacob Zuma to intervene. Mr Sexwale was dispatched to Durban to further investigate and officials from the Presidents office promised to keep Mrs de Beer informed about the progress.

In September, new MEC for Human Settlements, Ravi Pillay brought joy to many residents' faces when he made available 276 title deeds to

Sibongile and Sithembile residents renting state houses.

Once again Mrs de Beer and the other residents of Cornhill and Colley Streets were left empty handed. Mr de Beer spoke to the MEC after the event asking for his assistance, which he promised to give. With the combined power of Ravi Pillay and Tokyo Sexwale behind the matter, it was hoped that the title deeds saga would finally come to an end.

In October, after a month of waiting for a response, Mrs de Beer threatened to take the story to national newspapers. Officials from the Presidents then contacted her before she could do so.

"I have been told that the remaining title deeds are at a local attorneys office and will be released to the remaining beneficiaries when MEC Pillay comes to Dundee - either during the course of this week or the next."

Redtape 0, Dawn 1.

A battle that started in 2004 may be over this time next week...