

# Patrols to curb bridge attacks

## ●Woman hit by rock out of coma

Nathi Olifant

THE city has deployed several scholar patrols on bridges to curb rock-throwing attacks.

The city says the deployment of several scholar patrols, on 16 bridges prone to notorious rock-throwing incidents around eThekwinini, has helped reduce the number of such incidents.

However, the patrolling is currently only taking place during the day.

Deputy mayor Fawzia Peer, who chairs the security and emergency services committee, argued that since the patrollers were posted on February 18, there had not been a single rock-throwing incident reported.

“We definitely did not get any further incidents recorded lately from the bridges that are patrolled by metro police, the scholar patrols and the Expanded Public Works Programme personnel,” she said.

“But I’m told that some residential bridges are targeted and one incident took place on the Queensburgh Bridge. Otherwise all plans implemented and executed have yielded good results,” said Peer.

Durban and surroundings recently saw a spike in rock-throwing incidents, leaving several motorists injured and claiming the lives of two children.

Metro police acting deputy head Sibonelo Mchunu said yesterday that the city would like to post more personnel on other bridges.

“Unfortunately at night we cannot have the same scholar patrols manning the bridges and we have had to make do with our own metro police personnel from the dog unit and crime prevention,” said Mchunu.

He said it was important to first identify those bridges with a high number of incidents.

He said that at night the bridges were routinely patrolled by the K9 unit and Multi Operational Response Teams in marked and unmarked vehicles.

“This is yielding great results for us, as the number of rock-throwing incidents has drastically been reduced since we embarked on this exercise,” he said.

Peer, who also heads a task team set up by city manager Siphonzuza, said the city gets reports regularly from SAPS and metro police patrollers who are patrolling the bridges with-

in the eThekwinini jurisdiction. Peer’s task team consists of the SAPS, metro police, KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport, the Community Participation Unit, and the electricity and parks departments.

“It will be difficult to give you any accurate report on incidents that occur outside our municipality. Thus far we have had 10 incidents in the eThekwinini Municipality. Also, on some bridges, we have the Expanded Public Works Programme (personnel) who are under the Safer Cities Unit. The Huletts Bridge, where the kids

were killed by the rocks, is patrolled by them,” said Peer.

No time-frames have been given as to how long the bridges are going to be manned, with Peer saying “they will continue until further notice or receive further instructions”.

In January, eThekwinini mayor Zandile Gumede assigned Peer to develop a comprehensive report on the incidents.

Gumede pledged that, as the government, they would find both short-term and long-term solutions to the issue.

This was after the municipality

had met with the provincial government and other law enforcement agencies to devise plans to curb the throwing of stones and rocks from bridges across the city.

Asked whether the patrollers were being paid or volunteering, Peer said: “They are not voluntary and hence they are being compensated by the city,” but she would not divulge the remuneration structure.

The city, said Peer, was also in discussions with the SA National Roads Agency on the installation of steel barriers on the bridges as part of a long-term solution.