

# Daily Dispatch

## OUR OPINION

### Failing our children

EVERY parent dreads the years between childhood and responsible adulthood, when their children go out into the world to play, study, work and experiment with their newfound freedom and independence.

They are dangerous years when drink, drugs and fast cars threaten the lives of young people who need still to find their own boundaries.

Education institutions once accepted a role as “in loco parentis”, which implied a responsibility to care for the children in their care as a parent would.

University residences monitored the comings and goings of youngsters living away from home for the first time and enforced the values of the absent parents.

Those rules suited a context that no longer exists and young people are now expected to take full responsibility for themselves from a much younger age.

But as a society, we seem to have failed to compensate for the withdrawal of extended parental care either by making their world safe or by equipping young people to manage the freedom they have.

That was demonstrated in part by the findings of a unique survey by the Saturday Dispatch, which revealed that while more than half of the urban schoolchildren surveyed were sexually active, three-quarters of those who were did not always practise safe sex.

The survey also showed up a perverse culture in some schools that makes it more cool to be a teenage parent than it is to claim your freedom years.

Earlier this year, 23-year-old Rhodes student Lelona Thembakazi Fufu was murdered while travelling back to the campus for her graduation.

Today we report a second murder this year on WSU's Mthatha campus. Bhikinkosi Nkaziya from Nikwe village in Bizana was stabbed on Friday while walking with a girlfriend.

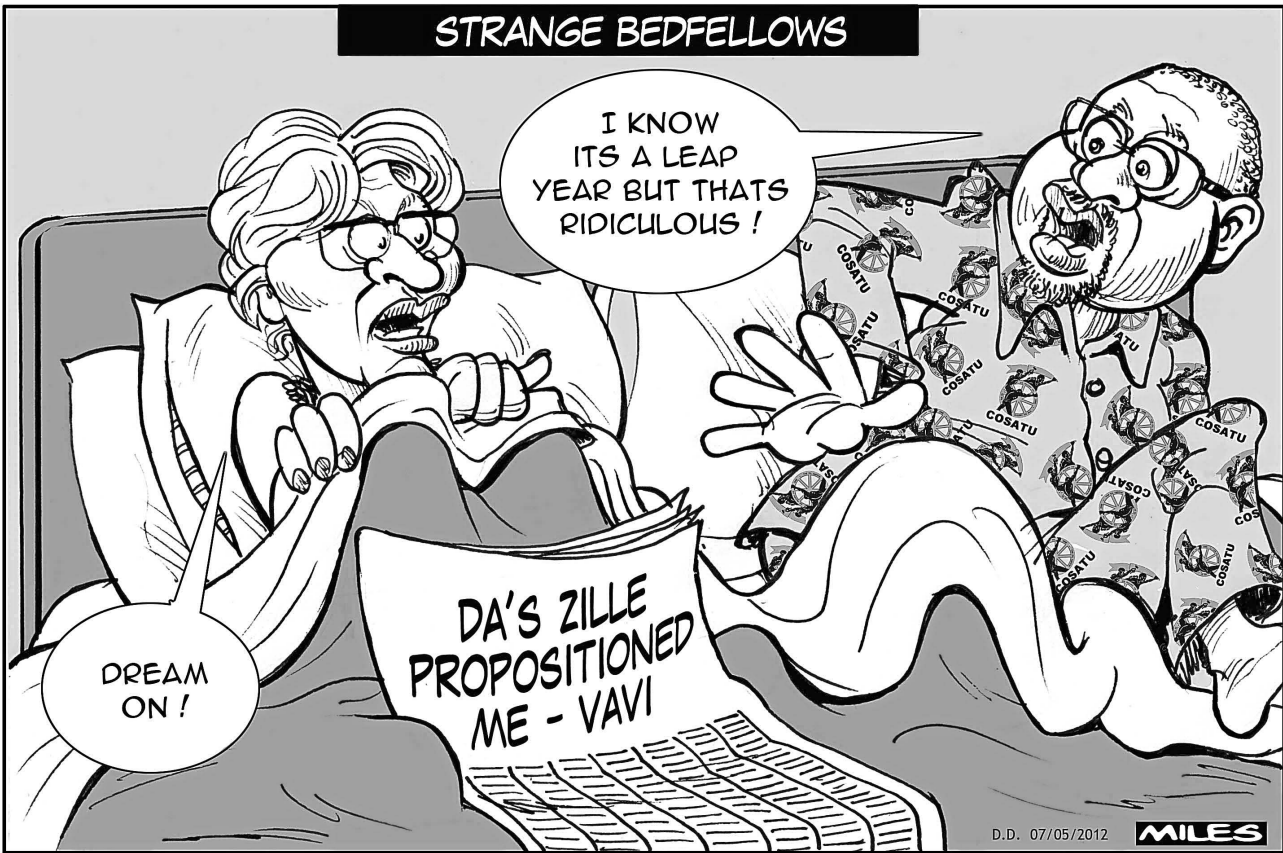
We cannot blame the government for failing our children in all these different ways. The responsibility is our own as a society which seems no longer to respect children, students or life itself.

