

Kalk Bay and St James SRA

Social Development: A policy clarification

This clarification is in response to recent reports from some of our residents that the SRA or persons acting on its behalf have “given permission” to some homeless people to stay on our streets, either indefinitely or temporarily, for example while awaiting the issue of new ID documents.

The opening sentence of the SRA’s Social Development Strategy states that “Everyone is entitled to human rights, including the right not to be harassed or intimidated”. The Strategy can be seen on the SRA’s website www.kalkbaystjamesra.org.

The SRA, including any person acting on its behalf, has no mandate or authority to “give permission” to any homeless person to remain on our streets, either permanently or for any temporary reason, and has not done so. To do so would in any event be counter to the core aim of the SRA’s Social Development strategy, which is to assist homeless people off the streets.

Recent reports to the effect that the SRA, or its Social Development Coordinator, is facilitating the criminal activities of persons with known criminal records by providing social assistance to them also requires clarification.

It is often difficult to discern the boundary between those who are genuinely in need of and desire social assistance and those who use homelessness as a disguise (or excuse) for criminal activity and attempt to use the SRA’s social assistance as further cover for this purpose. The SRA’s core policy is to provide social assistance only to those in our community who are in genuine need and desire social assistance and are not suspected by the SRA’s Social Development Coordinator of being engaged in significant criminal activity, unless exceptional personal circumstances apply and/or the City’s Reintegration Unit determines that social assistance is advisable.

The SRA Social Coordinator reports all homeless people she encounters to the City Law Enforcement team at Muizenberg in accordance with standard procedure. In the case of a recent group of homeless men suspected of criminal activity, some of whom have known criminal records, their presence has repeatedly been reported to Law Enforcement by the SRA’s Social Development Coordinator and by local residents. Law Enforcement are closely monitoring this group.

Our SRA has a proud record of providing social help to those in need in our community. Our Social Development Co-ordinator and her predecessors have many successes of assisting street people and children off the streets, sometimes into jobs and/or reunited with their families.

Recent examples include assisting two homeless men apply for SASSA grants and thereby to enable them to get off our streets. Also, two sets of married homeless couples have recently been assisted off the streets.

However, due to the general state of the economy and the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic there has been a very significant increase in homeless people throughout Cape Town, including, to a lesser extent, in our SRA.

A recent Supreme Court decision to the effect that during the current state of emergency no person may be evicted from his or her “home” and that no person’s “place of residence” may be demolished has inevitably made the issue much more complex.

Our residents are again reminded that the sad problem of homelessness and its associated social problems must be addressed by all as a community. Please therefore take note of the following:

- Report any incidence of homelessness to the relevant authorities in accordance with the procedures outlined on our website, which are included as an attachment to this note. **Call either of these toll-free numbers: 107 or 021-480 7700**
- Report any structure in the process of being constructed as soon as possible to City Law Enforcement on either of the above toll-free numbers.