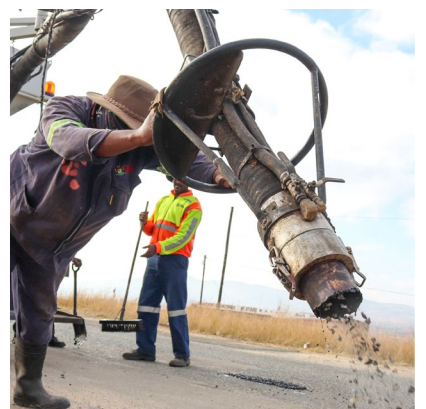


ISSUE 2/2024

# OPERATION VALA ZONKE

FIXING POTHoles TOGETHER

Produced by **SANRAL**



**transport**

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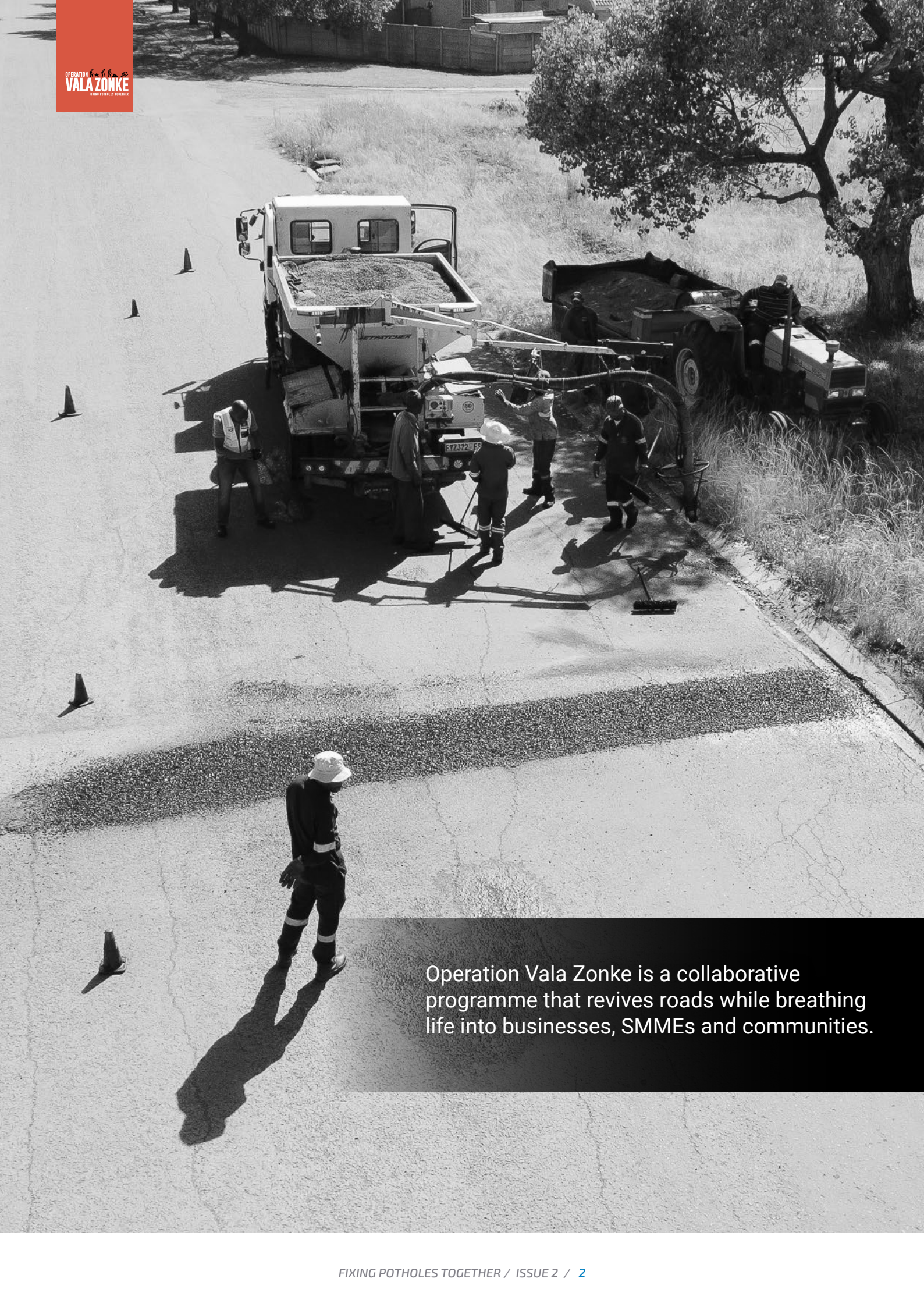


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Operation Vala Zonke is a collaborative programme that revives roads while breathing life into businesses, SMMEs and communities.