Perhaps these things would happen less if there was less poverty and people could grow up believing they would prosper.

Perhaps they would happen less if police looked after their vehicles better and thought it was their job to be on the streets, making them safe.

But those failings, too, are symptoms of a society that has lost its way, which lacks role models and which no longer values personal responsibility.

The answers are within us as people and society. We can begin by cherishing our children – even when that is hard to do.



## Cadre deployment just like a tornado raging through BCM

IT WAS recently reported that, some two months after the appointment had been made, the contract of Buffalo City municipal manager Andile Fani had yet to be tabled before the legislature.

The appointment itself had seemingly brought to an end more than three years of indecision about the position which, along with that of chief financial officer, had remained vacant.

It is true that for much of that time there was an acting municipal manager in place (Fani) but the temporary nature of any such contract means one is not able to plan long term, nor is the particular individual able to operate in good faith, as they have the sword of Damocles hovering permanently above their head.

No municipality can be expected to function properly without a municipal manager and chief financial officer in place for more than 1 000 days.

The effect of this, along with other general and widespread dysfunctionality, meant Buffalo City's financial management went into a downward spiral.

In 2003/2004, the municipality managed a financially unqualified report, with just two non-material concerns raised by the AG. From that point on, there has been a steady decline. Three points of qualification in 2006/2007, four in 2007/2008, six in 2008/2009, eight points on which the AG's opinion was disclaimed in 2009/2010 and, last year, nine points so severe the AG issued an adverse finding.

Over those five years, its total points have gone from four to 12 and, in each case, each point become so critical the AG's 2010/2011 report included some 80 paragraphs (each paragraph being a sub-point) and ran to 14 pages.

Buffalo City's credit ratings have also declined. Credit ratings are like the bank's assessment of you when you apply for a home loan. If you have a history of bad debt, poor financial management, dubious

### GARETH VAN ONSELEN

policy and practice and the misuse of credit given to you, you won't qualify for a loan. A bad municipal rating is a clear signal to investors to stay well away. And when that happens, the economy shrinks, employment drops and it becomes harder and harder to create new jobs.

With its short-term rating Buffalo City did by 2008 improve from the “Weak” band (zaA1) to the “Adequate” band (zaA2) but over the last four years has declined from zaA1 to zaA1- and is now in serious danger of lapsing back to zaA2.

This, then, is the reality in Buffalo City some 18 years after democracy. How did it happen? To answer that, one needs to turn to the policy of cadre deployment, a monster of the ANC's creation, now running wild in Buffalo City.

At the conclusion of the 2011 local government elections, Buffalo City appointed Zukiswa Ncitha as its executive mayor. This would bring the total number of mayors in charge of the city in three years to four – Zintle Peter, Sakhumzi Caga and Zukisa Faku being the others.

Over the past five years the municipality has had six municipal managers, five of them in an acting position.

The chief financial officer position has now been unoccupied for over three years, again, with numerous acting officials rotating through it.

Following a history of poor financial management, in particular a failure to spend the budget properly ahead of the 2010 Word Cup and huge tender irregularities, the municipality hired first PricewaterhouseCooper, and later Ernst & Young to conduct forensic audits. They made a range of findings against key members of the Buffalo City executive,

including then mayor Zukisa Faku, who was alleged to have interfered in the appointment of contractors and bypassed supply chain management protocols.

They set out in gory detail the massive material mismanagement of Buffalo City administration.

To date the municipality has failed to properly implement the recommendations contained within the report.

But it was enough for Jacob Zuma to discard Faku as mayoral candidate for the 2011 local government elections and, with a new mayor, to confirm Andile Fani as municipal manager.

Prior to the election, Faku faced 12 charges from the party, which, according to The Times, included undermining the ANC by appointing a new municipal manager “outside the ruling party's deployment procedures”. She and 22 Buffalo City councillors were expelled.

More recently, the Daily Dispatch reported that Faku had made a “dramatic comeback”. Leading a group “hostile to President Jacob Zuma's bid for a second term as ANC president” she was elected head of the ANC's new Buffalo City region. The paper reported that this would no doubt “reopen debate about the controversial appointment of Andile Fani”.

That Fani's appointment too was political is evidenced by his selection. More than 30 other candidates were overlooked, most instantly dismissed for not having the necessary qualification – a certificate in municipal finance management – but not so Fani, who is strongly supported by the Zuma faction and the SACP in particular. When he told the committee he had taken the requisite course but not yet received his results, they did not disqualify him as they had done other candidates, instead twice delaying the interviews so he might obtain his results. Later the Local Government Seta and the South Africa Qualifications Authority would not en-

dorse his certificate, effectively nullifying it. He was appointed regardless.

