

GMDIRECT

Friday 12, MARCH 2021



Police warn on killer 'scrap' **p2**



Local fossils shake-up **p4**



Tributes for Chris Mann **p11**

Local hero

35 years of protecting the community



Calm before the storm... Makana Fire Services Manager William Welkom sips coffee before leaving home for another day of looking out for the safety of the municipality's residents. The born and bred Makhandia fire fighter this week celebrated 35 years of service. Story on pages 9 and 10. Photo: Sue MacLennan

GMDirect

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Covid-19 Cases: 3 377

Active Cases: 7

Recoveries: 3 237

Deaths: 133

Police warn on killer 'scrap'

By SUE MACLENNAN

"I have never heard anything so loud in my life – hours later it was still ringing in my ears. I was so frightened, I couldn't sleep last night and my child is still too scared to go outside."

eNkanini is still talking about the explosion that rocked the informal settlement on Monday 8 March. It blew a bag of scrap metal to pieces, threw the bag's owner five metres across the veld and left him with one broken leg and both legs full of shrapnel.

It was not a "bomb", although it was so loud that neighbours believed it was.

"It was very frightening," said one. "I just grabbed my baby and ran outside the house. That guy was lying on his back on the grass over there and he was bleeding.

"There was this big cloud of smoke in front of him."

It was so loud that residents came running from the other side of eNkanini.

"We got there later and there was already police tape all around the place," said a man who lives at the west end of the settlement, about one and a half kilometres from the shack where the explosion happened.

He described what he saw.

"The police had laid these things out in rows on the grass," he said. "They were lots and



lots of metal things that looked like prickly pears. More than 50."

In their report, the police only describe the item as an explosive device and so it can't be officially confirmed, but from that description, it seems likely it was one of several grenades.

The man lay on the ground, metres away from where he'd put the bag down, bleeding and in shock. Someone called an ambulance and he was taken to hospital.

When GMDirect visited the site of the blast on Tuesday, the man had been discharged from hospital and was recovering inside his tiny one-roomed shack in the settlement.

The police are obliged to charge a person found in possession of an explosive device, no matter what that person's reason or intention. The 33-year-old man is thus formally a suspect and therefore can't be identified until he's appeared in court and pleaded. For the same reason, we also haven't included his own account of events.

In SAPS's statement on Tuesday, Provincial Police spokesperson Brigadier Thembinkosi Kinana said Joza Police had been called out to eNkanini informal settlement around 8.45am on Monday 8 March after an explosive device detonated there.

"On arrival at the scene they found a 33-year-old outside his residence at eNkanini with injuries to his left leg," Kinana said.

The man had been collecting items at a field used by the Grahamstown Military base to sell as scrap metal.

"It is alleged that when he put the bag down at his residence it exploded and a shrapnel struck him in the left leg. He was taken to a

local hospital for treatment," Kinana said.

The Grahamstown police explosive unit was on the scene and the incident was also reported to the SANDF.

"The incident is currently being further investigated and a Serious Incident report according to Act 26 of 1966 Section 27 of the Explosives Act. A Possession of explosive devices incident was reported at Joza Police Station.

Access to the Army Base

GMDirect can confirm that most of the fences surrounding the Makhanda military base on the south and west boundaries have been destroyed or damaged since at least 2014. Fence poles have been lopped off near the ground and removed. For many years, metres and metres of barbed wire fencing has lain in the grass in the area, a hazard. Warning signs likewise lie scattered on the ground and obscured by vegetation. This reporter's most recent direct observation confirming this situation was in late 2020.

In response to questions regarding the incident, and security at the base, the Army said the base was secured and that the area is cleared of sharp objects and explosives after training exercises.

Head of Communications at the South African National Defence Force Brigadier General Mafi Mgobozi said, "We would like to... state that there are security measures in place to safeguard the military unit, its training area, and all facilities allocated for the use by the SANDF.

"The SANDF can confirm that the range and entire training area utilised by 6 South

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



This is all that remained of the bag he was carrying the 'scrap' metal in. Photos: Sue Maclellan

FROM PAGE 2

African Infantry Battalion and visiting units is cleared after every training exercise where ammunition, or any explosives, and sharp objects were used."

Questions about the costs of the last fence and when it was erected were referred to the Department of Public Works. At the time of publishing no response had been received and we'll add that information in the online version of this article when we do.

Hand it in!

During GMD's research for this article, two things happened.

First, it turns out that lots of people know exactly who buys dodgy scrap metal, and didn't hesitate to say where they would go to get cash for something the registered recycling outlets might refuse.

Second, a member of the public approached GMDirect and, showing this reporter a handful of bullets and bullet casings, asked what they should do with them to avoid getting into trouble with the law. We said we'd find out.

Below follows what we asked the police, along with responses from South African Police Service spokesperson Captain Khaya Tonjeni.

If a person had in their possession the items shown in the attached photograph, for purposes of selling them for scrap metal, would that be illegal?

There are types of firearms and ammunition that are not allowed to be owned by the public. When these firearms when discharged, usually all the empty cartridges should be picked up afterwards – for example, after training at a shooting range. This sweeping is necessary so that the empty cartridges are collected and correctly disposed of. Being in possession of ammunition, for example, one bullet or more, is a crime: Illegal possession of ammunition. On top of that, being in possession of a used cartridge can implicate you in something far more serious. If that bullet round had been shot during the commission of a crime, you would

**TAKE-AWAY FENCING**

* Please note that these photographs of the army base boundary closest to Mayfield and eNkanini were taken in 2014.

immediately become a suspect in that crime – even if you know nothing about it.

2. If a person knew they had illegal items (for example, discarded ammunition) and wanted to "do the right thing", is there a way they could dispose of it without risk of arrest?

Once in a while, the police offer an amnesty window for the return of illegal weapons without the risk of prosecution. If one has a weapon and decides to hand it over to the police, no charge is effected; however, if the police search you and find you in possession

of an unlicensed firearm, a charge of illegal possession of firearms should follow.

3. Does SAPS have a strategy for tackling the illegal "backyard" scrap metal market in Makhanda?

The police have a unit dedicated to enforcement of laws regarding secondhand goods and non-ferrous material. This team conducts regular operations and compliance inspections. Those found to be transgressing the rules are issued with a fine, or closed down until they fully comply.



