

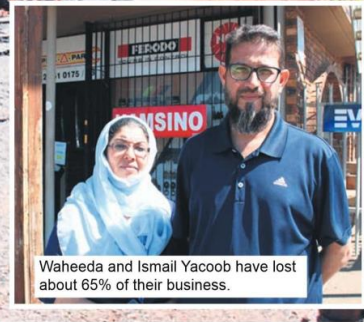


Publication: Rekord Centurion - Main
Title: Holes are sinking business
Publish date: 21 Apr 2023
Page: 1

Reach: 59929
AVE: R 76376.26
Author: Shaun Sproule



The newest sinkhole in Paul Kruger Road is still growing.



Waheeda and Ismail Yacoub have lost about 65% of their business.

Holes are sinking businesses

Shaun Sproule

Valhalla business owners are desperately asking for something to be done about the four sinkholes affecting access to their shopping complex.

The latest sinkhole formed two weeks ago on Paul Kruger Road, cutting off yet another route into the area.

"We are very frustrated. It all started just over six years ago at the dumpsite when the first sinkhole formed," said Waheeda Yacoub, who owns a parts supply store with her husband, Ismail.

"This road created a shortcut to bypass traffic, which made the shopping complex one that these people used all the time.

"It also helped alleviate the traffic conditions on the main roads," she said.

There was even a car that fell into that sinkhole.

"At the time, we were told to get a petition together and the community took it into their own hands to put it all together. We had thousands of signatures we handed over to the metro.

"Then the second sinkhole came. Right in front of someone's house."

Rekord spoke to nine of the business owners at the shopping complex who said that they thought that something would have been done by now as their petitions and the number of sinkholes would lead to action on the site.

But in October 2022, the third sinkhole formed on Snake Valley Road, affecting traffic through the area even further.

"Now, last week Monday, our fourth sinkhole came, closing off yet another road that feeds customers to our area."

The Yacobs told *Rekord* that their business has lost about 65% of its sales as a result of the sinkholes.

"If we make two or three sales in a day, it's a good day. We have even had to keep



We have to go all the way around. We are losing business. We have had to retrench people because our turnover is gone.

Brian Jaffe, hardware store owner

open on Sundays and public holidays to make ends meet."

Azghar Amod, who owns a petrol station at the shopping complex, said: "When we took over the garage, that first sinkhole was already about two years old.

"We were promised that everything would be repaired, we spoke to the mayor, and we did the petitions. They promised us the world. Two months later we lost that mayor, and then the new mayor resigned after that.

"The sinkholes have hit us by a lot. We were already trying to recover from the lockdown, now we are sitting with a situation where we have lost about 50% of our customers."

Brian Jaffe, whose hardware store opened about 60 years ago, said that even they struggle to get past the sinkholes.

"We have to go all the way around, our suppliers have to go around. But most of all, we are losing business.

"We have had to retrench people because our turnover is gone."

Armenio Souza, a butcher, has lost many regular customers.

He lives in Irene and has to find his way around the sinkholes on his way to work, such as the large one on John Vorster Drive before he reaches the four sinkholes throttling the businesses.

"When the sinkhole happened nearly seven years ago, we were getting clients from Erasmia and Raslouw. Now of those regulars, I only have the one that makes the journey about once a month. The others are all gone. The Lyttelton side ones are gone completely."

Souza said that apart from the little action over the past seven years, the business owners struggle to get any information from authorities about the sinkholes.

"They always tell us separate things. You ask the military, they tell you it's the government's responsibility to fix them. You ask the metro, they say it is the military's."

Ward councillor Ina Strijdom has been following the situation since it started and was involved in the petitions collected after the first sinkhole was formed.

"Sinkholes in my ward remain a huge problem," she said.

Strijdom said that the Alaric Road sinkhole was ranked third on the priority repair list by the end of last year. "It's not only a headache for me, but also has a huge financial impact on the business sector in Valhalla."

She confirmed that the Paul Kruger/Snake Valley roads sinkhole is on military property and thus the responsibility of the Department of Public Works.

The sinkhole in Wierda Road is the responsibility of the Gauteng roads department as it is on a provincial road.

"These sinkholes also cause major traffic problems with the roads being closed."