

# Ballot holds hope of better future for tenants

Daily News Tuesday February 28 2006

People living in shacks want security of tenure. They want the best for their children, a better life for their families.

They struggle to eke out a living and have to live with the stigma of being criminals because of the action of a few neighbours.

Confused and angry that criminal elements in formal neighbourhoods do not tarnish the reputation of the rest of the residents, they give their votes to prospective councillors.

Five years on, their conditions have not improved because the councillor for their ward was too busy.

After all, to some, being a councillor means setting high standards, improving one's own life, attending to one's own family, investing in business ventures and making deals.

Tenants who find themselves in deplorable living conditions battling to meet high rentals, see hope in the ballot paper.

Often, people are terrified of the landlord or his agent or not sure who the owner is.

There are instances in the inner cities when sitting tenants are forced to give up a major part of their space so that several cubicles can be constructed in their flats.

New tenants, who need to have their own keys cut for their cubicles, move in. There are tenants who are forced to

“share” the building with criminal elements who conduct their business with the consent of the owner / agent.

Five years on, no one knows who the councillor is or how to get in touch with him or her.

The city's power is in the hands of tenants of private, public sector landlords, and the residents of the informal settlements.

How they chose to vote tomorrow determines their future. For some it is bleak because of unfulfilled promises by previous councillors.

For others, a better future is possible because of the direct impact on the quality of their lives through delivery.

Councillors have an edge over parliamentarians because they supposed to be the ears on the ground.

They ought to feel the pulse of the electorate and direct changes to ensure delivery.

They may forget their promises and even their constituencies; the vulnerable electorates will not.

Sayed Iqbal Mohamed  
Chairperson, Organisation of Civic Rights  
Member of the KwaZulu Natal Rental  
Housing Tribunal  
[www.ocr.org.za](http://www.ocr.org.za)