Following the Ernest & Young report, Faku dismissed her mayoral committee and six managers – the politicians reportedly because they were mobilising against her. But the extent to which such political and public positions were in the past misused by cadres with a political agenda is well documented by the AG.

As a result of these problems and many others for the 2008/2009 financial year Buffalo City underspent its capital budget by R318-million or 46%. By the time an acting municipal manager took over in 2010, it was spending just 18%. In his adverse opinion for 2010/2011, the AG found the municipality could not properly account for some R2-billion. The inability to invest properly in infrastructure had led to a backlog so acute that in 2009 the municipality lost 53% of all water distributed and suffered electricity losses of R104m (13% of the total) – both primary sources of income for the metro.

These were service delivery problems on the grandest scale.

The minute you elevate political loyalty to a formal policy, as cadre deployment does, and seek then to extend it not just to political appointments but the public service too, you have not only violated the principles that define best democratic practice, but created the potential for the perfect political storm.

Polokwane formed those condensed storm clouds into a raging tornado that now rips through the country, and the damage it causes is most evident in places like Buffalo City, where an entire public administration has been turned into a focal point for the ANC's political feuding.

*Gareth van Onselen is the DA's Director of Political Analysis and Development. This is an edited version of a personal blog from [www.inside-politics.org](http://www.inside-politics.org)*

## THE CHIEL

### Bully mynas a major nuisance

MY COLUMN last week discussing the reintroduction of ospeckers to the Eastern Cape and their ability to deal with ticks on wild and domestic animals, elicited a letter from Hans Moerdyk of Stutterheim.

He says that the mid and late 1960s brought advancements in medicine and agrochemicals which had unintentionally disastrous consequences on nature.

What man believes is good for himself, but which disturbs nature is rife – Chiel.

Hans says as a child he saw the large vulture population in the Magaliesberg around Pretoria almost vanish. “Little did we know then that prosperity enjoyed by using more effective animal medication, specifically against tick-born diseases, would literally kill vultures in their thousands,” he writes. “We ought to know better that more potent tick dip is not a perfect solution to better tick control.”

“My brother-in-law owned a farm in the Orichstad valley in Mpumalanga where ticks were a similar problem. He used to hunt down every Indian myna in sight.”

“However, one year during a visit to his farm he told me he had stopped hunting mynas after seeing them picking ticks off stock like ospeckers do. Apparently they are related.”

Indeed. They are both members of the starling family. It was news to me that mynas, the bully-birds that have taken over several big cities, do something as useful as that. But it's true. My *Roberts Birds* book says so – they perch on game and domestic stock and remove parasites. So to an extent, the almost universally “hated” myna birds that have been introduced to a number of regions outside their indigenous territories, do something good. In fact, they were spread wide by farmers who introduced them to their lands, believing they would deal with insects and other pests among crops.

Australia suffers from that folly and mynas have now been declared by the International Union for Conservation of Nature to be among the world's 100 most invasive creatures. Only three birds make that list – European starlings are there too.

At Ndumo Game Reserve in northern KwaZulu-Natal, where we were recently, there was a notice in the office reading: “Please report sightings of Indian mynas in the reserve so we can shoot the bastards” (or words to that effect).

The reason for such aggression by conservationists is that mynas kill the nestlings of indigenous birds and take over their nest holes. In Australia, woodpeckers and parakeets are affected.

Turning to flowers, and a more positive note, Erica Vos wrote to tell me about the blaze of pink wild flowers she and her aunt saw just south of the Keiskamma River cuttings while driving on the R72. Her photos are spectacular.

I asked Mary Cole of the Wild Flower Society what they might be. Their botanical name is *Criminum campanulatum* and they're indigenous to the area around Port Alfred, Peddie, Grahamstown and Riebeeck East. They come up in shallow dams etc after rain. They don't seem to have a common name though, Mary says.

Chiel today is Robin Ross-Thompson; [robinross@gmail.com](mailto:robinross@gmail.com)

## FROM OUR FILES

**May 7, 1962:** JOHANNESBURG – A big baboon was removed to the Germiston government mortuary on Saturday afternoon with about ten bullet wounds after being shot at by several policemen who had at first tried to recapture it in a chase from the central part of the city to the old location.

The baboon, belonging to Mr CJ Schutte, snapped its chain and made its way through the streets, followed by many people and dogs. It killed a dog and scattered whites and Natives in all directions.

**May 7, 1982:** PRETORIA – The food price spiral triggered by the alarming 15.9 percent increase in the maize price has started.

