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Trollip fails on key promise

Deadline to eradicate bucket toilets extended to next year

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THE Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality has extended its deadline to eradicate the bucket system in the city by six months – leaving mayor Athol Trollip failing to deliver on one of his biggest political promises.

This comes as the municipality has also scrapped the provision of chemical toilets – a temporary replacement for the bucket system – as it is too costly.

The decision to shift the deadline was made at an infrastructure, engineering and energy committee meeting last week.

Councillors at the meeting noted the report on the bucket eradication programme, which included recommendations that:

- The timeframe for the eradication of buckets and installation of alternative sanitation facilities be extended to the end of June;

- Infrastructure and engineering portfolio head Annette Lovemore, human settlements political head Nqaba Bhanga and Trollip engage with communities; and

- The option of providing chemical toilets by the end of next month where bucket toilets are still being used, be scrapped.

However, just six weeks ago, the municipality had recommitted to fulfilling Trollip's promise.

"An election promise cannot be left at the ballot box," Lovemore said in the statement issued on October 13.

"It is a commitment made out of caring and determination to govern well and deliver services for all.

"We are very serious about seeing it through."

On the failed deadline, Trollip said there had been delays as some ward councillors and communities wanted electricity, housing, water and "other things" before the eradication of the bucket system.

"I'd rather miss my deadline and do the job properly," he said.

"We appeal for the community's and ward councillors' cooperation to bring dignified sanitation solutions to those communities using buckets."

Trollip made the political promise in his inaugural address in August last year, when he said: "As the mayor of our new government, I undertake to provide dignified sanitation to all communities by the end of 2017.

"It is time for this metro's 30 000 bucket



HOPES FOR FUTURE: Walmer Area G West resident Ntombizanele Makhaphela is one of many who look forward to the end of the hated bucket toilet system
Picture: WERNER HILLS

toilets to go." At the time, there were not even 30 000 bucket toilets in use and Lovemore has since said his figure was historical and dated back to 2005.

Statistics South Africa's non-financial census of municipalities, released in May, put the number at 16 317 last year.

By September this year there were 12 333 bucket toilets, according to the municipality – a reduction of 3 984.

But this was largely the result of people moving into RDP houses or to serviced stands where RDP houses would be built,

Lovemore said. Asked why the rollout of chemical toilets had been abandoned, Trollip said he was against their extensive use as they were expensive and not suitable in the long term.

Lovemore said the worst-case scenario cost was estimated at R22-million.

In wards where the municipality could get buy-in, container ablation facilities – with flush toilets – are replacing buckets.

Wards that did not agree, such as Walmer Township, might have to use buckets until at least June 30.

At Walmer Area G West, resident Ntombizanele Makhaphela, 32, was angry that the deadline would be missed and chemical toilets no longer rolled out.

"We don't feel valued. We have children who play in the street and are exposed to the stench.

"They must find money somewhere because we desperately need flush toilets."

Another resident, Dathini Kugabayo, 48, was not sure what would replace buckets but "prays for flush toilets".

said. "Sometimes dogs knock down the buckets when our children are playing.

"It's painful that this continues to happen in this day and age.

"When there is a strike, municipal employees do not bother to fetch buckets."

When he made the promise, Trollip did not specify what the buckets would be replaced with, saying only that it would be dignified sanitation.

Asked what the municipality considered dignified, Lovemore said: "We want to, at least, provide a solution where sewage is enclosed and no direct exposure (to faeces) takes place, or where sewage undergoes some level of treatment to render it less offensive and less of a health risk – as in a chemical toilet."

She said the ideal solution was one where sewage was immediately removed, as in a flush solution, like the container ablutions.

"But dignity cannot be measured with a ruler or defined by an outsider. It must be experienced," she said.

"This is why it is important for communities themselves to accept an ablation solution as dignified."

In Missionvale, residents live in RDP houses but still use buckets or pit latrines.

Five years ago, Miriam Deyn, 35, and her family were elated when they received an RDP house.

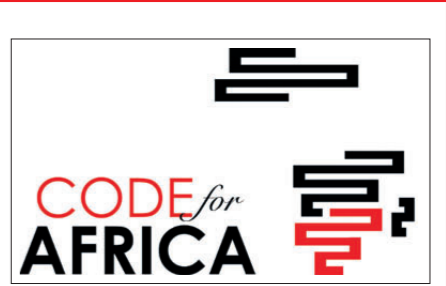
But their joy evaporated when they discovered that the water pipes in the toilet and bathroom were not connected.