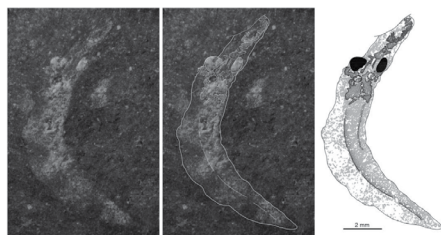
If you have a bullet round in your possession that was shot during the commission of a crime, you're implicated in that crime even if you know nothing about it. Rather hand it in!

Photos: Sue MacLennan

Local fossils shake up our tree of life



Prismozyon hatchling. Image: Kristen Tietjen



Prismozyon hatchling - detailed. Image: Tetsuto Miyashita



Ammocoete larva of Pacific lamprey. Image: Gregory Kovalchuk

By STEVEN LANG

An astonishing discovery of baby lamprey fossils just outside Makhanda will force a major rethink of the evolutionary tree that gave rise to all vertebrates including our own species – *Homo sapiens*. Well-known local palaeontologist, Dr Rob Gess, found the fossils in 360-million-year-old black shale deposits from the Waterloo Farm bordering the N2 highway.

The lamprey fossils were in various stages of development from hatchling to adult when they died. Remarkably, the smallest preserved individual, barely 15mm in length, still carried a yolk sac, indicating that it had only just hatched before entering the fossil record.

The prestigious scientific journal, *Nature*, has just published his findings and those of his collaborators in an article titled, *Non-ammocoete larvae of Palaeozoic lampreys* by Tetsuto Miyashita, Robert Gess, Kristen Tietjen and Michael I. Coates.

Gess had already described the world's oldest lamprey fossil species (*Prismozyon riniensis*) which he published in an article in 2006 about an exquisitely preserved specimen he had found at the same location.

The most surprising feature of the baby lamprey fossils is that they have almost the same appearance as their adults. This is not the case for lampreys living in our oceans and rivers today.

When modern lamprey eggs hatch, they produce larvae known as ammocoetes that don't look like, nor behave like the adults. Through the extended larval stage, the worm-like ammocoetes are blind, filter feeders that burrow into riverbeds. After

two to seven years, ammocoetes transform into adult lampreys with functional eyes and blood-sucking circular mouths.

Lampreys are fishes that look like eels and feed by latching onto other fish with a round sucker that surrounds their mouth. They grip onto their prey with circles of teeth on the sucker, then rasp a hole with special teeth on their tongue so they can drink their victim's blood.

Scientists believed that this strange life-story echoed transformations that occurred some 500 million years ago and gave rise to all fish lineages, including the one that ultimately led to ourselves. The last invertebrate ancestor of vertebrates is therefore often described as being ammocoete-like, and the earliest vertebrate (animals with backbones such as goldfish, lizards, crows and people) as being lamprey-like. But for this to be accurate, something corresponding to ammocoetes and lampreys would need to have been present at the dawn of our (vertebrate) history.

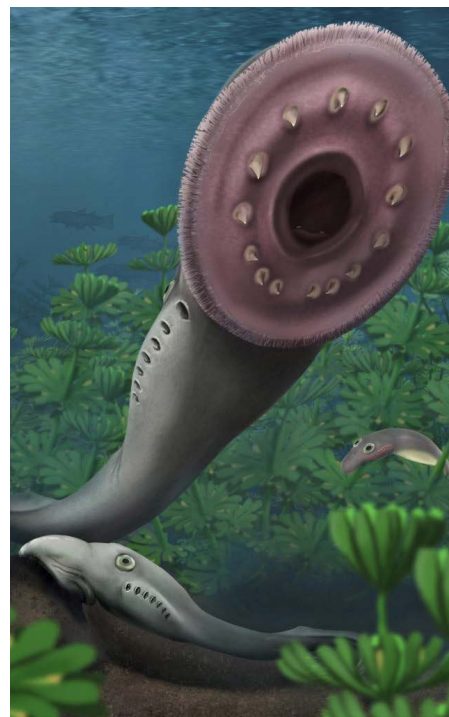
The problem with this widely held viewpoint is that ammocoetes only evolved much later. Gess's discovery provides strong evidence, supported by a few less ancient (Carboniferous) juvenile fossils found in North America, that ammocoetes did not exist when lampreys first evolved. They were an evolutionary innovation and only appeared sometime after the Carboniferous Period some 300-million years ago, probably much more recently.

The fossils found on Waterloo Farm have a drastically different structure to the ammocoete phase found in lampreys today. This shows that the ammocoetes are not ancient holdovers from ancient times.

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Rob Gess. Photo: Steven Lang



This reconstruction of the Late Devonian estuarine lake in today's South Africa captures the life history of a stem lamprey *Prismozyon riniensis*. Three individuals representing different ontogenetic stages take a shelter in the meadow of charophyte algae *Octochara crassa*. Clockwise from right: a yolk-sac-carrying hatchling tucked in the charophyte; a juvenile attached to the substrate in the foreground; and an adult looming over the other individuals and showing its feeding apparatus. In the background, a school of the coelacanth *Selenichthys kowiensis* swim by. Painting by Kristen Tietjen.

FROM PAGE 4

Rather, the modern filter-feeding phase is a more recent innovation that apparently allowed lampreys to populate and thrive in freshwater rivers and lakes.

Distant human ancestry seemingly did not include a lamprey-larva-like stage. Lampreys now appear to be a highly evolved side branch which shared a common ancestor with us – probably a jawless fish enclosed in bony armour.

Research on the Waterloo Farm project currently falls under the 'Devonian Ecosystems Project' based at the Albany Museum in Makhandla, a partner of the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and National Research Foundation (NRF) Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences. It is funded by the Millennium Trust, the DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences, the NRF and the NSCF (Natural Science Collections Facility).

People of Makhandla should value its unique deposit

Gess firmly believes that more needs to be done to allow the people of Makhandla to appreciate the town's unique fossil heritage, which he views as a shared treasure.

He said some way should be found of having a more comprehensive display of the material, "where the people of Makhandla can actually see some of the fossils and can see reconstructions of what they represent, and what picture we put together and some explanation of how we reconstruct them and what they tell us - it would help to make it a lot more real for everyone".

Gess said that a heritage site about Devonian fossils, accessible to all, would be free of the unfortunate baggage that weigh down other heritage monuments bound up in colonialism and wars. "What is really great about this site, is that it being so ancient, it is actually everyone's heritage . . . something that all people can be equally proud of".

