

Trying to rent

WE HAVE heard a lot about Windhoek property prices in the local press from the point of view of those trying to buy houses. But what about those unfortunate few who are attempting to rent a house here at the moment. My own experience may be of interest.

I arrived in Windhoek on April 2 to begin lecturing at the university. On Friday (7th) I telephoned all 19 estate agents listed in the Windhoek directory. Of these, only five had any property for rent and the total number of houses available was nine. The average monthly rental for these properties was R1995, approximately two third of my net salary.

I would hope to find a three-bedroomed house with a small garden, for my family which includes two children and two dogs. The cheapest house of this kind available, according to the agents, would still have absorbed more than half my salary after tax. Should I sell my eight year old bakkie in order to buy a newer car with seats for my two children, then the repayments will further reduce my income after expenditure on food and electricity to the point where a doctor's bill or car service would put us into the red.

If I am having this sort of trouble as a university head of department, how can other newcomers to Windhoek survive unless supported by Untag salaries or company rent subsidiaries? The town seems suddenly to have become a jungle full of cynical and avaricious property landlords, unrestrained by any semblance of local rent control or moral concessions to providing "value for money".

If we are to attract the kind of skilled personnel to Windhoek who are needed to train Namibians in the roles currently occupied by outsiders such as myself, then either the excesses of local landlords must be curbed, or there must be a considerable improvement in the inducements offered by local employers, particularly in the state sector.

I left South Africa for political reasons. I would hate to have to leave Namibia for purely economic ones.

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