

Cape Times 17.12.1

## City moves will not solve causes of Masi problems and won't prevent further fires

THE Active Citizen's Alliance of Cape Town (ACACT) notes the recent devastating fire at Masiphumelele (Masi) with deep concern, supports Mary Turock's challenge to the City to regard this tragedy as a test case, "Help after Masi fire" (Cape Times, December 1), and recognises the City's ongoing attempts to create roads and to reblock the area since the fire.

ACACT is concerned that the City has not provided additional local land for the continuing influx of people into Masiphumelele.

We are also concerned that the Masi Community (like many communities, including those in the leafy suburbs) has no organised and representative voice with which to liaise with the City to resolve the land, sanitation, fire and related problems of Masi.

While the disaster response measures by the City are important, they do not solve the root causes of crowded living conditions and health hazards, and are therefore unlikely to prevent future fires.

Although we acknowledge that the City has sought to create clearly defined streets and re-blocking as a part of the reconstruction effort in the area, ACACT doubts that these efforts will succeed without making additional land available. The absence of lasting solutions is leading to growing anger and frustration, which we are concerned will lead to ongoing destruction and possible loss of life.

A recent SA Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) Report proposes

## No more fires

Dr Lutz van Dijk, Clovelly

Every tragedy has the potential to teach us solutions. Scarborough resident Ushka Mrkusic wrote: "Just one water tap – one household... this is the basic appeal" (Echo letters, Thursday December 10).

And the City's Mayco member for human settlements, Benedicta van Minnen, is quoted, in the same issue: "The community has worked with us and enabled us to get the site ready in the shortest time humanly possible" ("Building kits issued", Echo, Thursday December 10).

The City and all its officials, our ward councillor and many volunteers from inside

gratulated this time. Not only is the previous disaster area rebuilt, but serious efforts were made to create at least some small access roads.

And also for the first time: The community leaders and residents of the affected areas were consulted and most cooperative (despite many challenges like those residents who are renting and not on any list to get disaster relief). This can also inspire how we can work together to avoid fires in the future.

Let's be honest – most of the more than 10 000 residents of the informal settlement Wetlands in Masi are still living under the permanent threat of new fires. To invest in the prevention of such disasters is not only humanly required, but

