

# SA in global plan to limit plastic blight

Numerous events around the world this week highlight the impact of the product in our seas. **Zamo Phungula and Fred Kockott report**

**I**N KWAZULU-NATAL, the endemic plastic litter problem, extending from city streets to communities in river catchment areas, becomes obscene after heavy rains, our beaches clogged with vast amounts.

But it need not be this way, say Plastics SA sustainability director Douw Steyn and Catherine Constantinides, head of Miss Earth South Africa's leadership programme.

Speaking at a World Ocean Day breakfast at uShaka Marine World on Thursday, Steyn and Constantinides said that, worldwide, pollution had been singled out as a major threat to the oceans.

But plastic was integral to every aspect of our lives, particularly in protecting food from contamination, said Steyn. It is where we use it, how we use it and what we do with it that was important.

To address the problem,



Catherine Constantinides, head of Miss Earth South Africa's leadership programme, helped launch Plastic SA's Operation Clean Sweep at uShaka Marine World on Thursday. PICTURE: ZAMO PHUNGULA

Plastics SA this week launched the South African chapter of Operation Clean Sweep – a worldwide drive to reduce the amount of plastic pellets ending up in rivers and, ultimately, the ocean.

Steyn said nearly all plastic products were made from pellets the size of a sunflower seed (without the shell). Oper-

ation Clean Sweep aimed to keep these pellets where they belong – out of the natural environment.

He said every segment of the plastics industry had a role to play – from producers and importers of raw materials (pellets and flakes) to the converters (manufacturers of plastic products), as well as the



Plastic pollution is a typical sight on Durban's beaches after heavy rains. PICTURE: USHAKA SEA WORLD

recycling companies.

"It is really all about containment and implementing good housekeeping and pellet, flake, and powder containment practices," said Steyn.

The goal: zero pellet, flake, and powder loss.

Endorsing Operation Clean Sweep, Constantinides said retailers and the public at large also had a vital role to play in ensuring that plastic products and waste did not end up polluting the environment.

She said in the build-up to World Ocean Day, which was on Thursday, Miss Earth SA ambassadors took part in

100 beach clean-ups across the country.

"But it's not just cleaning up that's important, but educating and creating awareness," said Constantinides. "Unfortunately, the reality is that if we don't educate, we will continually do clean-ups for the next 20 years of World Ocean Day."

You can read more about World Ocean Day initiatives at [www.rovingreporters.co.za](http://www.rovingreporters.co.za).

These stories form part of Roving Reporters Ocean Watch series supported by the Human Elephant Foundation and The Blue Fund, a joint initiative of Grindrod Bank and Wildlands.

In celebrating World Ocean Day on Thursday, Durban South Tourism, Sodurba, launched its whaling history tours in association with various stakeholders, including Wildlands WhaleTime project which engages the public in monitoring the migration of the marine mammal along the KZN coast from June to December each year. WhaleTime project manager Rachel Kramer, right, and Nomfundo Mseleku are hoping Durban will bid to become a Whale Heritage Site at the forthcoming World Whale Conference in Durban from June 24 to 29. See [www.worldwhaleconference.org](http://www.worldwhaleconference.org). PICTURE: FRED KOCKOTT



PICTURE: FRED KOCKOTT

## Outcry over neglect of police horses

TRIBUNE REPORTER

THERE was public outcry on social media yesterday in reaction to Durban's metro police horses being neglected and starved.

The equestrian unit's 14 horses went without food for three days last week and did not have shavings this week due to issues with processing and delivery of essential items.

Members of the unit forked out their own money to feed the horses.

A source at the eThekweni Municipality said their complaints to the supply chain management had fallen on deaf ears.

"It happens time and time again. Orders get sent on time, but someone is not signing the orders off and the horses suffer. These animals need to be fed and cared for, just like human beings."

Abie Martin commented on Facebook: "The sad state of these horses' lives reflects the sad state of our nation. If government cannot even look after its horses, how will it ever be able to take care of its people?"

Another Facebook user, Ange Schoeman, said: "This is utterly shameful. Animals can't talk for themselves, let alone go out and get food for themselves, but we expect them to work. Shame on you!"

Steve Middleton, the deputy head of operations at metro police, said after the story was published online, food and other necessities had been delivered.

## EnviroServ Health risk report challenged

NKULULEKO NENE

A HEALTH risk management report presented by independent experts appointed by EnviroServ has been challenged by the affected communities as it was only limited to the landfill site.

The landfill monitoring special committee meeting held at the Shongweni Durban club on Wednesday night was delayed after some arguments on who should chair the gathering.

Environmental activist Desmond D'Sa fired the first salvo at independent environmental consultant Dr David Baldwin's audit report when he referred to it as a "lack of critical information" on the part of the affected communities.

"That report cannot be

accepted. Have you spoken to people whose cattle have died due to poisoned water? Your report is in isolation and should be reviewed because you, as the professional, have not spoken to the people affected," he said.

D'Sa said the committee was calling for a review due to a lack of consultation with the affected communities.

However, Baldwin said his job was not to go to the communities but to look at the issue of licensing and study previous reports before approving it.

