

THE homeless sector has been trying to form a network to represent their interests.

But these once a month “get-togethers” are of very little value to their “clients”: the people living on the streets of Cape Town and those living in its few shelters.

In fact, it was mostly a day for playing “catch up” where *skinder* was the order the day.

The favourite topic always had something to do with the latest tender. The “whos”, the “how’s” and the “why’s”.

You found ways of convincing yourself that you were doing something significant and important when you went by attending these monthly meetings but truth be told, you were really just wasting half-a-day (the meeting is only an hour but the travel and the *skinder* and the lunch, well, half the day is gone by the time you get back to your office) – time which you could have better spent trying to convince a private donor to fund your worthy cause rather than keeping yourself bound in the chains of government funding.

The biggest failure of all these “building a network for the homeless sector” attempts was their absence.

SOAMI



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## THE HOMELESS MUST FIGHT FOR THEMSELVES

thought of asking one or two homeless people to join and contribute some “lived experience”.

It’s strange how even after Strandfontein and especially the manner in which homeless people claimed back their voices, people are still finding it difficult to let go of defining us all by virtue of our lack of accommodation.

We stood up for ourselves, took the City to court, spoke to the media, we conceptualised and effected it all ourselves.

All the official paperwork to set up the Strandfontein Homeless Action Committee might have been handwritten, but it was done by our hands and thought out by our brains.

It was good enough for a court of law to rule in our favour.

Our media and social media profile – we built that up.

Arriving back in the CBD and the City dumping us back on the streets saw this exposure rocket.

We asked no one for help, we were offered assistance because we were what in media circles you would refer to as “hot property” – so yes, we were approached and offered many opportunities.

These opportunities led to even bigger and better things which I will eternally be grateful for.

However, let’s be honest, no one would be trying to help us had we not shown we could help ourselves.

We all have a story to tell.

Mine happens to include being involved in this sector for several years prior to my homelessness.

This past week when I dared to

put forward a proposal for the sector (which by the way, I was asked to consider doing late last year),

I had to suddenly hear that I am “a wannabe homeless man who just happened to have been at the right place at the right time where I got given all these opportunities by Lorenzo Davids and Community Chest”.

And it is true a number of opportunities did come my way but it had nothing to do with right place and time.

It had mostly to do with knowledge, experience and damn hard work.

And that was only one of the negative comments that found its way to me.

Some of the opposition was malicious and some just ill-informed, but the fact remains that my “homelessness”, still defines and limits my capabilities for some.

Will this stop me, will it demotivate me?

No. I have put forward my proposal and hopefully a new and improved network for the homeless sector will see the light this year, with homeless people making up half the numbers – if I have anything to do with it.