"Every week, we carry the buckets across the street for the municipal truck to collect," Deyn said.

"It's unhygienic. There is no longer privacy or dignity."

Deyn said Trollip's promise had initially given her hope. But now she wonders: "How long must we wait for him to eradicate the bucket system?"

I'd rather miss my deadline and do the job properly



This package is the result of a collaboration between The Herald and Track My Mayor. Track My Mayor keeps track of mayoral promises in the interest of increased accountability at local government level. Reporting for this story was supported by Code for Africa's impact AFRICA fund.

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SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE: Kirsty Colledge helps Gerrit Cilliers, pictured, with a valuation of his painting by Johannes Meintjies. It was valued at between R80 000 and R120 000
Picture: WERNER HILLS



Nelson Mandela Bay art lovers cash in

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ARTWORK worth more than half-a-million rand was snapped up in a single afternoon when a pair of art specialists visited the metro.

Kirsty Colledge and Ian Hunter, from Strauss & Co, spent a busy afternoon at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum in Port Elizabeth on Monday as part of their Eastern Cape valuation roadshow, collecting art for their auction next year.

"We had a full diary, with appointments every five minutes

from 12pm to 6pm," Colledge said. "We saw some lovely [items], but among the highlights were two beautiful [Jan] Volschenk works, of which one was unusually large."

Hunter said they had also consigned a painting by late Port Elizabeth-born artist George Pemba.

"There was also a lovely work by Walter Battiss.

"This week's visit compared very favourably [to previous visits]," he said.

"We always get an outstanding response in Port Elizabeth.

"We often see work that we've seen at previous visits, after people have had a chance to consider

their decision." Colledge said one of these cases included a Lucas Sithole sculpture, consigned on Monday.

Although they collected 16 items in total, Colledge estimated that the auction value of these artworks could be more than R500 000.

"The Walter Battiss could sell for between R150 000 and R200 000, while the Lucas Sithole is worth R80 000 to R120 000," she said.

"The George Pemba could reach R120 000 to R160 000 and the larger Volschenk could sell for R60 000 to R80 000."

Colledge said the owners of the artworks were usually aware of

their value beforehand.

"We seldom find people who are surprised by the worth of their art," she said.

The roadshow follows the success of Strauss & Co's live sale this month in Johannesburg, which generated a headline turnover of R76-million.

The items consigned during this week's visit will be auctioned on March 5 at the Vineyard Hotel in Newlands.

"We offer the items [we consign] on auction on behalf of the client, and we advertise them in the catalogue going to 1 500 subscribers in South Africa and abroad.

"We cast a large net across the art market and attract all the big fish to [gain] maximum value for our clients," Hunter said.

Colledge and Hunter are visiting Plettenberg Bay this morning and will be in Knysna tomorrow, before ending the roadshow in Swellendam on Friday.

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Eradicating buckets uphill battle

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Residents fear accepting communal facilities system will delay getting a house

WALMER Township and Missionvale may be kilometres apart, but the Nelson Mandela Bay residents living there share a common reality – the continued use of bucket toilets.

Mzamo Fokwana, 41, of Walmer Township, said people were tired of living as second-class citizens. “We are frustrated with the bucket system. In fact [mayor Athol] Trollip undertook to eradicate them,” Fokwana said.

“Residents are ready to go to the street and toyi-toyi if the issue is

not addressed but we first want to follow the right process.”

Walmer is one of the areas where the municipality struggled to get buy-in for the installation of container ablation facilities as a replacement for the bucket system.

Infrastructure, engineering, electricity and energy political head Annette Lovemore said some communities had rejected the container ablation facilities for fear that they would lose out on a chance to get a house.

ANC ward councillor Ayanda Tyokwana said the community was sceptical about the bucket eradication programme.

“The priority for them is housing but the municipality is dragging its feet.”

While the demand for housing is the primary reason for the rejection of alternatives to buckets, according to Lovemore, she said the people of Walmer Area G West said that they would rather have electricity than have the buckets removed.