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OPERATION  
**VALA ZONKE**  
FIXING POTHOLE TOGETHER



# Operation Vale Zonke: *Paving the way to better roads in South Africa*

The government launched Operation Vala Zonke in 2022 as a groundbreaking initiative to address one of South Africa's most persistent infrastructure challenges. This nationwide campaign, aimed at eliminating potholes from the country's roads, was announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa. The ambitious project is spearheaded by the Department of Transport and implemented by SANRAL.

The campaign promises not only to improve road conditions, but also to create jobs, transfer skills and facilitate smoother transportation for businesses and individuals.

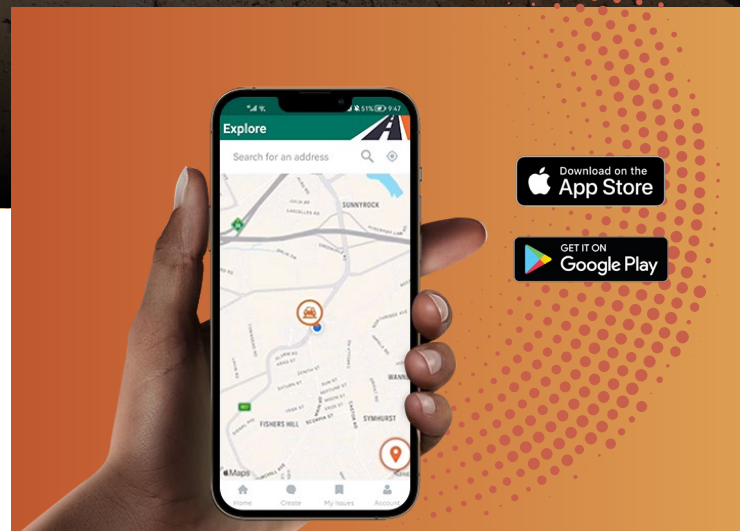
## A UNIFIED NATIONAL EFFORT

Operation Vala Zonke is a comprehensive effort spanning towns and provinces across South Africa. The project calls for the collaboration of national, provincial and local governments, as well as the private sector and the public. This important campaign will make a huge difference in the lives of many South Africans, changing the face of South Africa's municipal and provincial roads from pothole-riddled to an acceptable state of repair.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

A key feature of Operation Vala Zonke is the use of technology to enhance public engagement and streamline pothole reporting. A dedicated cell phone application has received over 40,000 alerts from the public.

The Vala Zonke app allows users to report potholes by uploading pictures and providing real-time locations on an interactive map. The data collected is then assigned to the relevant authorities for prompt action. This innovative approach not only empowers citizens to actively participate in infrastructure maintenance but also ensures transparency and accountability in the repair process.



## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT

The benefits of Operation Vala Zonke extend far beyond improved road conditions. The campaign is expected to create numerous job opportunities and facilitate skills transfer, contributing to local economic development.

For businesses, better road conditions mean reduced transportation costs and improved efficiency, which are vital for economic growth. For individuals, safer and smoother roads translate into fewer vehicle repairs, reduced travel time and enhanced safety.

Government and SANRAL believe that addressing the maintenance challenges and backlog in the South African road network starts with putting measures in place to halt the deterioration of all roads. Repairing potholes as soon as possible after they occur would be the most effective way to arrest the decline.

## A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

Operation Vala Zonke underscores the importance of collaboration among various stakeholders. The government has called on the private sector, communities and other stakeholders to support its efforts to preserve and improve road infrastructure.



The involvement of institutions of learning and sectoral education and training authorities would also play a crucial role in fostering a skills revolution within the initiative.

## LOOKING AHEAD

As the campaign progresses, continuous monitoring and evaluation remain crucial to assess its impact. SANRAL has established a war room to provide the necessary focus and impetus for the project, ensuring that all interventions are tracked and audited.

Over the next few months, the effectiveness of these efforts will be closely monitored, with audit reports serving as the basis for validation of the work undertaken.

Operation Vala Zonke represents a bold step towards revitalising South Africa's road infrastructure. By leveraging technology, fostering public engagement and ensuring accountability, the campaign aims to eradicate potholes and pave the way for a brighter, more connected future.

Working together, the government, private sector and civil society can transform South Africa's roads and help drive the nation towards sustainable growth and development.











## Northern Region

# Alliances key to **fixing potholes** in Gauteng

SANRAL, the Gauteng provincial government and its three metropolitan municipalities – Tshwane, Ekurhuleni and Johannesburg – have joined forces to make Operation Vala Zonke a success.

Vala Zonke is an integrated, rigorous and comprehensive plan, launched on 8 August 2022 in Gauteng, which drives interventions to ensure the National Department of Transport improves the overall condition index of roads under the supervision of local and provincial authorities.

