


## BACKYARD VOICES

### Engaging Effectively on Issues and Demands

Backyard housing, common in South African communities, involves living in separate homes on the same property, providing affordable housing for families who can't afford regular rent, currently waiting or don't qualify for government housing.

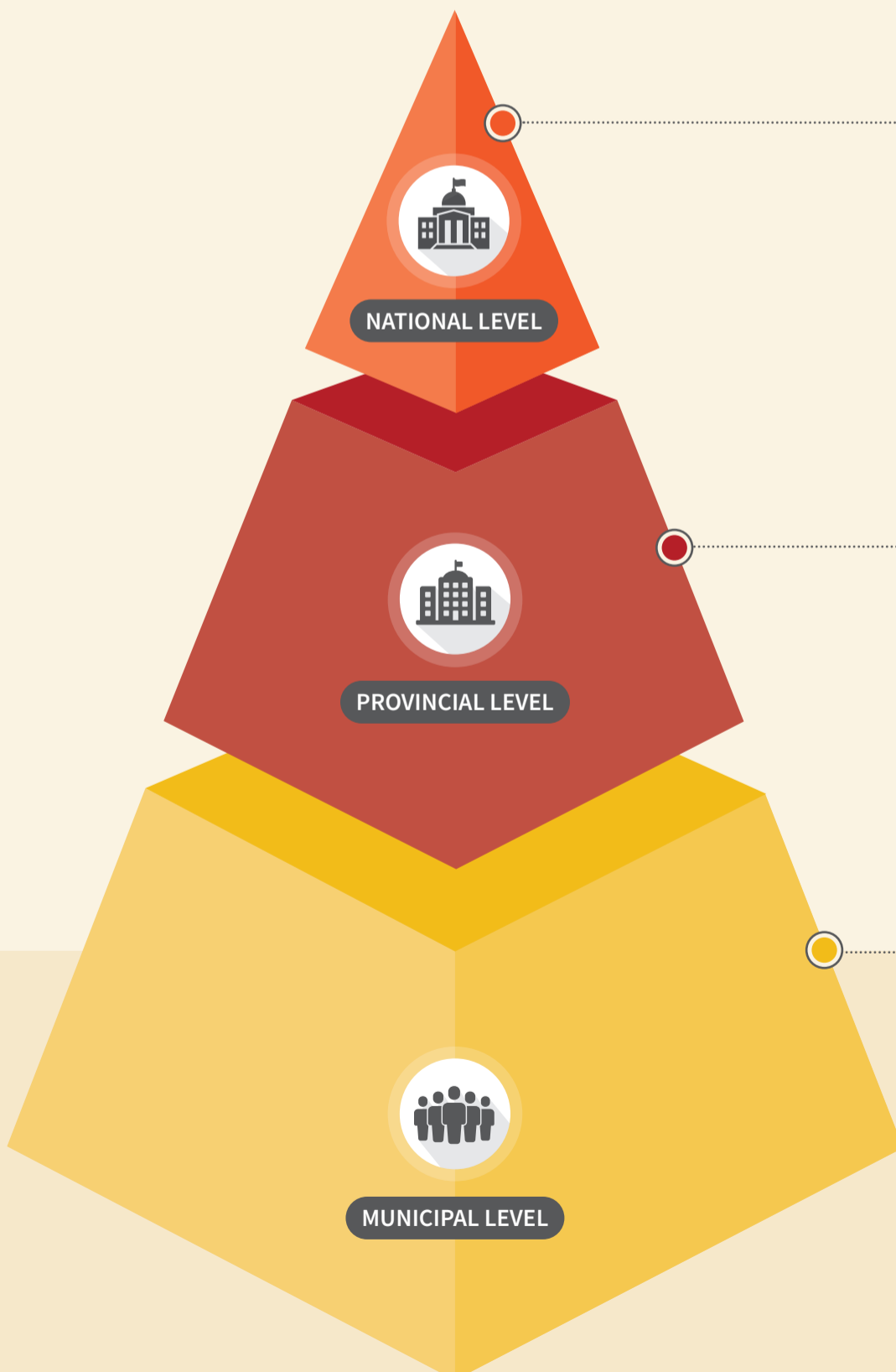
Backyard housing helps low-income families by giving them a place to live given the challenge of government-led housing programs falling short of meeting the demand. Despite its challenges, backyard housing remains crucial, especially for those living near jobs and public services.



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### THE KEY LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY DOCUMENTS THAT FRAME GOVERNMENTS APPROACH TO THE RENTAL SECTOR ARE



**NATIONAL LEVEL: Breaking New Ground (2004) Policy**  
 The Breaking New Ground (BNG) policy, officially known as the Comprehensive Plan for the Development of Sustainable Human Settlements, aims to address housing challenges and promote the development of sustainable human settlements. The key objectives of the BNG policy are to:

- Promote an integrated society by developing sustainable human settlements and quality housing within a subsidy system for different income groups.
- Utilize housing as an instrument for the development of sustainable integrated human settlements, supporting spatial restructuring.
- Combat crime, promote social cohesion, and improve the quality of life for the poor.