When a Herald team visited Walmer Area G West, the area was rife with dangerous electricity connections as wires ran all over the ground and others hung above.

Resident Zama Jeyesi, 33, said it was not correct to say residents

wanted electricity instead of toilets.

A self-conscious Jeyesi pointed out a small but smelly pit latrine and a bucket her household used to relieve themselves.

“It’s quite embarrassing that we still use this.”

“The priority for us is flush toilets and decent housing.”

“Families, particularly children and the elderly, get sick because we are exposed to the bucket system,” she said.

And Jeyesi remembers Trollip’s promise.

“We are still waiting,” she said.

In Missionvale, residents live in

RDP houses but still use buckets or pit latrines.

Morina Perscencie, 49, of Missionvale, said the community would not take the mayor and any of his future promises seriously.


“I have lived in this house for three years but I can tell you, we are unable to use the inside toilet because the pipes are not connected,” she said.

“It makes you uncomfortable to use the bucket, particularly if you have visitors.”

Lovemore said the municipality hoped to deliver working flush toilets to 1 716 households in Missionvale by the end of the year.

“Missionvale homes were built without proper water and sewer connections through the provincial department of human settlements.”

“The municipality is in the process of checking all water and sewerage infrastructure for full functionality before removing the buckets,” she said last month.



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Container cubicles adding dignity to lives

Hendrick Mphande

IT is 9am on a scorching hot Thursday morning.

Jabulani Simelane, 57, emerges from a toilet cubicle in a container and proceeds to wash his hands with water from a tap.

“These toilets helped us a great deal. We no longer use the degrading bucket system as hostel dwellers,” he said.

Simelane is a resident of the Matthew Goniwe Hostel where this container ablation facility was piloted.

Located in the heart of the hostel, the container for men has three flush toilets and two showers.

The container for women has four toilets and two showers.

Neliseka Zothe, 35, has been employed there as a cleaner since last year.

She spoke with pride about how the facilities had transformed the lives of those living around the hostel.

“Our lives changed for good. It’s amazing. Previously, residents used to use buckets and some threw faeces on the grass. But today, you can see how clean the lawn is. We can sit anywhere we like,” Zothe said.

The cleaners also keep an eye on the facilities to prevent vandals from damaging them.

They have two shifts – 5am to 1pm, followed by a shift that ends at 8pm when the toilets are closed.

“The only worry is what will happen in the middle of the night. You cannot come here to relieve yourself.

“Instead you will be forced to use a bucket. That defeats the purpose.”

In line with DA mayor Athol Trollip’s election campaign promise to eradicate the bucket system, the new coalition government has installed five similar container toilets in Ramaphosa Village.

But residents complained, saying this was insufficient considering the high demand in the area.

On Friday afternoon, the containers were not yet in use after being installed a couple of months ago.

A resident, who did not want to be named, wondered what the point was when they could not use them.

“Work was completed a long time ago and no one knows what will be the next step.”

“I saw a truck today remove one of



ALL SPOTLESS: Neliseka Zothe cleans the container at the Matthew Goniwe Hostel

Pictures: WERNER HILLS

the containers and we don’t know where they have taken it.”

Another resident, Regina Johannes, 61, said the community welcomed the initiative but wondered how it would benefit the elderly as some residents would have to walk about 500m to use the facilities.

“How will they get there at night? We are also concerned about the high crime rate and they could end up being victims of mugging,” Johannes said.

Across town, two containers in Nkanini, Veeplaas, were also not yet in use.

The project has generated great interest and excitement among residents, including Nomangisi Ntlali, 65.

The grandmother said she had been using the bucket system for years and now felt her dignity was about to be restored.

“I am delighted by this project. Although two containers is not enough, so we hope they will add extras to accommodate everyone,” Ntlali said.

ANC Ward 30 councillor Mbulelo Gidane claimed that when the DA came to power, they simply copied the ANC’s

bucket eradication programme.

“This was originally an ANC brainchild but due to delays, we did not finish,” he said.

Infrastructure, engineering, electricity and energy political head Annette Lovemore said the communal container ablation facilities had been used in eThekweni.

“It is based on their model that we have planned our roll-out,” she said.

Lovemore did not respond to questions about residents’ or Gidane’s comments.