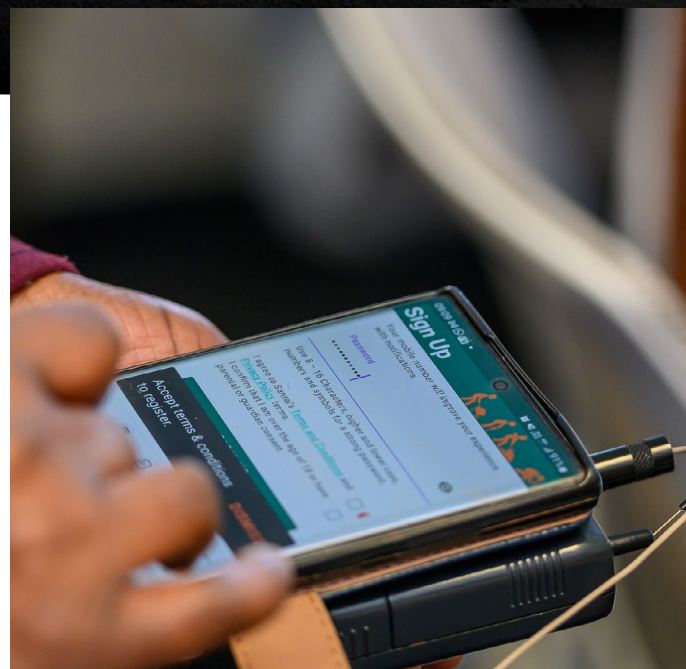
This labour-intensive initiative was subsequently launched in all other provinces, each with their own roll-out programmes to arrest the deterioration of roads across South Africa. This necessitated collaborative engagements between all spheres of government leadership, including provincial premiers, MECs as well as members of the South African Local Government Association, to formalise steps to be taken.

Most open potholes are found on municipal and provincial roads, while national roads managed by SANRAL remain largely pothole-free because of SANRAL's policy of fixing reported potholes within 48 hours.

This is enabled by SANRAL's own pothole app, which has since been rolled out at provincial and municipal levels to hopefully achieve the same results.

As custodian of the national road network, and given the magnitude of the pothole problem, President Cyril Ramaphosa and the transport ministry mandated SANRAL to lead this campaign as the implementing agency.

As part of the campaign SANRAL has launched two related apps: the SANRAL road authority app and the SANRAL public pothole app. The first is for authorities to record existing potholes, assign maintenance teams and track the repairs, while the second enables members of the public to report potholes on any road in South Africa.



A breakdown of pothole repairs per province in November 2023 indicated that Gauteng spent R61,111,024 on pothole repairs over six months.

According to figures previously provided by the Department of Transport, pothole repairs cost an estimated R700 to R1,500 per square metre.

Gauteng Department of Roads and Transport communications and media liaison officer, Melitah Madiba, said the Department had developed the PotholeFixGP app for the public to report potholes on roads in Gauteng on 27 May 2022, just over two months before SANRAL launched the Vala Zonke app.

Meetings with the National Department of Transport and SANRAL's Vala Zonke team ensued, and agreement was reached that the provincial department would continue using the PotholeFixGP app and share data reported by the public on the app with SANRAL's Vala Zonke team.

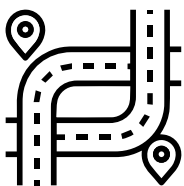


"This is currently done by sharing a download of all the reported potholes in CSV format with the SANRAL Vala Zonke team from time to time. The Department is looking at automating the data-sharing process in the new financial year," Madiba said.

## POTHOLEFIXGP APP TO DATE



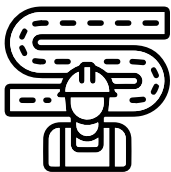
**11,160**  
**potholes reported**



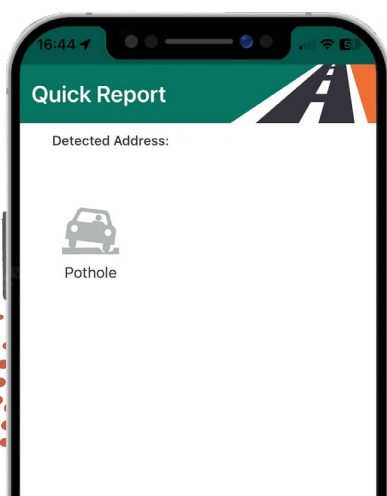
**1,950**  
**on provincial roads**



**199**  
**on SANRAL roads**



**9,210**  
**on municipal roads**



Potholes reported on provincial roads are referred to the Department's relevant maintenance region, while potholes reported on SANRAL roads or municipal roads are delegated to SANRAL or the relevant municipal roads department by way of an email.

The Department has repaired 1,496 of the potholes reported on provincial roads, and further developed an app for use by its in-

house maintenance teams and maintenance contractors.

