



**Friday, 25 January 2007**

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Dear Dr Sankar

### **Dumping in Motala Heights**

I was alerted by the community in Motala Heights of industrial waste being dumped adjacent to their homes as well as on a river bed. Motala Heights is located at the edge of Pinetown, and the specific area I am talking of is adjacent to the Motala Heights Library.

I visited the areas this morning and found evidence of waste oil in sand, furnace ash, asbestos, builder's rubble and chemical containers being dumped at the site, which is on the doorstep of people's homes.

In speaking to the local residents, it is alleged that Mr R.Govender, who is the local landowner, allowed people to dump waste there and from newspaper reports it is clear that he has used this as a dump for his own industry:

“Bronwyn Gerretsen, writing for The Mercury<sup>i</sup> reported that “They [residents at Motala Heights] allege that Govender has intimidated them by dumping waste from his glass factory almost literally on their doorsteps, burning plastic waste near their homes and threatening to bulldoze their homes”. Similarly, Niren Tolsi, who went to the area at the time to write his article for the Mail and Guardian<sup>ii</sup> also spoke with residents there who “allege a litany of intimidatory tactics on Govender's part, including dumping of waste from his glass factory; burning of plastic waste near homes with children”

The dumping of the waste has also damaged the local roads and, more importantly, obstructed people's access to their homes. The impact on people's health is of great concern to groundWork.

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People are concerned about this, and they have indicated that scavenging from the waste does take place.

The issue became public knowledge in September 2007, and it is clear that the relevant authorities have ignored this.

I would recommend that the Department of Health, together with the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, immediately:

- a. Investigates the types of waste dumped in the area, by taking samples of the waste and doing a full spec analysis;
- b. Investigates the source of the waste and takes the necessary legal action to remedy the situation;
- c. Does a full analysis of the impact on the local wetland system;
- d. Does a health assessment/study of the possible impact of the waste on peoples health;

Finally, we recommend that Mr Govender is served with an interdict as the landlord of the area to set in place mechanisms to stop this practice and to ensure that while he does this he does not place people's homes at the risk of being demolished or moving people off the land.

I have copied this letter to the DWAF, which I assume you will work with on this issue. In response please use [research@groundwork.org.za](mailto:research@groundwork.org.za) as my e-mail for communication.

Regards,



Bobby Peek  
Director, groundWork, Friends of the Earth South Africa

CC: Pat Reddy - DWAF

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<sup>i</sup> See <http://www.themercury.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=4069771>

<sup>ii</sup> (see his article: 'They can pack up and go' of 2007-09-21 at:  
[http://www.mg.co.za/articledirect.aspx?articleid=319877&area=%2finsight%2finsight\\_\\_national%2f](http://www.mg.co.za/articledirect.aspx?articleid=319877&area=%2finsight%2finsight__national%2f))