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# Attorney shuns filthy court

Proceedings halted after local attorney refuses to appear, citing deplorable and unbearable conditions of the building

**CHRIS NDALISO**

A civil matter in the Pietermaritzburg Magistrate's Court was halted this week after local attorney Nansen Sangham refused to appear before the court, citing the deplorable and unbearable conditions of the building.

Sangham said the unhygienic state, that posed a health risk to everyone present in the courtroom, was no place for anyone to work in and appealed to the presiding officer to adjourn the matter on Tuesday.

"It was still 9 am, but it was extremely hot. All the air conditioners were not working.

"I approached the magistrate in the civil court and told him that it was difficult to work under such conditions. It's not only about the air conditioning, it's about hygiene in general.

"The leaking toilets and many other issues are a health hazard to employees in the building. Such conditions are in contravention of the occupational safety and health provisions," said Sangham.

"The senior magistrate who was presiding over the matter understood my concern and granted me an adjournment.

"The court has a budget for fixing these issues, but we do not know what they do with the money," he added.

"The Witness recently reported on the deplorable conditions at the Pietermaritzburg Magistrate's Court.

An employee who spoke to *The Witness* reported that the conditions at the court building had led to some employees falling ill.

"The air conditioning is [never working]. There are no windows so there is no circulation, which is why we are getting sick constantly.

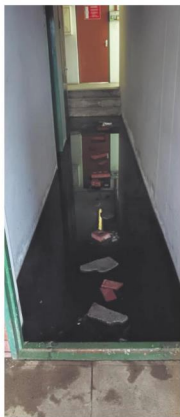
"It was over 30° Celsius [recently] and the aircon was not working, there was no ventilation and it was just unbearable," the employee said.

The employee added that a passage leading to the staff parking at the back of the building, near the case archives, is flooded with sewage. Loose bricks have been placed as stepping stones so that staff can reach the parking.

"There is raw sewage flowing out of the building into the parking area that we have to step into when we get in or out of our vehicles. The doors in certain courts don't close properly.

"The carpets in the courtroom are worn out, have holes, and are very dusty, and it's contributing to us having breathing difficulties and other health issues," the employee told *The Witness*.

Public Works spokesperson, Thamsana Mchunu said yesterday that the Department of Justice was responsible for the day-to-day management of the building.



Bricks have been placed across a flooded passageway at the Pietermaritzburg Magistrate's Court for staff to walk across. **PHOTOS: SUPPLIED**

"Each and every government

**“I approached the magistrate in the civil court and told him that it was difficult to work under such conditions. It's not only about the air conditioning, it's about hygiene in general.”**



Buckets have been placed to collect water dripping outside the holding cells at the Pietermaritzburg Magistrate's Court.

department has an allocation of R1 million per annum to fix such issues when they occur.

"The court manager and the Department of Justice should be accounting for the condition," said Mchunu.

The provincial labour department spokesperson, Nhlalhla Khumalo said the court management would be better placed to respond to specific concerns.

He said the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) and Occupational Health and Safety Act stipulate that employers, including court management, are responsible for providing a safe working environment for their employees.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act places responsibility on employers to identify and mitigate hazards in the workplace, he said.

"Our role is to support and enforce compliance with the Acts, ensuring that court management fulfils their obligations in addressing these issues.

"The Department of Employment and Labour is not responsible for the magistrate's court.

"Both the Acts require employers to ensure access to basic amenities such as water and sanitation facilities. The BCEA mandates that employers maintain a safe working environment for their employees," he added.

Justice department spokesperson, Stephen Mahlangu said he would respond today.

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## Residents rally to the rescue of community 'Good Samaritan'



Musa Ngubane with his bakkie that is now up and running after the community he serves came together to raise funds for its repair. **PHOTO: PRASHALAN GOVENDER**

**CHANEL GEORGE**

In his hour of need, Pietermaritzburg residents rallied to the rescue of community "Good Samaritan" Musa Ngubane, who provides a waste collection service across the city free of charge but makes money from the scrap.

When Ngubane's bakkie broke down in January and required R15 000 to repair, he thought his recycling business had come to an end. That was until the communities he serves banded together, raising R28 000 to get his business back on its wheels.

Ngubane, who runs Myaluzza Waste Management, has been serving the Pietermaritzburg community through his free waste collection service for over five years, after his employer relocated to northern KwaZulu-Natal in 2020.

Instead of relocating to keep his job, Ngubane, who did not want to leave Pietermaritzburg, made the tough decision to stay behind and

serve his community.

"I had to quickly think of a way to make an income for myself in order to provide for my children, which was when I discovered recycling by studying vagrants who collect plastic and cans in order to make money," said Ngubane.

He said he quickly realised that it was a great way to turn waste into money, however, the negative stigma around waste picking proved to be a challenge to his business idea.

Ngubane said after learning how to sort waste, he began speaking to residents in the city in an attempt to build a relationship to grow his new-found business venture.

"I now service more than 1000 houses a week, going house to house to collect recyclable waste from Scottsville, Pelham, Scottsville extensions, Epworth, Hayfields Primary School, Chase Valley, Chasedene, Hilton, Prestbury and Blackridge, which is all done with my bakkie," Ngubane said.

His weekly expenses come up to

R5000, which includes paying for fuel and five workers who sort the recycled waste. Sadly, Ngubane's vehicle broke down in January, putting him out of work for five weeks.

Stephanie Baleta, who assists Ngubane with his paperwork, said they thought the business would not survive when his bakkie broke down.

However, the absence of his services did not go unnoticed by his many customers, who after realising the impact his service had on communities, rallied together to raise funds to help him get his vehicle on the road again.

Baleta, who lives in Chase Valley, said the Chase Valley community put out an appeal for assistance and voluntary contributions started pouring in.

"We, as the Chase Valley community,

along with the help of the Clarendon Community Association, put out an appeal to our respective community groups to donate whatever they could to help Ngubane fix his bakkie," said Baleta.

Using the Clarendon Community Association's bank account, they were able to raise R28 000, almost double the amount required to fix Ngubane's vehicle. "The association assisted by paying the R15000 into the mechanic's account and the difference was sent to Ngubane," she said.

Thrilled to be back on the road again, Ngubane said, "I am still overwhelmed, and humbled by the gesture. I am glad to know that my work is appreciated by so many people," he said.

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