"We did a health risk assessment on site, not on the communities," said Baldwin.

Grant Walters, the deputy director general for enforcement management inspector-

ate within the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA), who was present, raised concerns, saying there were gaps in the report.

Civil group Upper Highway Air director Lauren Johnson also blamed EnviroServ for deliberately misrepresenting the hydrogen sulphide readings on its presentations to the community and the DEA, saying they were non-compliant.

"We are waiting for EnviroServ to file its affidavit on the mystery polluter it blames for the health impacts. It's inability to do so to date is telling," Johnson said.

EnviroServ chief executive Dean Thompson said the company had engaged with the community since the issue of the smell in the area was

first brought to its attention in April last year.

"We called a town hall meeting and agreed to participate in a working group with members of the community...Regular updates were sent to the community members who attended these meetings," he said.

Thompson said the scope of work was instructed by the department and municipality. "EnviroServ was ordered to investigate fugitive emissions from the landfill and their subsequent health impacts."

He said EnviroServ agreed in principle to a peer review.

"We maintain that the site has been operated in a compliant manner. We are continuing with all agreed-upon remedial measures which are progressing well," he said

## Gory shoot-out scene leaves residents reeling

NKULULEKO NENE

A GUN battle in the middle of the night claimed the lives of nine people this week, among them a policeman and eight suspected ATM bombers.

Residents of the Mpumalanga township near Hammarsdale would have been asleep in their homes as the gun battle between police and criminals raged in the streets.

By Monday morning, a night after the prolonged gun battle, relatives had to step over blood-drenched bodies, as they were loaded onto a mortuary van while forensic officers combed the scene.

The battle claimed the life of National Intervention Unit member Warrant Officer Duncan Ndabezinhle Zwane, 44.

The other eight killed were all suspects. Among them were Celimpilo Mbeje, age unknown, Theminkosi Ndlovu, 37 and Thembelani Dlamini, 25. The rest have yet to be identified.

Zwane was hailed as a hero by his colleagues, who had come under fire with him when they spotted a gang of men, who were allegedly about to bomb an ATM.



Joseph Khwela and his daughter Mayo point to a spot where dead bodies lay after the shoot-out. PICTURE: NKULULEKO NENE

Police spokesperson Captain Ngobile Gwala said the shoot-out ensued when the police intercepted them.

The suspects fled to nearby bush where more gunshots were exchanged with the police, who killed three of them.

"The team continued the search for members of this armed gang and a second group were tracked to a home-stead in the Mophela area.

"In another exchange of gunfire, a further five suspects were fatally wounded," Gwala said.

During the processing of the scenes, police recovered two rifles, four handguns, five explosive devices, two detonators, gas masks, goggles, gloves and two stolen cars.

When the Sunday Tribune visited the first shooting scene where three suspects were killed, blood stains were still

visible on the road. A 74-year-old pensioner, Gogo Ncwane, who lives near the shoot-out area, was in shock.

"I feared a bullet would come through the bedroom window and hurt me. I heard the footsteps of people running in the yard."

"I ducked under the bed until it was quiet. The next morning we picked up bullet shells in the yard. I have never seen something like this," Ncwane said.

At the last shoot-out scene in Mophela, sleeping residents were awakened to more gunshots as police pounced on the suspects at a house, where five suspects were killed.

The owner of the house, Joseph Khwela, 64, and his daughter, Mayo Khwela, were also busy cleaning the blood-stained walls and floors where two suspects died, while three others died in the yard.

"I saw blood everywhere. Dead bodies had bullet wounds in the head and neck," Khwela said.

Khwela said the shooting had shaken the whole neighbourhood. They were gossiping that the house was used as a hideout by criminals.

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### Campaign takes edge off winter

AS WINTER bites across the country, Independent Media and Gift of the Givers once again embark on our Winter Warmth partnership campaign with the support of Shoprite/Checkers.

The aim of the campaign, previously run by the disaster relief organisation and our Joburg sister newspaper, The Star, is to deliver a larger quantity of blankets, new clothing and food parcels and provide hot meals during certain distributions. The Shoprite Group has already contributed 17 400 blankets and 7 000 food parcels to the campaign. Many more are expected. Support has also come in from the Foschini Group which has given us 40 000 blankets over the past few months valued at R6 million, many of which have already been distributed.

The official campaign commences tomorrow. Corporates and the public are encouraged to help us make a difference in the lives of so many vulnerable people in our country. There are many ways to make a contribution. We encourage the purchase of food items, blankets or both. Donations can be dropped off with Gift of the Givers, or at Independent's main branches in each region. Alternatively, these items can be purchased specifically at select Shoprite/Checkers stores in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, Western Cape and Kimberley and Gauteng.

All items will be handed to Gift of the Givers to distribute throughout the country. Cash contributions can go into Gift of the Givers, Standard Bank, Pietermaritzburg, Account number 052137228, branch code 057525. Send deposit slips to [sooliman@giftofthegivers.org](mailto:sooliman@giftofthegivers.org). Section 18A tax certificates are issued on request. Intiaz Sooliman is on 083 236 4029.