

MES opens a new safe space for the homeless in Durbanville

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MES (Mould Empower Serve) is proud to announce the opening of the Durbanville Safe Space, a robust further initiative set to positively impact the lives of homeless individuals, extending the service of the NGO to the people in need across the northern suburbs of Cape Town.



"The newly renovated building, the Durbanville Safe Space, represents a joint effort between MES and the City of Cape Town to restore dignity, safety, and essential services to Durbanville's homeless community," states Leona Pienaar, CEO at MES. "It is strategically located within the bustling city centre and a testimony to the power of partnership and public welfare."

Cape Town Metro Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis officiated the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Other dignitaries in attendance were Alderman Theresa Uys, Mayoral Committee Member; Carin Viljoen, Manager of Corporate Services at City of Cape Town; Megan Pangen, Head: Street People Programme at the Department of Social Development and ECD; Ruan Beneke, Councillor for Ward 105, as well as key partners and MES staff who have tirelessly worked to realise this project.

This initiative directly responds to increasing homelessness in Durbanville and aims to offer more than just shelter. At the MES Durbanville Homeless Support Centre in Queen Street, MES has served 6577 meals for the past year. The centre assisted 40 people with ID applications and assessed 157 beneficiaries, while 151 change readiness workshops were hosted for 1524 attendees, preparing them to make a meaningful contribution to society.

"There are no similar centres in the immediate area. Recent homelessness studies have highlighted the overwhelming need in the Western Cape and Cape Town. The Durbanville Safe Space will be a flagship for furthering successful rehabilitation programs," says Pienaar.

The growing concern regarding the number of homeless people living in Durbanville - without access to alternative accommodation nearby - was the main driver to obtaining the urgent lease for our Safe Space. MES chose not to wait for a tender to be drafted, budgeted and advertised. If Durbanville's Safe Space had to follow the normal Tender and Supply Chain Management route, MES would likely only have been able to open a safe space in this area in 2027.

MES is immensely thankful that the capital upgrades have been completed and the Occupational Certificates have been obtained. The next obstacle for MES will be to secure operational funding to ensure the space runs effectively.

The monthly operating costs are projected at R130,000. MES is actively pursuing financial backing from public donations, businesses, churches, foundations, and the City of Cape Town's Winter Readiness programme to maintain the facility's crucial services. The MES Durbanville Safe Space is designed to aid in reintegrating those committed to positive change, supporting 40 beneficiaries monthly through a multi-phased programme that reinforces personal development and eventual sustainable re-entry into the community. With space for 20 males and 20 females, preference is given to participants in MES's Change and Work Readiness Programmes.

The opening event unveiled a structure and revealed the heart of a community dedicated to uplifting its most vulnerable members. "There is a pressing need for a comprehensive strategy to address homelessness in our inner-city communities. Creating low barrier entry points, like safe spaces, is crucial for a person's recovery," says Pienaar. "The mayor's presence and endorsement reflect his and the City's acknowledgement of the essential role that MES and its safe havens play in the recovery and care of homeless individuals, signalling an enduring commitment to the cause."

The mayor officiated the ribbon-cutting ceremony at 2 New Street, symbolising a fresh start for many and the unwavering support of the wider community.

"Establishing the MES Durbanville Safe Space marks a critical milestone, effectively doubling the available shelter beds in surrounding areas. In light of studies revealing extensive cash handouts exacerbating drug addiction and hampering rehabilitation, the MES Durbanville Safe Space and accompanying programmes present a sustainable alternative that fosters genuine social rehabilitation. MES urges the public to support Responsible Giving by handing out Mi-change vouchers instead of cash to informal car guards and people standing at intersections (www.michange.org)," Pienaar concludes.

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MES (Mould Empower Serve)



MES is a Christian integrated social development organisation that has been changing the heart of the city since 1986 and has been actively working towards providing sustainable solutions to pervasive poverty in the inner cities of Johannesburg, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Kempton Park.

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