He is also enthusiastic about the tourism potential of such a site, "It could help to rebuild Makhandla's tourist portfolio around something which is unifying, and which is of international significance".

He has already arranged for SANRAL (South African National Roads Agency Limited) to sponsor a stop-over on the N2 highway where people can learn about these unique deposits, but would also like to see an easily accessible exhibition of some of the actual fossils, in town, where learners and tourists can learn about them - even on weekends. Perhaps it could be coupled



Robert Gess and Tetsuto Miyashita discussing Priscomyzons in February 2019. Photo: Supplied

with a coffee shop where people could also get educational materials and locally made Devonian souvenirs.

Riches of black shale

The Waterloo Farm is one of the most important sites of the late Devonian age (approximately 360 million years old). It has exceptional fossil preservation dating from just before the second of five major extinction events that have reset the diversity of life on the planet.

It preserves a wide range of fish, plant and invertebrate fossils which are preserved as flattened silvery white impressions in black shale. About 360 million years ago black gooey mud accumulated in the bottom of a coastal estuarine lake where a swollen river mouth was partially cut off from the sea by a sand bar.

Rising sea levels buried the mud under layers of beach sand. Over hundreds of millions of years the layers of sand and mud were hardened into rock which was buckled and buried as continents broke apart and mountain ranges were folded up.

The original fine, black mud was often very low in oxygen, so plants and animals rapidly buried in it sometimes left behind impressions of their soft parts such as cartilage, skin, muscles and fins. This is extremely rare in the fossil record which normally only preserves bones, teeth and other hard bits.

Exceptionally, what is recorded are the remains of an entire estuarine ecosystem, from delicate waterweeds and seaweeds to small clams, baby fish and the bones of

larger fish. Land plants which grew nearby are also preserved, from the remains of small undergrowth species to fronds from the earliest types of trees.

Apart from the lampreys, fossils from Waterloo Farm include Africa's earliest four-legged animals, aquatic stem tetrapods; Africa's oldest coelacanth from the world's earliest known coelacanth nursery; a scorpion which is the oldest known land-living animal from the whole of Gondwana; and remains of sub-Saharan Africa's earliest woody trees. Other fossils include several species of armour plated (placoderm) fish, the most primitive group of jawed fish which had their entire head and trunk encased in armour plates and went extinct at the end of the Devonian Period; spiny finned fish, an extinct group which had bony spines supporting all their fins except the tail fin; primitive sharks that grew several metres long and probably entered the estuary from the sea to hunt; ray-finned fish of the type that gave rise to modern fish; a range of lobe-finned fish; seaweeds; charophyte waterweeds representing the oldest fully reconstructable species; and a diverse range of plants.



Rob Gess with his fossil-rich shale collection. File photo: Steven Lang

Rich pickings from Waterloo Farm

A man and his fossils

Dr Rob Gess has devoted a hefty portion of his professional life as a palaeontologist to splitting open tons of black rocks found on the Waterloo Farm on the outskirts of Makhanda, then analysing and describing their contents. Over the years, the sedimentary black shale has rewarded him with rich pickings of fossils of animal and plant life that inhabited an estuary in this area in the late Devonian Period about 360-million years ago.

Those rocks have yielded dozens of species that are new to science, of which 23 have been described and named - and he is still counting. A previously unknown lamprey species, *Priscomyzon riniensis*, is one of the more fascinating discoveries Gess has made. The 4.2 cm long well-preserved fossil he uncovered in rocks salvaged in 1999 and described in 2006, still represents the oldest lamprey species ever found anywhere in the world.

Gess was naturally pleased with the exquisite fossil, but as often happens in science, new answers raise new questions. The ancient lamprey looked very much like its modern counterparts - but what did the juveniles look like? Did the Devonian lampreys have a similar life-cycle to the species alive today?

Contemporary lampreys go through an extended larval stage, when they are known as ammocoetes, before they become adults. Gess wanted to know whether the fossil lampreys transitioned through a similar stage. He needed to find a fossil of a juvenile lamprey to be able to answer this question.



Tools of the trade: Rob Gess uses an old table knife and a chisel to explore the mountain of shale he collected from the N2 near Waterloo Farm. File photo: Steven Lang

While splitting layers of rocks stored in a shed in Bathurst, Gess found fragments of juvenile lamprey fossils every year or so. They were enough to tantalise him with the prospect of an important discovery, but not enough to provide conclusive evidence.

Then one day in the 2007/2008 season, there was the clincher. He was examining new road-works at Waterloo Farm when he found the smallest lamprey fossil from the site. It was only one and-a-half centimetres long and it was still attached to a bulge of yolk-sac.

Gess said that when he found that specimen he did not have an immediate 'eureka moment' as each of the lamprey fossils he had found before "had shown something a little different, but each of them has been

exciting".

He said, "the smallest one was really exciting to find" but "the full eureka moment only came later, to be honest, when we sat down and analysed what I had found".

Gess knew he had uncovered important pieces of the puzzle, but it was only when he had put those pieces together to understand the life cycle of lampreys that he became really excited. "We realised that ... Hang on! ... there's no room for ammocoetes in this series 'cause the smallest one seems to have yolk sac attached, so it must have just hatched.

"So that was really the eureka moment - when we realised that there was no room for ammocoetes in its life-cycle".

Pride of place

Head of the Albany Museum, Manzi Vabaza, said his institution is immensely proud of Gess's latest discovery that is important enough to be published in one of the world's most prestigious journals.

"Rob's lifetime efforts in conserving the Waterloo Farm site, collecting, curating and researching the fossils that have been excavated over many years, is an accomplishment for which our community can be really proud. One of our treasures is the Waterloo Farm fossil collection, curated



at the historic Old Priest House in Beaufort Street. This collection is of great international significance and attracts researchers from all over the world.

"The fact that Rob Gess' research is on a local fossil site in Makhanda is a massive bonus

for our little town, and for our Museum.

The Waterloo Farm collection only exists because of Rob's tireless efforts, at times undertaken at his own expense. His foresight, vision and effort have brought immense credit to South African palaeontology and highlighted our country's rich fossil record".



A fire at Mountain View Manor damaged three rooms on the first floor on Sunday 7 March 2021.

Photo: Jason Krain

Fire damages Makhanda landmark

By **SUE MACLENNAN**

A fire at Mountain View Manor in Makhanda on Sunday 7 March* was contained in three rooms. No one was injured.

