3. The addition of backyard rooms provides accommodation that is more responsive to diverse household arrangements where families are rarely nuclear - mom, pop and 2.5 kids - but more likely to comprise grannies looking after AIDS orphans, extended families, women headed households, and multiple households.

4. The addition of backyard rooms improves the supply of much-needed affordable rental accommodation, fulfilling the needs of an estimated 80% of the population who cannot afford formal rental housing. Cheap rental options are necessary in the context of ongoing migrancy where work in cities, but maintain links with families elsewhere and in the context of increasing labour mobility where urban residents are forced to move in search of jobs.

5. From a municipal perspective backyard rooms are a far less alarming manifestation of informality than freestanding shacks which are often erected on inappropriate or unsafe land. Backyard rooms are built on land that has already been zoned as residential.

It is for these reasons that backyard rooms are increasing being seen as a solution to South Africa’s housing shortage rather than a problem.

Continued on Panel 2.