"This maintenance app allows for reporting of all maintenance activities, including pothole-patching undertaken by the in-house maintenance teams and maintenance contractors. This maintenance app was launched on 3 May 2022, and to date 28,685 potholes have been repaired and reported on it," Madiba said.

Meanwhile, since 1 July 2023 the Johannesburg Roads Agency (JRA) has repaired 34,677 potholes as part of its maintenance programme on the 12,631km of surfaced roads spanning the City of Johannesburg's seven regions under its jurisdiction, said the agency's acting CEO Zweli Nyathi.

"The JRA responds to all service delivery requests received from multiple reporting platforms – including potholes reported via Operation Vala Zonke – although our reporting systems are not integrated with the app at this stage," said Nyathi.

He said the entity had also partnered with Discovery Pothole Patrol, which undertakes pothole repairs city-wide and had fixed 215,000 potholes since the partnership launch in June 2023.

While some roads have become so bad that residents have taken to fixing potholes themselves, SANRAL said that doing so without the consent of the relevant authorities was against the law.

According to the City of Tshwane's official website, R68 million has been set aside to respond to the dire state of existing tarred roads and resurfacing of roads through the Rehabilitation of Roads Project, which was set up to undertake planned maintenance activities to improve the lifespan of roads.

The Metro is also running its own crusher plant to assist in accelerating the repair of potholes and reducing the current backlog. In the previous budget the City of Tshwane invested R46 million to upgrade the Bon Accord Quarry Crusher Plant in Onderstepoort.

The Municipality will no longer procure asphalt mix from external service providers to fix potholes. This plant will produce its own road building and maintenance materials, which will also be used to produce its own hot-mix asphalt and ready-mix concrete, and to build and maintain tar roads.

"In the space of one week the City has fixed over 4,000m2 of potholes and road failures using the Jetpatcher machinery in various regions of Tshwane. Key areas covered include Rosslyn, Soshanguve South ext. 2, New Eersterus, Mangobo, Zwartkop, Eldoraigine and Wierdapark, as well as Garsfontein Road and Brakfontein Road in Highveld," the website reports.

Meanwhile, in September last year Ekurhuleni's MMC for Transport Planning, Roads and Stormwater, Councillor Andile Mngwevu, laid the foundation of the campaign by rolling up his sleeves and actively fixing potholes in the area.

According to metro spokesperson Zweli Dlamini, a budget of R50 million was set aside for the city's pothole repairs blitz, dubbed Sivala ama-pothole, which is expected to accelerate patching potholes and road repairs across the city.

While SANRAL is aware of work that has been and is being done by the Gauteng provincial government and its three metropolitan municipal roads authorities in fixing potholes, the roads agency acknowledges that Operation Vala Zonke can only be fully effective when all parties play their part.

A total of 1.3 million square metres of potholes have been fixed between June and November 2023. There was no specific budget allocated for pothole repairs, and the funds came out of municipalities' maintenance budgets. The total amount spent on the maintenance of provincial roads through the Provincial Roads Maintenance Grant (PRMG) over the six months was R3.6 billion.





Northern Region

# Upgrades to the **R21 in Gauteng** benefit road users and SA's economy

Transport Minister Barbara Creecy says SANRAL's R450-million upgrades to the R21 road in Gauteng, including repairs to a massive sinkhole, will have significant benefits for road users and the South African economy.

SANRAL CEO Reginald Demana and his team took Minister Creecy and Deputy Minister Hlengwa, as well as the national and Gauteng provincial roads departments, on a site tour of the sinkhole repairs and resurfacing of the R21.

Minister Creecy said the R21 was one of the most important roads in South Africa, noting its role in economic activity. "The R21 is one of our country's main freight corridors leading to and from OR Tambo International Airport and it is an important link to the capital city of Tshwane, hence our interest in the work that SANRAL has been doing here," she said.

"The public has been dissatisfied with the state of this road for a long time, not only the major problems with surface damage but also the loose stones, which may cause cracks and damage to windscreens. Also, it is extremely uncomfortable to travel on a road with a poor surface, because it is noisy and there are also safety considerations," Minister Creecy added.

The Minister of Transport said she was impressed with the engineering solutions to the sinkholes along the road, which are a natural phenomenon. The roads engineers informed Minister Creecy and Deputy Minister Hlengwa, National Department of Transport officials as well as Gauteng MEC for Roads and Transport, Kedibone Diale-Tlabela, that they had drilled deep below the R21 to support and stabilise the ground.

"On that stretch of the road where we face the sinkhole problem, they are drilling down to a level of 25 metres, constructing support where the sinkholes are. Very advanced engineering is involved in this project, to avoid a repeat of the problems created by sinkholes," Minister Creecy said.

The resurfacing project stretches for 14km from the Pomona Road Interchange close to OR Tambo International Airport to the Olifantsfontein Road Interchange near Centurion.

