



The situation at the canal in Onverwacht Street as of the start of the month (Wednesday 1 June).

# Waste in canal 'a health hazard'

**Jamey Gordon**

**Despite a regular cleaning programme, the City of Cape Town cannot keep pace with the increasingly high levels of illegal littering and dumping in and around the canal in Onverwacht Street, Strand. It is something that requires much-needed community support.**

This came to light in council's response to a *DistrictMail* enquiry after a concerned resident turned to the newspaper in hopes of finding a solution to the dire situation causing an eyesore and posing great health risks to the community. The resident provided photos depicting the dirty and seemingly unmaintained canal, which has become a dumping site with piling household and solid waste.

Xanthea Limberg, Mayoral Committee member for Water and Waste, confirmed council is aware of the issue. She said the City conducts a regular cleaning programme, which involves the mechanical removal of litter at the location twice a year as well as continuous hand cleaning of the stormwater canals and underground pipes upstream in an attempt to remove the waste before it collects at the site.

"However, with current levels of littering and dumping upstream, the services cannot keep pace," Limberg said. "To see a significant improvement, communities will need to come together to prevent littering and dumping in canals."

She further shared that the canal was last cleaned on 21 and 22 April, and provided dated images as proof. She reiterated that the City conducted mechanical cleaning of the site at least twice a year, and canals upstream were accessed by Extended Public Works

Programme (EPWP) workers, who hand-cleaned continuously. She added that frequency of cleaning is dependent on available resources.

"The soonest mechanical cleaning can be done at the pictured area again is in October."

Asked what action has been prioritised to prevent or curb illegal littering and dumping at the site, Limberg said the City provided refuse collection throughout the metropole as well as area cleansing services in informal settlements and economic and recreational centres.

Formal areas receive weekly servicing of wheelie bins and informal areas are provided a weekly door-to-door refuse collection service, with bags provided, at no charge to the residents.

"We are also continuously communicating the importance of preventing littering and dumping, but it is unlikely residents will stop littering if it is accepted by the community," said Limberg. "With this in mind, the Solid Waste Management Department is working with the local subcouncil to set up workshops with community leaders around canal cleaning programmes, and how they can help influence communities not to dump in the canals."

Zahid Badroodien, Mayoral Committee member for Community Services and Health, said contact with the accumulation of refuse and sewage should always be avoided. "Refuse and sewage, if not removed, will result in the increase of rodent activity as well as fly breeding," he said.

"Contact with decomposing waste or sewage could cause various gastrointestinal illnesses as well as skin infections. Residents are advised to avoid contact with dumped refuse or sewage overflows."