



Above: Homeless people have been moved from Strandfontein to the city centre and are staying in tents next to the Culemborg site, which is being expanded for more homeless people. Below: Carlos Mesquita shows a paper stating he was screened for Covid-19 at the Strandfontein shelter. He says he was not tested for the virus, even though he was exposed to someone who carried it. Yazeed Kamaldien

Street people still homeless as new site not ready

By BULELWA PAYI May 30, 2020

CAPE TOWN - The City of Cape Town says the Culemborg site for the homeless is not ready to accommodate them.

A draft order issued by the Western Cape High Court on May 21 authorised the City to accommodate the homeless who were to be moved from the Strandfontein Temporary Shelter to the Culemborg safe site by no later than May 31.

Mayco member for community services and health Zahid Badroodien said yesterday that the City would not be able to move the homeless to the site as connection of utilities were taking longer than anticipated and would not be possible without correct occupation certificates.

There was no indication when the site would be ready.

Badroodien's statement came two days before the homeless people, who claimed they were dropped off on a pavement under the bridge in Culemborg in the city centre without food, drinking water and support services last Thursday evening, were expected to be moved into the site.

In terms of the draft court order, 96 people were to be accommodated at the site, whereas 178 people were "dropped" by law enforcement officers at Culemborg on May 21.

More than 1600 homeless people were accommodated in several tents at the site with one housing up to 600 people first and later 300.

Spokesperson for the Homeless Action Committee Carlos Mesquitta was among those who shared Tent No 2.

“We expressed our desire to engage City officials on the future of the homeless post the closure of Strandfontein, and after the confirmed positive case, the need for testing and to be quarantined, but these fell on deaf ears.

“Prior to us being taken to Strandfontein we were promised that the City would look after us. We had already been taken to Culemborg from various places and we were told to leave our stuff behind. We rode in luxury buses to Strandfontein.

“That was the worst experience of my life under the guardianship of the City, and I am also speaking on behalf of many,” Mesquitta said.

On May 21, the City shut down the camp as it regarded it as a temporary emergency site, adding that alternative shelter accommodation was being offered.

He said all of them had undergone private testing for Covid-19 and were still awaiting results.

He said their plight had now escalated to Premier Alan Winde.

Spokesperson Bianca Capazorio said the premier received correspondence from the Community Chest.

She said the premier indicated that should any of the group test positive, they would have access to the Western Cape government quarantine and isolation facilities.

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