Owners of the landmark multi-storey guest house on Mountain Drive, Victor and Margaret Banks, were in their house behind the main building and were alerted to the fire by someone ringing the bell at the front gate. There were no guests in the building.

Acting Fire Services Manager Vuyokazi Sam said fire fighters responded quickly after a call around 1.30pm yesterday.

"A Vehicle was dispatched with two fire fighters," Sam said. "On arrival they found a building in fire." "They immediately called for backup and two more vehicles were dispatched to the scene."

The response had been quick and the fire was contained in two bedrooms and two bathrooms on the west wing of the first floor.

"No one was harmed. The fire was discovered after guests had gone," Sam said.

The cause of the fire is as yet undetermined.

The fire fighters worked hard to save the property," Sam said. Sam had a special request to the public.

"Can callers please be specific when reporting fires. Say if it is a building or a veld fire.

"Please also supply as many location references as you can to ensure a quick response and proper allocation of resources to save lives and time."

The building is a well known landmark in Makhanda. Formerly a sawmill, then the SABC building, it was converted into self-catering accommodation and a boutique hotel around eight years ago and has been operating successfully since.

POSTSCRIPT

Sharon Banks commented on the Facebook post sharing this article as follows: I posted something on the group yesterday but cannot seem to find it. The owners of Mountain View wanted to thank the hikers walking by who alerted them to the fire. If it weren't for them the fire could have spread quickly and who knows what would have happened. So thank you so much we all really appreciate it. We were all in a bit of shock I think so never got your names. Not sure if you're visitors to town or students. But greatly appreciated.

NSFAS to release funds for new qualifying students

STAFF REPORTER

Cabinet has agreed that funding should be reprioritised from the Department of Higher Education and Training budget, in order to ensure that all deserving National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) students receive funding support for the 2021 academic year.

Unpacking Cabinet's decision on NSFAS funding during a post-Cabinet media briefing held in Tshwane on Thursday, Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande said however that further reprioritisation can only be considered as part of the Medium Term Budget process

of government, which takes place later this year.

"This decision has been taken in the context of funding cuts and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following this decision, NSFAS will be able to release funding decisions, and the registration process at public universities can continue as planned," Nzimande said.

The Minister said no NSFAS qualifying students have been affected by these delays, as universities had agreed to extend the registration period to ensure that students without funding decisions would

not be prevented from accessing a place that they qualify for.

Cabinet has also instructed the Department of Higher Education and Training to immediately commence a review of higher education policies to support students in financial need in the post-school education and training system.

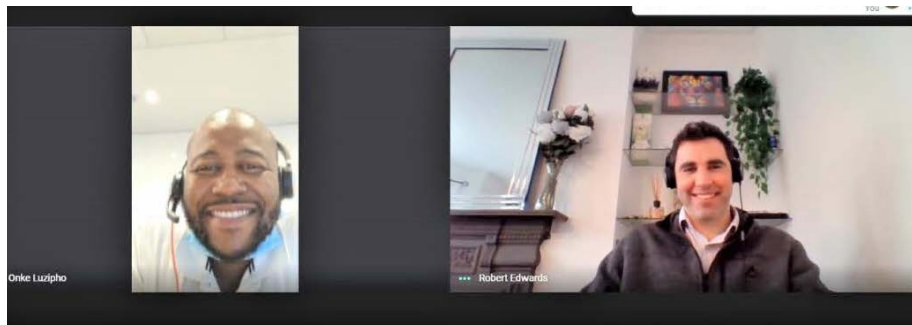
He said that government is very concerned about the issue of growing student debt in the system, as are the universities, and this issue will also be considered as part of the policy review. – *SAnews.gov.za*

Accountants launch isiXhosa money series

STAFF REPORTER

Too many South Africans get themselves into financial trouble simply because they don't understand exactly what they are doing. That's the starting point for a YouTube series by two former Rhodes University Accounting students who want to see that change.

Robert Edwards and Onke Luzipho are now both qualified Chartered Accountants who started a project six months ago called Inyathi Imali (Buffalo Money) where they create podcast style discussions about money and finance, mostly in isiXhosa.



Onke Luzipho and Robert Edwards are developing a financial literacy series in isiXhosa. Image: Zoom screenshot 8 March 2021

The first three discussions are Budgeting and needs vs wants (Inyathi Imali – Needs vs wants and budgeting – YouTube); Debt (Inyathi Imali – Debt – YouTube); and Saving and investing (Inyathi Imali – Saving and Investing – YouTube)

It is not financial advice, they stress, but simply an open discussion between the two friends, using real-life examples that are easy to relate to. Luzipho now lives and works in Joburg and Robert in London, so GMDirect's interview with them this week was on Zoom.

Inyathi Imali is aimed at people with an income, or monthly allowance, but who do not have a real understanding of financial matters. "Even when people have an income, they're poorer than they need to be," said Luzipho. "They're still not getting to grips with their finances."

"We wanted a practical, easy to understand way to get these concepts across, and we came up with this idea of podcasts," said

Edwards. The series on financial concepts as they related to life skills started to take shape. What they've done so far is a kind of test run.

"We wanted to get our content out to our target market so we could get feedback and adjust it," Luzipho said.

What is their target market?

"Funnily enough, we were aiming at middle to lower LSM, but we've found people from all income groups have appreciated it. This series could be a tool for anyone – someone starting their first job, students, middle management or just any other ordinary person," Edwards said.

They've already had requests to produce something similar in other languages, including Shona and Ndebele and say they'll explore options to do that once they've fine-tuned their content and approach.

"Going forward, we hope to provide more discussions and potentially have people send us specific questions," Edwards said. "We may also branch into other languages – but for now, we need to get this content out there."

The project came about as a result of a shared passion for sharing information, and a cross-continental friendship that's lasted well beyond their 2016 Honours in Accounting at Rhodes University.

Edwards is an Associate Director at Aalto Capital, a pan-European Investment Banking firm, where he's been for two-and-a-half years. He is in the company's London office and they do equity fund raising and mergers and acquisition (M&A) deals. Luzipho has been a Credit Consultant at Investec Bank for over a year, focusing on credit risk management and working capital deal structuring for their clients. He's based in Johannesburg, and previously worked at Deloitte for three years doing his CA articles specialising in financial institutions.

Both have good memories of Makhanda – Edwards's began when visiting his two sisters, who both studied at Rhodes.