Minister Creecy said the maintenance and resurfacing of roads was crucial to ensure that the road network stayed in good condition.





SANRAL CEO Reginald Demana said the entire 201km road network in Gauteng was overdue for major maintenance and replacement of surfaces, which SANRAL was scheduling to take place over the next four years. "The next phases we will cover are the N1 and N3. We are already sending out contractors for that periodic maintenance work and we will be resurfacing the whole network in due course," he said.

Minister Creecy lauded SANRAL for its commitment to spend 30% of all contracts awarded on subcontracting for smaller contractors, as well as the job creation which flows from road construction.

The oversight visit included an inspection of Vala Zonke pothole repair work on Tugela Road in Tsakane Township, Ekurhuleni.

Both Minister Creecy and Deputy Minister Hlengwa tried their hand at pothole repairing, while the local labour from Tsakane township, many of them women and youth, showed Creecy and Hlengwa the ropes.

"I am pleased to see so many young people and women being trained to do these jobs and learning new skills. I want to encourage them to dream even bigger, to start their own companies and in turn create jobs for several other women and youth in their communities," Deputy Minister Hlengwa said.

Minister Creecy reiterated government's commitment to improving the condition of all of South Africa's roads by fixing potholes.

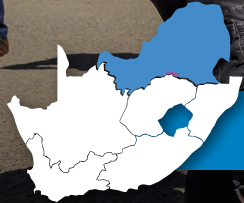
"We understand that the problem is bigger than we initially anticipated, but by working together, SANRAL, provinces and municipalities will continue with the Vala Zonke campaign, fixing potholes one road at a time."











## Northern Region

# Stand(erton) and deliver: Vala Zonke helps revive roads while breathing life into local SMMEs

**M**otorists in Standerton would inevitably describe the poor state of the local roads before the arrival of national pothole repair project, Operation Vala Zonke. An initiative of the National Department of Transport together with SANRAL as the implementing agency, Operation Vala Zonke aims to eradicate South Africa's estimated two million potholes.

While tales of potholes damaging ball joints and tyres on vehicles and tarred roads in the area feeling like gravel around, the stories are now changing.

This collaborative pothole-patching programme, coinciding with SANRAL's recent R1.1 billion upgrade of the R23 highway, is changing the face of Standerton.

Project Liaison Officer Aubrey Mnguni, who assists SANRAL and the resident engineer Lwando Ndabeni in day-to-day liaison with communities affected by the projects, said: "We have successfully engaged directly with local community members, particularly, local small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) on planned road upgrades and available tender opportunities. Our objective is to ensure that local SMMEs benefit from SANRAL projects in Lekwa Local Municipality."

Mnguni added that the scope of work on routine road maintenance (RRM) included general road maintenance such as potholes and road surface repairs, and road signs. "Through community development and RRM projects we continue to identify, train and develop local labourers from small contractors to attain the relevant skills needed for the projects," he said.

What residents are pleased about is that people from their own community are playing a significant role in the transformation and, more especially, that young SMME owners are at the forefront of this change.





## EMPOWERING YOUTH- AND WOMEN-OWNED SMMEs

Mike Mngwevu (31), director of Mikael & Khumo's Trading established in 2018, is a case in point. Like many young South African entrepreneurs, he struggled to find start-up capital, but Operation Vala Zonke has injected new life into his company.



Mike Mngwevu, director of Mikael & Khumo's Trading

On the R546 Vrede road, Mngwevu is currently subcontracting on a R800,000 road rehabilitation and pothole-fixing project. He oversees 12 workers from the township and surrounding rural areas, four of whom are women responsible for traffic control, and works closely with SANRAL to ensure his team's efforts are up to standard.

"This is my company's first project since I started it, and SANRAL is helping us to develop as a company," he said. "They are also teaching our residents how to do this work. You first learn the theory and then you put it into practice at work. SANRAL is responding to the needs of small local businesses," he said.

"They not only trained us, but also bought us a concrete-cutting machine, a roller, brooms and spades to start working on this project," said the father of three, who previously worked as a casual worker on the R50 road with another main contractor, Raubex.

A flagger employed by Mngwevu, who did not want to be named, said she enjoyed being a part of the project that has since made her a breadwinner and restored her dignity.

"I started working with cleaning our site office, and always wished to work on the actual road. Today my dream has become a reality, as I'm now helping to direct traffic and earning more than I ever dreamt of," she said.



Most encouraging from ongoing collaboration is that SANRAL and the municipality have created and sustained opportunities by creating jobs for women and youth, making businesses accessible due to improved roads, and minimising the operating costs of taxi owners as there are fewer breakdowns and repairs due to potholes.

Various beneficiaries are working on new routine road maintenance (RRM) on the R50 Leandra and periodic maintenance projects on the R546 Secunda, R23 Volksrust and R546 Vrede artery roads in and out of Standerton.