**NATIONAL LEVEL: Human Settlements Norms and Standards for Rental Housing (2023)**  
 Recent policies from the national government recognize backyard housing within the broader context of human settlements. Gazetted in 2023, the Human Settlements Norms and Standards for Rental Housing aim to bridge the fragmentation and gaps that exist in the sector. The key objective is to:

- Bring all norms and standards for rental housing together under one framework, as far as possible within the existing legislative and regulatory framework, while addressing inconsistencies and clarifying what is allowed and what is not. (p72).

**PROVINCIAL LEVEL: Backyard Housing policy**  
 Currently, there is no policy legislation from the provincial government to guide municipalities on backyard housing.











**PROVINCIAL LEVEL: Rental housing tribunal**  
 However, the Western Cape Rental Housing Tribunal, regulated by the Rental Housing Act, No. 50 of 1999, outlines the government's role in rental housing. The key objectives are to:

- Promote the provision of rental housing.
- Ensure a functioning rental housing market.
- Facilitate sound relations between tenants and landlords.
- Provide legal mechanisms to protect the rights of tenants and landlords respectively.

**MUNICIPAL LEVEL: Integrated Development Plan (IDP) 2022–2027: City of Cape Town focus on backyard dwellings.**  
 The city has introduced initiatives to support backyard dwelling communities. First, the Backyarder Programme, which began in 2014 with a pilot project, provided basic services to backyarders residing on Council-owned property. Currently, the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) focuses on the following:

- Energy Access Project
- Backyard Dwellings Service Project (City Public Rental Stock)
- Backyard Dwelling Service Support Project (Private Properties) (p59, IDP).

## ISSUES AND DEMANDS SHARED BY BACKYARD COMMUNITIES

ISSUES											
	Backyard sector lacks recognition and visibility to the public and policymakers.		Backyard dwellers face challenges accessing essential services like electricity, water, and sanitation, leading to health risks from overcrowding and inadequate living conditions.		Backyard dwellers have very little if any understanding of their rights and that this greatly compromised their security of tenure and access to basic services.		Backyard dwellers are excluded from decision-making processes, which are often top-down and fail to consider their needs.				
DEMANDS											
	The City of Cape Town (CoCT) needs a dedicated unit for backyard housing, like it has for informal settlements, to engage with backyard dwellers effectively.		Backyard dwellers seeking permanent homes through the government's low-income housing program (BNG) require transparency in the waiting list, especially since some mention they currently hold white and red cards, waiting for their turn. They want to ensure fair access to housing opportunities.		Government must provide service sites and give technical and financial support to beneficiaries who want to self build.		Hold the City of Cape Town accountable for implementing its backyard housing policies as outlined in the 2021. Human Settlements Strategy, and extend these to include backyarders in privately owned properties.		Increase bulk services in areas with high backyard housing density.		Enhance the role of the Rental Housing Tribunal in public education and dispute resolution for the backyard rental sector.

## STEPS TO EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Each participating resident's association should appoint a representative for backyard issues in order to form a committee to engage collectively with different spheres of government.

Share your concerns in community meetings and Whatsapp groups, ensuring all key issues are raised and there's clear action plans

Together, the committee will collaborate to prioritize the most pressing matters and decide on the next steps for advocacy.

Stay informed as your representative reports back to you, providing updates and feedback from the government.















Your elected representative will compile these concerns accurately and comprehensively and present them to your broader committee.

Your representative will then engage with the relevant government department, advocating for your community's needs.

Amplify your message by utilizing broader media platforms such as SABC and social media, spreading awareness and rallying support for your cause.

## RELEVANT DEPARTMENTS TO APPROACH

NATIONAL LEVEL		MUNICIPAL LEVEL	
	Clearer on policy guidance on backyard housing		Access for basic services for backyard tenants
	Clear framework on the provision of site and services		Housing allocation policy and opportunities
National Department of Human Settlements			Issues of provision of title deeds
			Housing needs register (previously known as the housing database)
<b>DEPARTMENT OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS</b> Backyard housing is currently under department of informal settlements		<b>DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SETTLEMENT</b> <b>Telephone:</b> 021 444 0333 <b>Whatsapp:</b> 063 299 9927 <b>Email:</b> housing.db@capetown.gov.za or MyEstate@capetown.gov.za	
PROVINCIAL LEVEL		WARD LEVEL	
	Dispute between tenant and landlord		Issues with streetlights, safety, and all basic services issues in the ward
	Unlawful repossession of property and unlawful eviction		Ward budget participation
	Enquire about provincial housing projects	<b>RELEVANT WARD COUNCILLOR</b> The ward councillor will then direct the ward issues to subcouncil manager	
	Clear framework from province to guide municipalities on backyard housing		
<b>RENTAL HOUSING TRIBUNAL</b> <b>Contact centre:</b> 086 010 6166 <b>Please call me:</b> 079 769 1207 <b>SMS:</b> Help to 31022 <b>Dispute related enquiries</b> <b>Email:</b> rht.disputes@westerncape.gov.za			
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