

ANC must keep the housing promises it made in 1994

By Leon Basson MP - DA Shadow Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation

Chairperson,

The lack of affordable housing in South Africa is a [well-documented problem](#). The housing backlog stands [at 2.3 million houses](#) and is growing with approximately 180-thousand houses per year. The Socio-Economic Rights Institute estimates that between 2.9 million and 3.6 million people still live in informal settlements in South Africa today.

Chairperson, Section 26 of the Constitution stipulates that everyone has the right to adequate housing. In the ANC's first election manifesto, in 1994, the party stated, and I quote:

"A roof over one's head and reasonable living conditions are not a privilege. They are a basic right for every human being".

Chairperson, millions of South Africans are still deprived of this "basic right" in 2019. People continue to live in appalling conditions where a "home" is often nothing more than a shack made from whatever materials are available, with no running water, proper sanitation or electricity.

In 2014, Minister Lindiwe Sisulu boldly declared that the Department of Human Settlements would create 1.5 million new housing opportunities by 2019. This amounts to 300 000 units per year! Given the fact that the number of built units are decreasing, this was nothing more than a pipe dream. At its peak in 1999, the government delivered 235 000 units per annum. In 2018 this number had decreased to less than 90 000 built units per year.

It is clear that under the ANC government we will never resolve the housing backlog. Government can no longer follow the narrow strategy as outlined initially by the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and then the Breaking New Ground (BNG) programmes for addressing the housing backlog - as these have patently failed.

Firstly, because many South Africans still do not have houses, but also because this approach has not worked to create integrated cities and towns.

Chairperson, the Democratic Alliance (DA) believes that there is no single solution that will eradicate the housing backlog, but what is essential is a basket of solutions which can address the issue and give South Africans more choice and a better quality of life when it comes to finding a place to call "home".

The DA believes that we need to take a new approach:

- Giving more South Africans safe and dignified living spaces;
- Creating more diverse and inclusive cities and towns;
- Bringing more people closer to economic and educational activities;
- Densifying existing towns and cities; and,
- Providing more options that allow South Africans greater choice when it comes to housing.

To do this, we need to:

- Give recipients of RDP and BNG houses ownership of the land they live on by giving them title deeds;
- Create a single national housing database which each province and local government will have to cross-reference to prevent beneficiaries from benefitting more than once; and,
- Launch a national housing audit to verify the current ownership of RDP and BNG houses to identify where houses have been allocated through corruption or have been sold illegally.

There has been surprisingly little innovation in the field of housing within the Department of Human Settlement. Disadvantaged communities in poverty and unemployment are trapped and they are robbed of the secure livelihood a home can provide.

Minister, there is no time for you to dream like the President.

It's time to have a plan, time for change, time to put South Africa first.

And that time is now.