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Page 5

Gang violence halts garbage collections

Officials scrap Helenvale, Gelvandale route ahead of weekly roll-out

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AS THE Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality gears up to roll out a weekly refuse collection service fully in the northern areas from Monday, metro staff have been pulled from Helenvale and Gelvandale due to the ongoing gang violence.

Public health executive director Andile Tolom said they were waiting to hear from the police if it was safe to start the weekly service in Helenvale and Gelvandale next week.

Other areas that are also scheduled to be getting a weekly refuse collection service starting on Monday are Beverly Hills, Barcelona and Matabar.

Collection in the other areas will be spread over the rest of the week.

On Monday, the senior superintendent of the metro's Gail Road depot e-mailed Ward 13 councillor Nico du Plessis to tell him that they would withdraw their staff and refuse collection trucks from Helenvale.

The e-mails states: "Kindly be informed that Gail Road depot had no option but to retrieve their refuse collection trucks and staff from the Helenvale area today at 9am due to ongoing shootings between rival gangsters and the police.

"Management has therefore taken the initiative to withdraw refuse trucks and staff to ensure safety."

Tolom said the shootings in Helenvale and Gelvandale were a safety risk for staff.

"Our staff withdrew as a cautionary measure. Once the situation has been monitored and calmed down, staff will go back in."

The shooting takes place any time during the day, on any day

"The police are supposed to monitor for us and inform us. We are hoping the situation will be calmed on the weekend and we can go in on Monday," Tolom said.

He said the staff were almost never accompanied by security or the police.

"It only happened in certain instances," he said.

"Some staff were shot at in the past and they had to run for cover," Tolom said.

"It's a community we have to serve; we can't run away from it and that is the attitude of the staff," Tolom said. Gelvandale resident Tom-

my Swartz said they had received letters informing them that their rubbish would be collected on Mondays. "In the past it was every two weeks.

"The shooting takes place any time during the day and on any day but I don't know if it is the shooting that is keeping the rubbish collectors away, but there was a truck picking up garbage earlier [today] from the tip," Swartz said.

Jogra Yon, 81, also of Gelvandale said: "The dirt has been piling up on the site now, but I don't know why the municipality don't want to come into the area anymore. We did get a letter to say they will collect our garbage every Monday from this month."

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