Before the end of the month the prices of butter, cheese, fresh milk, eggs and poultry will rise.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### School language row: time for black parents to step up

Discrimination on the basis of language is against the democratic principles of our constitution. A reader in the Dispatch commenting on the language issue at Goniwe Primary School alluded to the fact that former Model C schools with a majority of black pupils have a white majority on their school governing bodies.

Why, I ask. I once attended a meeting at the school of one of my sons and white parents constituted the majority in attendance, with only yours truly and a couple of other black faces present. The same also happened in other schools.

The fact is that we black parents do not fully participate in our children's school activities, let alone make ourselves available to be part of various parents' committees formed to address specific and relevant issues. Let us not moan and complain about this and other problems in schools and, instead, use our sheer numbers to dominate the SGBs (school governing bodies) and change the status quo. — ZP Sethuntsa, WSU, Mthatha

□ HAVING recently had a re-look into the South African Schools Act and the Language in Education policy, I am convinced that there has been a flawed stakeholder

consultation process in implementing the Goniwe Primary language policy.

Given the numbers of black learners in that school, it seems the policy formulation process was manipulated. Or that concerned stakeholders did not avail themselves in numbers and thus opened the opportunity to skew the policy to disadvantage the majority. When this stakeholder consultation process as determined by the constitution of South Africa is identified as flawed, the department of education has the legal and moral obligation to intervene, given the way the policy is crafted: “The governing body of a public school may determine the language policy in public schools.” It does not say that it must.

The Language in Education policy has sufficient safety valves to justify the intervention. If any evidence could be produced that the consultation process was flawed, naturally the Goniwe Primary language policy becomes invalid and without force. — Mziwonke Qweshu, Goniwe

### Why evil triumphs

SOME people are not aware of the existence of the Institute For Accountability In South Africa, (Ifaia), one of whose pur-



poses is “... devoted to ensuring that the rule of law is upheld and enforced for the good of all by ensuring that governments, parastatals and the private sector are held to account”.

One of the directors of this institute is Advocate Paul Hoffman, SC, whose article on the Glenister Challenge appeared in the Daily Dispatch's “In Focus” on May 2. Every free-thinking South African who can, should log onto the website [www.ifaia.org](http://www.ifaia.org), as the articles make interesting reading.

There are two I feel need specific comment: ● Accountability is a word/function the government is wanting to make disappear through its introduction of the Protection of State Information bill (PoSI bill).

The article titled “Much devilry still in

the detail” will dispel any illusions of what is in store for us. We will rue the day this draconian bill ever becomes law.

● The second article, “Mdluli – muddly, murky and mysterious”, contains an SAP internal investigation document, referred to as the Hankel Report, relating to the nefarious goings on of Lieutenant-General Richard Mdluli, the reinstated head of Crime Intelligence and a man tipped as a future commissioner of the SAP.

Besides being exactly the type of document you will never see again if the PoSI bill becomes law, it is scandalous that this man had all charges against him withdrawn by the NPA and was then reinstated into his very senior position.

Did the NPA even read the report and how could his police bosses ignore it?

These are the type of issues Ifaia is bringing into the public domain for the good of this country and its people. Never in the last 18 years has there been a better time to remember: “The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.” — Joe Barry, Bonza Bay

### Guard our talent

THE phenomenal achievement of East Lon-

don-born singer Zahara in winning eight Samas makes us all very proud and is a reminder of the many talented artists and sportsmen and women who hail from EC.

Sadly, our top achievers in sport, the arts and culture receive little, if any, financial and moral support from the province. We should be jealously guarding our home-grown talents and should not allow them to be poached by other provinces because we don't have the necessary support, infrastructure and competitive edge. Cases in point are Matatiele-born soccer midfielder Andile Jali, who now plays for Orlando Pirates, Mthatha-born Akona Ndungane who plays rugby for the Bulls, and his brother, Odwa, who plays for the Sharks.

Our province receives plenty of bad publicity. But Zahara has placed us back on the map. — Pine Pienaar (MPL), via e-mail

### Turn over a new leaf

START enjoying life and experience the exhilaration of making a few changes to attitude and lifestyle. Enjoy each day. Adopt an animal, go for a hike and breathe fresh country air, laugh a lot, chat to older folk or take them for coffee – generally improve the fabric of life.

Always see the glass as half full, not half empty. Lonely? Learn to make a cocktail of your choice and enjoy the sunset. Believe me, friends will roll up. — Thulani Mangona, via e-mail

### Sky-high prices

YESTERDAY something puzzled me about our domestic airline fares. A relative of mine flew to Durban and the ticket cost R410 for the flight and R325 for airport taxes plus some other stuff – in total R910. How can they justify airport tax of R325 and then Vat of 14% in accordance with the country's tax laws? I think the Minister of Finance should look at this practice. No wonder the average person cannot afford to fly. — Burton Brown, Buffalo Flats

## NOTE TO WRITERS

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