BIG DIFFERENCE: Jabulani Simelane washes his hands in a container

People let down by DA, EFF claims

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WHILE some opposition parties have accepted the extension for the eradication of buckets in Nelson Mandela Bay, the EFF believe the DA has let residents down.

The decision to shift the deadline was made at an infrastructure, engineering and energy committee meeting last week.

EFF councillor Likhanyo Mrara said the extension was a letdown for residents who still used the bucket system.

Mrara attended the meeting last week when a report outlining the extension was noted by councillors.

“When the DA was contesting the elections it promised citizens that there would be no buckets in the city by the end of this year, but nothing has happened,” Mrara said.

“We have noted it as a concern that [they] had promised citizens but [they] have not delivered.”

Mrara, however, said they understood that some challenges had been experienced.

“They have indicated that they are dealing with the matter.

“However, we are saying it cannot be June, it has to be sooner and they must minimise the number of people using a single container.”

Mrara said 50 people using one container was equivalent to 50 people in an informal settlement using the bucket toilet system.

“That is not bucket toilet eradication,” he said.

ANC councillor Bongo Nombimba said he was happy with the extension.

“We saw nothing wrong with the report, we understood that it was for information and we were happy to hear of the progress.

“We can see that the programme is going ahead. We also understand that they met some challenges, otherwise we have no problem,” Nombimba said.

DA councillor Masixole Zinto said councillors had “noted” the report last week after deciding that it made sense to move the deadline.

“All the councillors were comfortable with the report and we were convinced that it makes sense,” Zinto said.

Asked if he was happy with the progress of the project in Motherwell where he is assigned, Zinto declined to comment.

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Anger over 'rubbish plastic toilets'

Hendrick Mphande

ALECK Bergines vividly recalls Nelson Mandela Bay mayor Athol Trollip's promise to eradicate bucket toilets.

But if the alternative is the “rubbish plastic toilets” they have in New Rest, Seaview, the 54-year-old is not interested.

“We were promised lots of things including [the] eradication of buckets. Just like every political party, [this was just] rhetoric.

“The DA is useless. They don’t care for those in the informal areas.

“Why can’t Trollip and his government give people decent toilets?”

“The people expected to see water toilets [flush toilets]; not rubbish plastics,” Bergines said.

The plastic toilets he refers to are chemical toilets – the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality’s abandoned “Plan B” in the bucket eradication programme.

Eric Dyasi, 55, has been a Seaview resident for years.

“These chemical plastics were installed by the ANC government. When you are inside, the door is pushed wide open because it’s broken,” he said.

“There is no sense of privacy and people are sick. Our right to privacy and health is compromised. Give us flush toilets, please,” Dyasi said.

While hundreds of Seaview residents make use of chemical toilets, some would rather be without sanitation.

One of them is Xolile Sigxabayi, 38, who said the sight of the plastic toilets made him sick.

“They [the plastic toilets] smell. I don’t use [them]. I prefer to make my own. I dig a hole under the ground and when it’s full, I move to another space,” he said.

When a Herald team visited New Rest, an informal settlement a few kilometres from the city centre, to establish how chemical toilets were received by a community that had used them for some time, some toilet doors were broken.

Residents complained that the toilets were not cleaned at regular intervals and that at times, cleaners simply dumped the faeces in the neighbourhood.



PLASTIC ALTERNATIVE: A family makes their way to one of the chemical toilets in Seaview

“At times the officials who clean these toilets empty the poo next to our houses

Janine Lesley, 24, expressed mixed feelings about the facilities.

Previously, Lesley said, she and other residents used the bushes to relieve themselves.

The chemical toilets brought some relief.

“However, the stench coming from these toilets is unbearable. It is even worse when it’s summer.

“This is unhealthy. What is even worse is that at times the officials who clean these toilets empty the poo next to our houses. Just imagine how much stench we have to endure.”

Lesley, who also wants flush toilets for Seaview, said it was dangerous to use the chemical toilets, particularly at night.

“Everything is not right. People get mugged when the streetlights switch off. The toilets are located far away from the houses and it’s dark out there,” she said.

Infrastructure, engineering, electricity and energy political head Annette Lovemore failed to respond to questions about the sanitation situation in Seaview.



NO THANK YOU: Aleck Bergines does not regard chemical toilets as decent toilets