

# Aids Council to Break Silence and Remove the Stigma



The Local Aids Council launched by Metsimaholo Local Municipality is aimed at breaking the silence and remove the stigma that surrounds those living with the disease. These were the words of Metsimaholo Local Municipality Executive Mayor Cllr Jeff Zwane during the launch of the Local Aids Council at the Harry Gwala Multipurpose Centre last month.

“A fundamental challenge to every individual and institution in South Africa today is posed by the onslaught of the HIV and AIDS pandemic and the devastating impact it has had on the fabric of a society. All of us must

answer the question of how we will respond to this challenge. To do so we must build a clear understanding of the social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of the pandemic. Since the impact of the pandemic is multi-faceted, our response must be multi sectorial. We must seek to transcend the divisions across sectors between spheres of government and between government, communities and civil society to build a common response that addresses the social impact of the disease” said Zwane.

“Government, together with welfare and other organisations, has developed a response to the

AIDS crisis, but without a coherent and collective approach at local level their efforts will not achieve as much as it could. Municipalities should ensure that all

projects take account of AIDS and its consequences. As employers we should also make sure that our own employees are adequately protected and that we have workplace policies and programmes that spread awareness, provide care, and educate around prevention and non-discrimination.

Municipalities are ideally placed to play the coordinating and facilitating role that is needed to make sure that partnerships are built to bring prevention and care programmes to every community affected by AIDS. A local municipality is the

sphere of government closest to the people and local councillors are the politicians directly elected to serve local communities. Municipalities need a coherent strategy that brings together leaders of all sectors of the community, service providers and welfare organisations to halt the spread of HIV and to provide care for people living with HIV and AIDS and their families.

Although AIDS has become very common it is still surrounded by silence. People are ashamed to speak about it. People living with HIV and AIDS are exposed to daily prejudice born out of ignorance and fear. We cannot tackle this epidemic unless we can break the silence and remove the stigma that surrounds it. The fight against AIDS must happen on two main fronts - prevention and care. To prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS we must educate people on how to prevent infection. We also must change the social attitudes that make women vulnerable because they cannot refuse unsafe sex from a partner and the attitudes among men that lead to woman abuse and rape. Mayors and councillors should act as role models for communities and be an example to people. We should take the lead in promoting openness and ending the silence that surrounds AIDS, concludes Cllr Zwane.

## “Disappointing” increase in Easter Weekend road deaths

South Africa recorded an increase in fatalities during the Easter Weekend with 225 people losing their lives on the roads this year when compared to the 161 fatalities that were recorded in the same period last year. Addressing members of the media last Friday, Minister of Transport Sindisiwe Chikunga, expressed disappointment at the high rate of crashes, which showed that 185 crashes were recorded this year when compared to 135 fatal crashes during the same period last year.

“Human factor, which include reckless and negligent driving, was the most prominent contributing factor in all fatalities at 96.2 followed by road and environmental factors at 4.5% while vehicle factors were the least contributor at 1.1%. “The unacceptably high contribution of human factors reflects poor driving habits of our motorists and is also a reflection of the high number of incompetent drivers on the roads,” the Minister said.

The high number of road users who died on the country’s roads were pedestrians, who accounted for 44.4% of all fatalities, followed by passengers at 27.7%. Drivers accounted for 25.6%, cyclists at 1.3% while the road user status of 1% could not be determined. “The

highest number of fatalities occurred on Friday (7 April) and the lowest number was recorded on Thursday 6 (April). Most of the fatalities that occurred between 3pm and 10pm were predominantly characterised by hit and run crashes, single vehicle overturns, pedestrian collisions and head on collisions.

“An increase in fatalities was recorded in all provinces except in Mpumalanga, Western Cape and the North West and we congratulate these provinces for the work well done,” the Minister said.

Traffic Volumes

Reports from the South African National Roads Agency SOC Ltd (SANRAL) toll gates indicated an increased traffic volume on the major highways leading to and from Gauteng. “At the start of the Easter weekend on Thursday, SANRAL recorded an average of 2 000 vehicles an hour passing through the toll gates. The highest volume of 2 287 vehicles an hour was recorded between 4pm and 5pm at Pumwani Plaza on the N1 towards Limpopo.

“At the end of the Easter weekend on Monday, 10 April 2023, the highest traffic volume was recorded between 5pm and 6pm, when 3 244 vehicles were recorded passing through the Pumlani Plaza into Gauteng,” the

Minister said. Law enforcement officials issued 30 934 traffic fines; 430 vehicles were discontinued because of road unworthiness related issues; 1 625 were impounded for displaying invalid or fake discs, and operating in violation of permits; while 1 716 drivers were arrested for excessive speeding, drunken driving, reckless and negligent driving, and operating public transport without permits.

The top five traffic offences identified were speeding, driving unlicensed vehicles, driving without fastening seatbelts, driving without licences, and driving vehicles with worn out tyres. Chikunga affirmed that government remains resolute in turning the tide on the carnage on the roads.

“We are continuing to strengthen measures which seek to make our roads safer. In addition, we continue to learn invaluable lessons and will use these to bolster our traffic law enforcement interventions. “We have taken strides that have brought us closer to classifying traffic policing as an essential service of a 7-day, 24-hour job across the country - a move which will transform the face of traffic law enforcement and ensure sustained visibility on the roads,” the Minister said. – *SAnews.gov.za*



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