



# Wes-Kaapse Provinsiale Parlement Western Cape Provincial Parliament IPalamente yePhondo leNtshona Koloni

Ref Number: 11/4/6

---

The Standing Committee on Human Settlements, having undertaken an oversight visit to the Wolwedans Housing Project, Grootbrakrivier (Mosselbay) on Tuesday, 5 May 2015, reports as follows:

## **Delegation**

The delegation consisted of the following members:

Maseko, LM (DA) (Chairperson and leader of the delegation)  
Hinana, N (DA)  
Magaxa, KE (ANC)  
Schäfer, BA (DA)

Alternative member

Dijana, TM (ANC)

## **1. Introduction**

On 14 April 2015, the Standing Committee on Human Settlements was requested to investigate a petition by Mr John Jacobs, on the Wolwedans Housing Project and to look into the recommendations stemming from the Royal Haskoning Structural Engineers report.

The petition by Mr Jacobs listed complaints raised by the community on the poor quality workmanship, structural defects, deflecting foundations and the formulation of cracks in the houses.

The Royal Haskoning Structural Engineers' report, dated 19 February 2014, corroborated most of the issues listed in the petition. The report listed the defects and provided recommendations for remedial action in terms of cracks, monitoring of piling and foundations for possible deflection.

In a meeting dated 1 October 2014 the Standing Committee on Human Settlements recommended that the Department address and resolve the outstanding issues raised in the petition by Mr John Jacobs and faults listed in the Royal Haskoning report.

Funding to the value of R6 million was provided to the Mosselbay Municipality for housing rectification projects. In addition hereto the Department approved an additional R9 million for stormwater management and retaining walls to ensure that foundations were not damaged due to severe water run-offs.

Once the report relating to progress with resolving the issues that were raised in the petition was received from the Department of Human Settlements, the Committee resolved to

conduct an oversight visit to the Wolwedans Housing Project in Grootbrakrivier to observe the status of the housing project.

This Committee report discusses the Committee's findings to date. It also includes the findings and recommendations stemming from the over site visit undertaken by the Committee on 5 May 2015.

## **2. Overview of the visit**

The Committee conducted an oversight visit to the Wolwedans Rehabilitated Housing Project in Grootbrakrivier, Mosselbay on 5 May 2015. The visit started with a meeting at 09:00am in the Old Council Chambers at the Grootbrakrivier Municipal Office. Representatives of the Department of Human Settlements, the Mayor, Municipal officials, Structural Engineers from Aurecon (Consulting engineers for the Wolwedans Housing Project) and members of the public were in attendance.

During the meeting the Department briefed the Committee on the status of the Wolwedans Housing Project. In addition hereto, Mr Thiart from Aurecon briefed the Committee on the design, defects and remedial work that was implemented on the Housing Project.

After the meeting the Department, municipal officials, Aurecon and members of the public accompanied the Committee on a walk-about of the Rehabilitated Housing Project.

## **3. Background on the Wolwedans Housing Project**

The Mosselbay Municipality embarked on a programme to upgrade the living conditions of people living in informal settlements in the Grootbrakrivier area. Acquiring suitable land for relocation and the upgrading of informal settlements proved challenging. To ensure optimal land usage, all informal settlements in the area were combined and integrated with the formal Wolwedans and the adjacent Green Haven areas. Through a combination of incremental in situ upgrading and relocation of households, approximately 675 housing opportunities were created.

Construction on the slopes in Wolwedans was deemed to be challenging. Skilled engineering and design solutions were required to construct suspended reinforced concrete slabs on end bearing piles to prevent excessive settlement.

During the time of construction in Wolwedans, extreme dry spells were experienced and piling was performed in overly dry soil. Extreme seasonal climate conditions which veered from very dry spells to excess rain, resulted in water retention which adversely affected the foundations of the structures. The variation in heat levels, water retention and the difference in the material fibre utilised for construction had an adverse effect on the structures foundation. This resulted in cracks in the walls and foundation slabs. During this time no provision was made for stormwater management systems and/or stabilizing interventions due to budgetary constraints.

The defects stemming from the Wolwedans community was recorded in the petition by Mr John Jacobs and was escalated to the Standing Committee on Human Settlements for further investigation.

The Committee held several meetings in this regard, before conducting an oversight visit to Grootbrakrivier observe the status of the Wolwedans Housing Project.

