



Leah Thelele, a resident of a Joburg council-owned block of flats in Windsor East, has to find ways to flush her toilet. She has been without water or electricity for almost two years. PICTURE: MUJAHID SAFODIEN

## Family fights for water, power

ANNA COX

TWO FAMILIES living in council-owned flats in Windsor East have been without water and electricity for 18 months.

They occupy two of the four flats in the complex, and claim they have been trying to get lights and water accounts from the city, as well as renewed leases, for months.

The Johannesburg Property Company (JPC), which manages the property for the city, said the tenants refused to pay for rates and services. It also claimed tenants were subletting to non-council employees.

When The Star visited, the block was empty except for three people, who claimed to be legitimate council employees.

Clement Nohashe has been in the flats for more than 10 years. Rent of R192 is deducted from his salary every month.

He said he had been asking for an electricity and water account for months.

Every Saturday, Nohashe takes buckets and other containers around the area, begging for water.

A petrol station agreed to give him water, but it's contaminated with grease and oil.

"We were desperate and took it, and used it to flush the toilets. We even take swimming pool water to bath in," he said.

They used gel and paraffin to cook, and his fridge is a small cooler bag. "That is how we live. The smell of the gel and paraffin gets to our lungs, and we battle to breathe."

Pikitup cleaner Leah Thelele has been living there since 1976 and owes the council R39 000. She gets a monthly electricity bill, but refuses to pay it because she gets estimates every month for

about R3 200 – although she has had no power for nearly two years.

Hazel Blatch, Nohashe's manager at the council, said she had been trying to assist him for almost two years.

"We all work for the council and try to help one another: I, and other colleagues, have been corresponding with the JPC and the council for months.

"They refer us to the council housing department, which wants nothing to do with this. There are dozens of letters and replies and promises of new lease agreements, but nothing gets done."

JPC spokesman Brian Mahalangu, however, said there had been numerous meetings with tenants, but they were refusing to pay.

"We could have had them evicted months ago, but are trying to seek a resolution."