Luzipho loved the fact that the town was relatively safe. "You could walk anywhere, anytime."

At Rhodes, Student Bureau Manager Desiree Wicks was Luzipho's standout champion. He loved the campus culture of having fun while working hard.

"I think my only bad memory of the town is the occasional hangover!"



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Landmark anniversary for local hero

This week, as Makana's Fire Chief marks 35 years of service, GMDirect asks about his lifelong dedication to keeping his town safe.

"People remember the two houses that were burnt – but not the 40 houses and an entire school that were saved."

There have been many serious fires in and around Makhanda but the 2015 fire was the worst the Makana Fire Services Manager has ever had to deal with. It was a nightmare.

It started behind the electrical substation near PJ Olivier and with winds of 110km/hour, quickly tore up the hillside towards the school and rows of houses in upper Sunnyside.

"Every fire fighter was called up and all the volunteers were out, including Basil Mills and his crew."

They saved the school and its hostel, and more than 40 houses on and around Hillview Road. But the wind was relentless and the fire tore past the State Vet, jumped across to Waterloo Farm and across the mountainside, and easily jumped the Southwell Road, on to Stones Hill.

"We stopped the fire at Stones Hill. It was very unfortunate that two houses did burn down. But we did manage to save more than 40 houses and the school with its hostel."

That was nearly 20 years after Welkom's 'baptism by fire' in 2008, when he stepped up as the town's Chief Fire Officer.

That fire started on the Highlands road and burnt a terrible swathe southwards, fuelled



by tons and tons of invasive aliens, recently felled by Working for Water.

"That was the first time I'd ever seen helicopters brought into town to fight fires," he said.

"I had to go up in the spotter plane to tell the helicopters exactly where to do the water drops."

A photo by Stephen Penney shows one of the helicopters filling up at the Waainek

Water Treatment Works. (below)

"That was a real baptism by fire," said Welkom, who in 2005 was called to the Lewis Stores fire in High Street. The biggest building fire was in the Monument auditorium in 1994.

"His Majesty's bioscope, Furn City – and the last one was Birch's factory in Froude Street," he recalls.

Welkom started on 8 March 1986 as a learner fireman.

"I'll never forget that day," he says. "It was a Saturday."

He'd completed school and a year later, still without work, the learner fireman job came up.

"I grew up in Scotts Farm and it was very important for me to get work, so I took a chance and applied."

"There were 30 of us applying for four positions. I was shortlisted and interviewed twice."



AIRBORNE FIREFIGHTER... One of the two military helicopters from Durban and Bloemfontein refills a water bag from the water works dam late on Wednesday afternoon. The two helicopters made numerous trips, collecting water from various dams as they attempted to put out the raging fires around Grahamstown. Photo: Stephen Penney

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FROM PAGE 9

He heard nothing until, early one morning there was a knock on the door.

"It was people from the fire station telling me I mustn't forget that I was going to start work that day." Somehow the message that he was hired hadn't reached him.

"I always remember that day because it was on a Saturday. I was informed I had to start that same day at 8am. I had no transport, so I had to run from Scotts Farm not to be late. I will always remember that day.

When he got there, he learned that they'd come to his house the day before.

"My mom worked at National Lamps in Cobden Street and my dad was a builder – no one was home."

The young William took to the job enthusiastically. Mr Hickman was the fire chief.

"We had a dual function – ambulance services as well as fire. Only in 1990 was that handed over to EMS." The fire station was built in 1909 and when Welkom started, the origin stables were still there.

"In the old days, they used horses to pull the fire trailer," he said.

The entrance for the horses was in Carlisle Street. "But we renovated that space and turned it into a recreational room for the fire fighters on standby." One of the things the young Welkom couldn't understand was why there were different uniforms in the fire service.

"We got powder blue shirts – the same as the meter readers. But the Reilly brothers wore white shirts and black pants."

He found the answer: Norman Reilly, who lived in the house next door to the Traffic Department, and Charlie Reilly, who kept pigeons at a house where the ACVV retirement home now stands, were officers.

"That's when I decided that's what I want to be, and I asked, 'How do I become an officer?'"

"Register with the SA Fire Services Institute and start studying," is what they told me. So that's what I did. And continued to do."

As his qualifications and experience grew, so he climbed up the ranks:

"You start as a learner fireman. Then it goes: Fireman, Senior Fireman, Platoon Commander, Station Commander.



"Finally in 2008, I was made Chief Fire Officer."

"Hickman, Bodenstein, Ingram, Julius, Sauls – then in 2008 it was me who became fire chief. Knowing where I started off in Scotts Farm, that for me was my greatest achievement. Having the opportunity to become fire chief of the town you are born and bred in.

"I had the opportunity to serve my community – to make sure I protect my community at all times. That for me was my best moment."

Three presidents

The worst moment have been responding to accidents, and to incidents where people have lost their lives.

"It's your job to try and avoid loss of life, so when you get to a building that is well alight and you can't send fire fighters in, and someone tells you there is a person in there – knowing you couldn't save that person... that is terrible.

Some of his most memorable moments have been his involvement in ensuring three Presidents were safe during their visits to Grahamstown.

When Madiba visited in 1996, Welkom was a senior firefighter and he was dispatched to be part of the convoy.

"The current Mayor (Mzukisi Mpahlwa) was Mayor then. Mpahlwa was Mayor when Cyril Ramaphosa address supporters on Freedom Day two years ago at Miki Yili Stadium.

While I was driving the Mayor and his wife to the airfield to welcome the President, I could remind them what happened in 1996.

"Mrs Mpahlwa had a welcoming garland ready for President Mandela and she sprayed it with water to keep the flowers fresh. "But when the bodyguards saw it, they were not happy. They said, no, the old man is going to get sick.

"Mrs Mpahlwa had to physically dry the garland. They inspected it again and then she was allowed to put it around his neck."

Looking ahead

"I'm 55 years old so I've got a while to go in the fire service," Welkom says. I would still like to do more to broaden our scope, to make sure the whole community is protected. There are resources to respond – we have a collaboration with the Sarah Baartman District Municipality to provide these tools.

"This building has been here since 1909 and I would like to see the fire services continue to grow in strength – even once I've retired. It is critical and essential. The Fire Chief's future plans are to expand the municipality's fire services into rural areas .

"We started off with a satellite in Alicedale with the assistance of the District Municipality. Then we plan to move over to Riebeeck East. "It has always been one of my plans in the IDP to broaden our service to outlying areas."