Women's empowerment is not neglected. "I am happy that when I called the contractor after realising there were construction activities along Standerton roads and surrounding areas, I was asked to give them a quote," said Khosi Mazibuko, owner of one of the local SMMEs subcontracted to the project.

"Today my company MSX, which is three years old, is involved in road markings on major roads like Beyers Naude, the R50 and Lombard Street here in Standerton. I have also hired seven skilled and local labourers, who are now keeping the wolf from the door," Mazibuko added.

She said some of the challenges she faced as a woman were that "Sometimes they don't take one seriously as a woman in construction and the construction mafia wants to take a chance from time to time. I am in business today and want to encourage young girls not to dream of working in offices, but here in the sun on the road. This is the future."

## A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR FAMILIES

Further instances of how Operation Vala Zonke has not only improved roads in Standerton but provided employment and income for families include the case of Gabriel Mlambo, who operates a pothole-patching machine called the 'Jetpatcher'. He said: "The pothole-patching project has been a lifesaver to us, because as general workers – and taking the municipality's financial position into consideration – we were facing retrenchment. But the future is now looking very bright, and our children now have a tomorrow."

Jan Khanyi (55) has been with the municipality since 1992, and John Makhanya (59) has been a general worker in Lekwa for 34 years. "We would have been the first to be laid-off if it wasn't for this pothole repair project. This has given us a second, and probably last, chance to provide for our families," Makhanya said.





## PROTECTING AND MAINTAINING THE ROADS NETWORK

Kwanele Simelane, who is managing the project for SANRAL, said it viewed the network in and around Standerton as strategic in terms of connecting the region to other provinces.

He gave the example of the R50, which starts in Pretoria and runs past Standerton. "For us it's about the corridor in its entirety. In terms of construction costs, we have spent about R90 million on the CBD or the streets in town. On the provincial sections, we've only spent about R10 million, because the majority of the rehabilitation required is on the streets in town," he said.

Delani Louis Thabethe, Executive Mayor of the Lekwa Local Municipality where Standerton is located, noted that road conditions were very different compared to a few years ago.

"This partnership with SANRAL and the Department of Transport and commitment have assisted us as a municipality, because we were spending very little money attending to these roads because we simply did not have it," he said. "With SANRAL now here, we should focus more on upgrading our internal roads and patching potholes internally. It's important that we maintain these roads."

Taxi driver Sibusiso Mzisi said: "Most of the local streets are great, while the R23 to Jo'burg is like a stairway to heaven. We are now definitely spending less on tyres and lost bolt joints. Thanks, Lekwa and SANRAL."

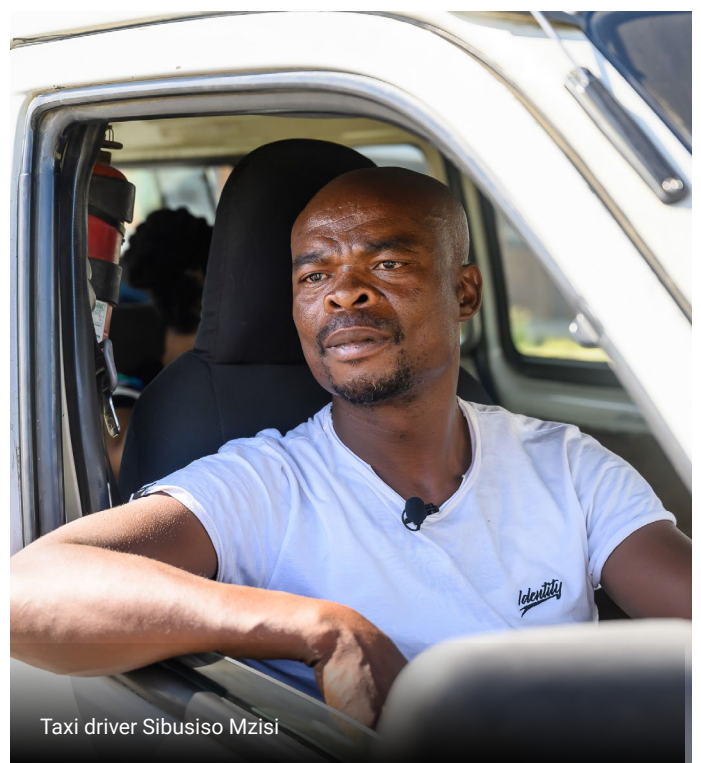
There is no doubt that through these projects, SANRAL has continued its mission to ensure communities are adequately involved in development of the road systems.



SANRAL Project Manager Kwanele Simelane



The owner of Save Rite welcomed the improved roads.