#### **4. Findings and observations**

The Committee proceeded to a walk-about of the Wolwedans Rehabilitated Housing Project and observed the following:

##### **4.1 Warping foundations**

During the walk-about the Committee members were invited into the houses of community members to observe the cracks in their structures. They pointed out cracks in the foundation slab as well as warping slabs under the structures.

Aurecon in their report dated 22 April 2015, indicated that the warping slabs did not compromise the structural integrity of the structures. DMS Consulting Structural Engineers in their report on the Wolwdans Housing Project dated 21 April 2015 corroborated the statement. They indicated that the warping was caused by the lack of temporary support props during the curing of the slab.

##### **4.2 Cracks in the walls**

The majority of the structures in the Wolwedans Housing Project had diagonal cracks spreading from windows, doors and air vents. These cracks were reported to be superficial cement cracks and could be fixed with a filler when routine maintenance was done.

Mr Thiart of Aurecon indicated that the cracks were caused by temperature variations that caused the material used to either expand or contract. He indicated the cracks were superficial and would not affect the structural integrity of the structure.

##### **4.3 Horizontal cracks in the “V” joints**

Numerous houses throughout the walk-about had horizontal v joint cracks where the structural walls connected.

Aurecon reported that these cracks only affected the cement and did not extend to the structural wall. They attributed the occurrence of the cracks to the expansion and contraction of the cement when subjected to temperature variations. These cracks they informed would not affect the stability of the structure and could be fixed with a filler during routine maintenance.

##### **4.4 Stabilisation of street embankments**

Throughout the walk-about the Committee was able to observe the construction of retaining walls and sidewalks. The Department informed the Committee that an amount of R9 million was allocated to the Mosselbay Municipality for stormwater management systems and retaining walls to stabilize the slopes in Wolwedans and to deflect water away from properties.

#### **4.5 Leaking geysers**

The Wolwedans community members informed the Committee members that they were experiencing problems with their geysers. They indicated that it was leaking water and requested the Committee to assist them in having the matter remedied.

#### **4.6 Structural defects**

The petition by Mr John Jacobs listed two houses which were deemed to be structurally defective. In addition hereto house numbers 4064 and 4093 were identified as structurally defective. Cracks had formulated in the block slab (foundation) and the walls of the structures. The cracks spread throughout the main living areas and were visible in both the inside and outer walls. The defects to the two houses were never reported nor were they included on Mr Jacobs's petition.

Aurecon informed the Committee that a structure would only be deemed defective if the foundations deflected. They informed the Committee that any deflections which had been reported in the Wolwedans structures were within the design parameters and posed no threat to the stability of the structures.

The Royal Haskoning Report indicated that the structural stability of the structures in Wolwedans should be monitored on a regular basis to ensure that foundations have no further deflection.

#### **4.7 Budgetary implications**

In the Medium Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) 2015/2018 and the 2014 Adjusted Estimates of Provincial Expenditure Speech, Minister Ivan Meyer indicated that an amount of R6 million was granted to the Department of Human Settlements, specifically for Housing Rectification Projects in Mosselbay.

In addition to the aforementioned, the Department indicated in a report dated 29 April 2015, that an additional amount of R9 million had been approved to assist the Mosselbay Municipality with drainage challenges experienced in Wolwedans, Grootbrakrivier.

In March 2015, a partial amount of R4.5 million, derived from the R9 million above was given to the Municipality for the construction of Phase 1 of the storm-water Channels, retaining walls and sidewalks. The remaining R5 793 915.00 was handed over to the Municipality in this (2015/2016) financial year for the finalisation of the project. The Department indicated that 70% of the work has already been completed and that Phase 1 of the project should be finalised by 30 June 2015.

### **6. Recommendations/Actions**

The Committee RECOMMENDED that the Department:

- 6.1 Ensure that Mr Jacobs is updated on all repair work done on the houses in Wolwedans.
- 6.2 Repair the defects stipulated in the petition including those of houses number 4064 and 4093 by 30 September 2015.
- 6.3 Determine the validity of the warranty on geysers and provide the necessary assistance with having the faulty geysers replace or repaired.

- 6.4 Assist the municipality in strengthening consumer education workshops, to create awareness in terms of maintenance and to educate the Wolwedans community on how to identify and report structural defects.



**MS LM- MASEKO (MPP)**

**CHAIRPERSON: STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS**

**DATE:** 23/06/2015