Staff and family

"None of the people who started with me and before me is in the Fire Service any more," Welkom said. "Of those original fire fighters, I'm the last man standing.

"My passion and dedication for the fire service drove me over the years – being able to serve and protect my community.

"I am grateful to my staff for their support over the years and for always ensuring that the Fire Service flag flies high."

William Welkom is married to Vinola. They have a son, Jeremy, and daughter Jillian. "They are my support pillars over the years and still are. I am forever grateful to them.

"My wife always supported me and understood the demands of my job – even when I sometimes had to attend incidents such as major bushfires that have required me to be away from home for days."

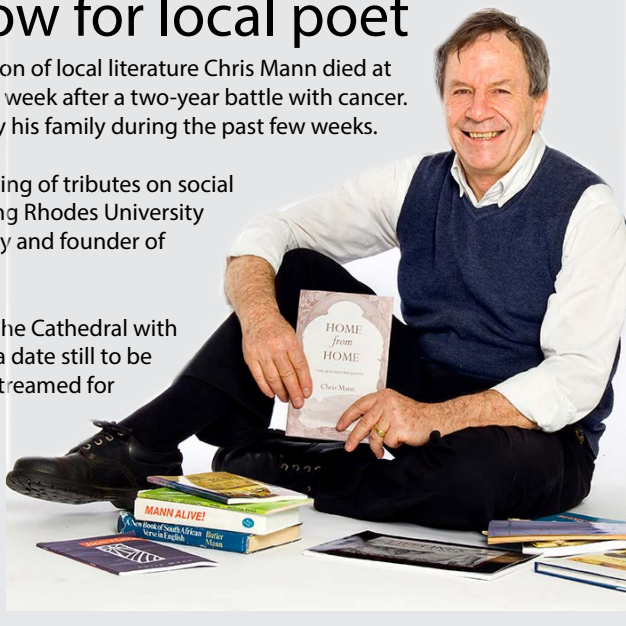
Tributes flow for local poet

Poet, musician and champion of local literature Chris Mann died at his home in Makhanda this week after a two-year battle with cancer. He has been surrounded by his family during the past few weeks.

There has been an outpouring of tributes on social media for the award winning Rhodes University Emeritus Professor of Poetry and founder of Wordfest South Africa.

The funeral will be held in the Cathedral with a limited congregation on a date still to be confirmed and will be livestreamed for those who can't attend.

Chris leaves behind his wife Julia, son Luke, daughter Amy, daughter-in-law Kim and brother-in-law Michael Shipster.



ISIXHOSA SIYAVUTHA
with Dumisa Mpupha

Isililo ngoChris Mann

News of the passing of the imbongi led another imbongi to write this eulogy.

Nina sele ningaphakathi ndiyakhahlela
Ndikhahlela ngaye umzingeli obepheth'ityiwa
Akuyifumana ayinike ukudla
namanziNdivukile kungekasi!
Gxebe ndilele ndingena buthongo nkqo!
Ndagagana nosizi lwesithwangube
Esindithungileyo saya kundithulula
Sandixakathisa usizi ngathi lilishwa
Kanti kuku dlula kwakho Njingalwazi Chris Mann

Hoyini nina nidlula ngendlela

Ngalo ndlela ibe bubudlelwane
obungapheliyo
Nguye ke lowo uNjingalwazi Chris Mann

Hamba thole ndini lase Gqeberha!rha!
Rhaaaaaa!
Siya kukhumbula emaphandleni xa
wasinkinkishela amanzi
Wakwenza oko ngexabiso elifikelelayo
Tsi! Madoda yemka italente siyijongile
Sashiyeka thina sijonge enkaweni
Sijongile mhlonitshwa Njingalwazi Chris

Hamba mseki wabaqambi beengoma!
Hamba kwedini kaZabalaza ibutho lemilonji
Khwawuvapha umLungu obethanda isiNtu
Nokwenza isintu ekuthiwa sisiZulu
Etsho ngelo lizwi linzuuuuulu!
Umlholi madoda wolwimi lwesiNgesi

Hamba kwedin'ooJadezweni bakulindle
nabanye
Zokulinda izithwalandwe eziphuma kwilwimi
zonke
Zikurhangqe zikuthwese isangqawe
Zikunike nomnweba ombala umzuba
Ukuze isibhakabhaka sivuye naso
Kuba uyaku yokozela ngumnyama
umgcamabelebele

Hamba mbongi yase Mpuma Kapa
Ulityhutyhile elimiweyo ngosiba lwakho
kuphela
Uhlanganisa nabo babengathathi ntweni
Hamba snunza nunza esinwele zibulembu
bombona
Ezintliziyweni zoninzi ugximfizile washiya
iinkumbulo.
Imithandazo yethu apha eCathedral yase
Makhanda
Mayihambe nawe ikufukule sibeka noJuliya
emithandazweni.

Ndinyhidinyhidi!

SOUL FOOD

Why did Jesus pray?

Jesus found it necessary to pray. Often He would withdraw from the crowds to a quiet place to spend time in prayer. Luke 5:16 - "Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. 16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

At the height of his ministry, on the eve of his atoning death on the cross, "being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground". (Luke 22:44).

Do we not much more need to pray?

Jesus told his disciples to watch and pray in order to be strong against temptations that will destroy their lives. And He asked Peter in amazement, "Could you not keep watch with me for one hour?" (Matth 26:41).

We need to remember that prayer is not a one-way speech bombarding God with all our needs. It is meant to be a real experience

of God's love.

Madame Jean Guyon, the 17th century champion of prayer, writes on the first page of her little book, "Experiencing God through Prayer" (about 1685) that prayer "is nothing more than turning our heart toward God and receiving in turn His love."

She also says the following of God's willingness to bless us as we pray, "He desires to be more present to us than we are to seek Him. He desires to give Himself to us more readily than we are to receive Him."

And eventually, in our experiencing of the presence of God as we pray, "When you have enjoyed God and the sweetness of His love, however, you will find it impossible to set your affections on anything other than Him."

I believe this is the example Jesus set for us to follow, to pray as an experience of a love fellowship with God.

Strauss de Jager, NG Kerk

SOUTH AFRICAN CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

Rhodes University's Professor George Euvrard, psychologist and educator, pioneered the South African Cryptic Crossword series with Grocott's Mail in 2015 and dozens of local crossword fans look forward to the weekly challenge. With the help of the Mail & Guardian, which now also publishes the crossword, we're delighted to present you with the online interactive version.