Taxi driver Sibusiso Mzisi



**Eastern Region**

# R80 million **pothole-fixing trucks** for Pietermaritzburg

**T**he Government's co-ordinated drive to deal decisively with the menace of potholes through Operation Vala Zonke is not only creating job opportunities, but also contributing to economic growth and investor confidence.

This has remained the government's message as it works tirelessly to improve the condition of the country's 750,000km road network, which is the longest in Africa.

The Transport Department's Operation Vala Zonke, implemented by SANRAL, addresses the repair of potholes across South Africa, which are the result of the deterioration of roads.

SANRAL is responsible for about 24,000km of the road network, while provinces manage around 44,537km of paved roads and 226,138km of gravel infrastructure. The bulk of the responsibility falls on municipalities, that take care of 89,362km of paved roads and 233,684km of unpaved roads.

This means collaboration between the three spheres of government in fixing potholes is critical.

In KwaZulu-Natal recently the former Transport Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga was joined by Msunduzi Municipality Mayor, Mzimkhulu Thebolla, as she inspected the work being done to repair potholes along Selby Msimang Avenue near Edendale in Pietermaritzburg.

This key road links rural communities around the city and connects with the national highway, which links to other provinces.

At the event the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government also unveiled 55 new trucks fitted with the latest pothole-fixing technology. This R80 million investment is a significant contribution by the provincial government towards attaining the goals of Operation Vala Zonke.

The provincial road maintenance grant provided by national government is for general road maintenance and not exclusively to repair potholes. Expenditure patterns differ in provinces and municipalities.

The Vala Zonke app which is part of Operation Vala Zonke enables users to report potholes on any road in South Africa. This app has been downloaded more than 111,850 times, and more than 75,650 potholes have been reported.

Interventions to fix potholes have boosted local economies, as the work is labour-intensive and provides employment opportunities through the Expanded Public Works Programme.

Chikunga said the government has taken great strides to improve the national road infrastructure, and was working hard to ensure provincial and local roads were also properly maintained. "Through SANRAL we are building world-class roads and massive interchanges, demonstrating excellent engineering skills in the process," she told the community of Inadi outside Pietermaritzburg.

She stressed how government had undertaken to accelerate job creation by improving road and rail infrastructure. "We are attracting investors as we improve freight logistics, and we are promoting our young graduates to provide excellent engineering," she said.



Former Minister of Transport Sindisiwe Chikunga (right) raking hot asphalt to repair potholes on Selby Msimang Avenue in Pietermaritzburg.



## Western Region

# Fixing potholes *presents opportunities for SMMEs*

Repairing potholes, as part of routine road maintenance (RRM) by SANRAL, presents opportunities for black-owned small businesses in the Northern Cape. Such businesses in the Mothibistad and Kuruman areas of John Taolo Gaetsewe (JTG) District are preparing themselves to participate economically in two upcoming RRM projects.

SANRAL recently hosted a session for small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) where the agency shared information on two multimillion-rand projects in JTG District. These will focus on repairing and maintaining the road network, said SANRAL engineer Rudi Joubert, and will cover several hundred kilometres.

"The first of the two runs between Olifantshoek through to Kathu and Kuruman, right up to the Northern Cape and North West border," he explained. "The total length of that project is approximately 250km."

The second project is centred around Kuruman. "The project starts halfway between Danielskuil and Kuruman, and runs north through Kuruman, past Hotazel, continuing to the Botswana border," Joubert said.

The projects will have significant economic impact for small businesses. "The estimate of the value of the work will be determined by the tenders submitted, which we're currently evaluating. However, the scope of the work is expected to cost several millions of rands. The project will run for the next five years," he said.

The process to evaluate the main contractor has started. "The projects are envisioned to start between August and October 2024, dependent on when the tender processes are concluded. Both projects were evaluated in parallel, so appointment of the contractor and the starting date for the two will be at the same time," Joubert said.

"Generally, how our tender process works is that we will advertise for a consultant, after which the appointed consultant will conduct a site assessment. They will draft the tender document for the contractor and the bill of quantities – including the pricing schedule. The contractors on both projects are being evaluated," he said.

The main contractors appoint subcontractors and determine their packages, which are then presented to SANRAL. Joubert said the appointment of subcontractors was expected to begin early next year.

He added that the projects were based solely on the maintenance of roads. "We will not be constructing any new roads. Both projects will be solely focused on RRM, so the roads do not deteriorate over time. If there is a pothole, it will be fixed, and if there are cracks, they will be sealed," Joubert explained.

"The biggest enemy to a road is water, so if rainwater seeps into the pavement layers, the deterioration of these layers increases exponentially. Resolving this will be one of the primary duties conducted on these two projects.

"Off-road work will, among others, include grass cutting, removal of trees, culvert cleaning, clearing of litter at rest areas, and keeping between the road reserve and the fences clean," Joubert said.

Small business owners attending the sessions said they were pleased SANRAL had taken the time to communicate with them.

Tumiso Pampoen (27), who owns Ladotech Engineering, said he was glad there are possible opportunities for youth-owned businesses on the two projects. "My experience as a young business owner is that the youth are at times sidelined from business opportunities, as some contractors want to employ only established companies who have experience," he said.

"Lack of experience in a field can lead to youth-owned businesses never gaining the experience needed to be recognised as established businesses. We are anticipating that these projects will result in profit for businesses, but also in much-needed experience for those who might never have had an opportunity to participate in road maintenance projects otherwise," Pampoen added.







## Southern Region

# Buffalo City's road soldiers *take on potholes*

The Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (BCMM) aims to repair 30,000 potholes by the end of the year.

While some might call this target ambitious, the municipality's political and department heads believe it is well within reach, thanks to the successful roll-out of Operation Vala Zonke in the Eastern Cape metro.

Implemented by SANRAL, the Department of Transport launched the Vala Zonke campaign in the first quarter of the 2022/23 financial year. It addresses South Africa's pothole challenges on an unprecedented scale.

BCMM, which includes East London, provincial capital Bhisho, Qonce (King William's Town) and the townships of Mdantsane and Zwelitsha, welcomes thousands of local and international tourists each year, thanks to its idyllic beaches and rich political and cultural history.

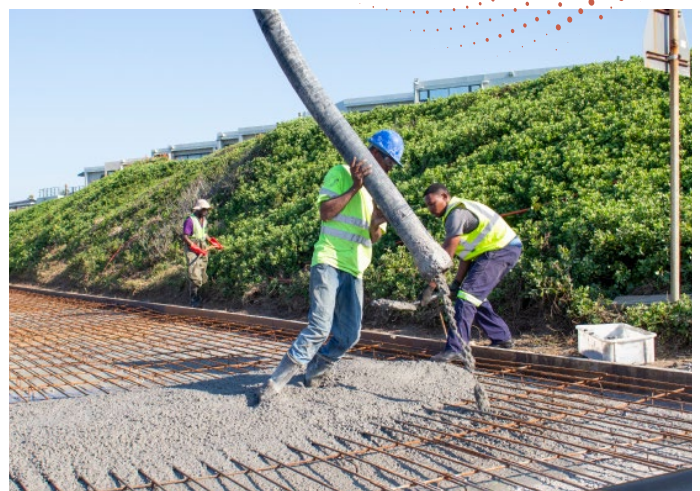
One of its main attractions is the suburb of Gonubie, home to a magnificent river of the same name that flows into the Indian Ocean. Breathtaking scenery and unspoilt stretches of coastline make it a must on every traveller's itinerary.

Unfortunately, this exquisite location – unquestionably one of the country's finest – has not escaped South Africa's pothole scourge.

But all that is about to change.

With Operation Vala Zonke now well and truly up and running in the metro, business owners and motorists will soon be able to benefit from roads completely free of the mini-craters that have blighted Gonubie and other parts of East London for years.

The arrival of the campaign in the city has also created hundreds of employment opportunities for locals, who previously had no knowledge of road maintenance construction.





During a recent site visit to East London, then Transport Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga said jobless locals were equipped with the skills to perform this vital service, and would be able to utilise what they'd learnt when other road construction opportunities arose.

For the youth of the area, a future is opening up in ways they never thought possible.

Zizo Tolbadi has been appointed community liaison officer for the Gonubie pothole project. "Working on this project has been great, especially since I am a young female. Most of the time, you only see males in the construction industry," she said.

Another woman, Sindisiwe January, a participant in the Eastern Cape Department of Transport's Youth Brigade Programme, describes her involvement as a 'beautiful experience' and said "I didn't even know how to fix potholes. Now I'm learning how to fix them and also about other parts of construction."

BCMM Executive Mayor, Princess Faku, said it was vital to tackle the pothole problem head on, as East London was a place tourists wanted to visit. So far, the feedback her administration has received from residents has been positive, and she assured those living in other parts of the metro that Operation Vala Zonke would not pass them by.

"We have a target of closing about 30,000 potholes by the end of the year," she said.

One of Gonubie's biggest problem areas is Oceanway Road. In 2009 the path running alongside this stretch was ravaged by high seas stemming from a coastal tsunami. Storm surges in subsequent years have worsened the problem.

Luyanda Mbula, BCMM's head of infrastructure services, recognises that climate change does not do East London's roads any favours, with those in Gonubie often being submerged in water.

Potholes were the result, but lessons had been learnt and the municipality was now using road materials that were far more durable, he said.

Ravin Gooranah, owner of popular East London restaurant Irana Indian Cuisine said "Potholes have been affecting businesses, not only mine but everybody's. But I am so glad they are fixing them. Yes, it's going to affect business until they are finished, but it will be better in the long run."