[Click here for your favourite homegrown challenge.](#)

Detectives get the better of burglars

STAFF REPORTER

Being burgled at home while you're asleep is bad enough. Having your laptop stolen in that raid takes a person's distress to another level.

For Hill 60 resident Bruce Maclean, it was catastrophic. "The impact was devastating," he wrote in a Facebook post. Especially as my laptop had in excess of 314 000 files."

The burglars struck in the early hours of 17 February while the household was fast asleep. The stole two laptops, car keys, wallets, bank cards and other items.

"Morning coffee at 5.30am and the sudden realisation that life as you knew it had changed," Maclean wrote. "I won't elaborate on all the details, but the impact was devastating, especially as my laptop had in excess of 314 000 files."

Then a whole lot of things went right, starting with the heroes of this story – officers from the Grahamstown Police Station.

"The case was reported and within fifteen minutes the police arrived," Maclean wrote.

An intense few hours followed in which phone messages indicated the thieves were trying to withdraw from one of the bank cards they had stolen. With the assistance of the police, Maclean made a court application to get camera footage of the

ATM.

Captain Jurgens Gouws of the Grahamstown Detectives contacted Maclean to tell him he had a team on the case, headed by Constable Yibanathi Dlakwe.

Using GPS locations in a race against time from that Thursday night to that Sunday, Constable Dlakwe worked solidly on the case – "day and night right into Sunday evening 11pm" – giving up his third wedding anniversary on the Sunday.

One laptop was recovered on Sunday night and the other on Monday morning. A week later, Constable Dlakwe recovered Maclean's car keys in the bush near the railway line at Hill 60. The police also recovered the family's ID documents and bank cards.

Both suspects remained in custody after Constable Dlakwe successfully opposed bail.

"Damn... one needs to understand how appreciative you are for this effort, as these criminals do not comprehend what this does to a person and how long it takes to recover," Maclean wrote. "These things move so fast.

"While we all sit in distress about our water, and complaints around service delivery, I felt it necessary to write this post," Maclean wrote. "Sometimes amidst all the darkness, a ray of light shines through so brightly that recognition is so deserved. Often these are



Constable Yibanathi Dlakwe, who tracked down two burglars and recovered most of the resident's important equipment.

Photos: Bruce Maclean

passed by without mention.

"I bow to you guys, for the work done, and I hope the community appreciates that there are those who are so committed and passionate about what they do..."

He specially thankd Constable Dlakwe , Captain Gouws and his team and Sergeant Manyati, who kept the case moving on Thursday until 10pm that night.

"I certainly hope and trust that Grahamstown can be appreciative of the work you do," Maclean wrote.



Heroes - Grahamstown Detectives.

Investing in property may not be suitable for everyone

An investment in property, be it residential, commercial or a combination thereof, can be an integral component of a well-diversified investment portfolio. It has the potential to generate outstanding returns or it could result in a loss of money, as has been experienced by many landlords during the current period associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. Just as with any investment, it is essential to proceed with a great deal of caution.

There are many ways in which you can enter the property market; for example, you could purchase a second property to rent out to students.

The objective of direct investment in property is first to create an ongoing flow of income and secondly to achieve capital growth. It is akin to a business venture and involves a great deal more work than just sitting back and collecting rental income every month!

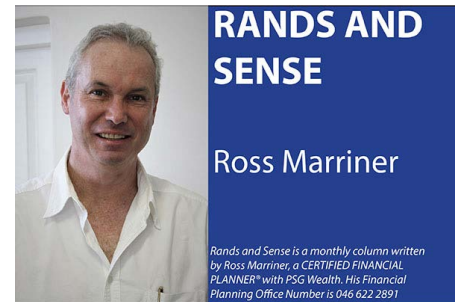
Many private property investors grossly underestimate the long-term costs associated with property ownership, and the effort involved in managing properties. There are a number of costs that are often overlooked, for example bond registration costs, the cost of not being able to rent out the property, the cost of recovering

arrear rentals from a defaulting tenant (and the costly eviction process). Ongoing maintenance costs, the cost of renovating the property every few years and estate agent commissions when it comes to selling the property must also be taken into account. Other costs include levies, insurances, municipal rates and taxes, water and electricity and the cost of repairing damage to the property.

It is crucial for an investment in property to be made at the right time and in a good area. The effect of municipal decay, for example, could result in the dramatic deterioration of the capital value of a property located in the wrong area. To sell a property in such an environment could prove to be challenging.

Instead of directly purchasing and owning physical property, you can enter the property market indirectly through the purchase of a property unity trust, now known as Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT).

By investing in a REIT, you gain exposure to listed property without the hassle of having to manage the property and, importantly, you have the advantage of having almost immediate access to your capital.



A direct investment in property has the potential to provide you with greater rewards than is the case in an indirect investment. Conversely, the risk associated with direct ownership is normally greater than that of an indirect investment.

Ideally you should only invest directly in physical property if you really understand the property market. If you wish to hold a portion of your investment portfolio in property without having to physically own and manage the actual properties, an indirect investment may be a better option. An experienced Certified Financial Planner® would be able to provide you with sound advice and assistance in this regard.

Rands and Sense is a monthly column, written by Ross Marriner, a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® with PSG Wealth. His Financial Planning Office number is 046 622 2891

Cabinet approves Land Administration, Land Tenure Reforms papers

Cabinet has approved the draft position papers on Land Administration and Land Tenure Reforms in Communal Areas for further consultations with relevant stakeholders. Acting Minister in the Presidency, Khumbudzo Ntshavheni, announced on Thursday morning when she briefed the media on the outcomes of the previous day's Cabinet meeting.

"The proposed reforms provide a legal framework to initiate the process of transferring communal land to persons or communities whose tenure of land is legally insecure," said Ntshavheni.

Meanwhile, according to Cabinet, these reforms will also expand the communal asset base to empower communities to engage in cultural, social and economic activities of their choice. – SAnews.gov.za



BID NOTICE / ADVERT

The Makana Local Municipality invites all experience and competent suitable Tenderers that are fully equipped to provide the following projects

PROJECT NAME	CONTRACT NUMBER	PREFERENCE POINTS	DATE ADVERTISED	CLOSING DATE
Supply, delivery and installation of six smart managed network switched or similar	MLM/2020-21/MM/001	80/20	12/03/2021	29/03/2021
Supply, delivery and installation of two servers or NAS storage backup server or similar	MLM/2020-21/MM/002	80/20	12/03/2021	29/03/2021
Supply and delivery of 28 laptop and backpacks	MLM/2020-21/MM/003	80/20	12/03/2021	29/03/2021
The supply, delivery and installation of a server with server virtualisation software and two UPS	MLM/2020-21/MM/004	80/20	12/03/2021	29/03/2021

or electronically (email; facsimile; telegraphic; telex/telephonic), will not be accepted and submissions from Tenderers who arrived late at the Tender clarification meeting will not be accepted.

• Documents to be filled with black ink.

• Tenders submitted are to hold good for a period of 90 days. Tenders must remain valid for a period of 90 days after the closing date for the submission of Tenders, during which period a Tender may not be amended or withdrawn and may be accepted at any time by the Makana Municipality. Validity period can be extended when required by the municipality.

PREFERENTIAL PROCUREMENT POLICY FRAMEWORK ACT NO 5, 2017 (PPPFA) POINTS WILL BE AWARDED AS FOLLOWS:-

Received Responsive proposals will be evaluated based on the following two stages, namely:

• Stage 1 – Functionality

• Stage 2 – Price and Preferential Points

A bidder that scores less than 70% in respect of “functionality” will be regarded as submitting a non-responsive bid and will be disqualified and will be not evaluated further, i.e. for price. Only bidders who score 70% or more would be evaluated further and therefore eligible for the award.

NB: PLEASE REFER TO SPECIFIC TENDER DOCUMENT FOR DETAILED FUNCTIONALITY

• Local Content is applicable, minimum threshold is 100%

• NO SUBCONTRACTING WILL BE ALLOWED IN ALL THESE TENDERS

• Bids must only be submitted in the format as stated in the tender document and this advert as per tender documentation provided by the municipality.

• One envelopes system will be followed.

OBTAIN DOCUMENTS

Bid documents will be available at Makana Finance offices upon payment of R845 non-refundable cash fees for each tender document, from 16th March 2021.

NB- SUBMITTING OF TENDERS

Closing Date: Completed tender documents must be enclosed in a sealed envelope, clearly marked “APPLICABLE TENDER NAME” BID NO OF THE APPLICABLE TENDER SUBMITTING FOR” as well as the closing time and due date, and must be addressed to the Supply Chain Management, MAKANA MUNICIPALITY, PO Box 176, Makhandha 6140, should be deposited/submitted in the tender box situated at downstairs at finance building, Makana Local Municipality: Finance Department at 86 High Street Grahamstown not later than 29 March 2021 @ 12H00. (No late tenders shall be accepted; all late tenders shall be returned unopened to the sender if received by post)

Makana Local Municipality does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any bid and reserves the right to accept the whole or part of the bid.

Requirements for sealing, addressing, delivery, opening and assessment of tenders are stated in the tender Data.

All Technical Enquiries are to be directed to Mr Thapelo M email: Tmatshuisa@makana.gov.za / and all SCM queries are to be directed to Ms. T Mvane 046 603 6222, email:tmvane@makana.gov.za

Issued by office of the Municipal Manager: Mr Mene

MR M. MENE
MUNICIPAL MANAGER

Bidders are required to submit the following documents:

- **Founding Statement (CK / Company Registration Certificate) or certified copy must be submitted, if a sole proprietor provide affidavit confirming ownership.**
- **Bidders to submit a valid SARS Tax status report Issued with a Pin. Completed and signed declaration of interest MBD4, MBD 6.1, MBD 6.2, MBD 8 & MBD 9, Failure to submit will result in disqualification. BBBEE Certificates original / certified copies must be submitted and failure to do so will result in loss of points.**
- **Original certified copy Directors/Owners/Partners Identity documents.**
- **Billing clearance / lease agreement signed by both parties the lessor and the lessee, if expired extension of the lease must be attached or statement of municipal accounts not more than 3 months old and not more than 3 months in arrears must be attached to and be returned with the Tender documents, if arrangement is done proof must be attached, failure to submit will result in disqualification.**
- **NB:JV/Partnership; JV agreement or partnership agreement must be attached failure will result in disqualification**
- **Each JV partner or Partnership partner must complete and sign all MBDs and submit billing per requirement above**
- **Tenderers must be registered as a supplier/service provider on Makana Local Municipality supplier/service provider database and Central Supplier Database (CSD) proof of registration (Makana Database Confirmation Letter; CSD Registration report) on both databases must be submitted.**
- **MFMA Circular 90 will apply**
- **Tenders which are late, incomplete, unsigned or submitted by fax**

CLASSIFIEDS

adverts5@ads.grocotts.co.za

MISCELLANEOUS
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in any condition. Old Models are welcome too. Please contact Himat on 082 722 6183

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WE ARE COVID COMPLIANT. ESSENTIAL WORKER DURING LOCKDOWN.
Contact Marius on 079 463 0872 or Whatsapp 071 211 4723. Email mbholdings01@gmail.com

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GARDEN REFUSE REMOVAL

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As per quote

Garden Refuse Removal
Per Load - as per quote
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WE ARE COVID COMPLIANT. ESSENTIAL WORKER DURING LOCKDOWN.

Contact Marius on 079 463 0872 or Whatsapp 071 211 4723. Email mbholdings01@gmail.com

CHILD WELFARE NOTICES



Child Welfare Grahamstown is looking for the biological father of a female child born **29/08/2016**. **Bongiwe Plaatjie** is the biological mother of the child. Please could anyone with information regarding his whereabouts contact **Phumza Maqoko-Mxoli, Social Worker from Grahamstown Child Welfare on 046 636 1355**.

Child Welfare Grahamstown is looking for the biological fathers of female children born **04/01/2017 and 25/05/2019**. **Fredilene Oliphant** is the biological mother of the children. Please could

anyone with information regarding their whereabouts contact **Asisipho Ginya, Social Worker from Grahamstown Child Welfare on 046 636 1355**.

Child Welfare Grahamstown is looking for **"Zithulele"** who is the alleged biological father of a female child born **19/07/2015**. **Nosicelo Amanda Ncula** is the biological mother of the child. Please could anyone with information regarding her whereabouts contact **Asisipho Ginya, Social Worker from Grahamstown Child Welfare on 046 636 1355**.

