

Children of Fire charity takes on e.tv's Patta



e.tv's Debora Patta allegedly aired a defamatory programme.

Trust's founder wants R5m, says she was defamed in a *3rd Degree* programme

HANTI OTTO
COURT REPORTER

THE CHILDREN of Fire Trust and its founder are suing e.tv and Debora Patta of the programme *3rd Degree* for R5 million after alleged defamatory programmes were aired in August and December, 2006.

According to papers filed in the Johannesburg High Court, the charity felt that due to the image portrayed by *3rd Degree*, and statements made by Patta during the programme, the Trust lost donations and suffered damages to its goodwill and name of R3 million.

Bronwen Jones, a trustee and founder of Children of Fire, who was interviewed by Patta, is suing

for R2 million for damages to her reputation.

Patta and e.tv have until Thursday to respond.

e.tv spokesman Vasili Vass confirmed that they had received the summons and would defend it in court.

Children of Fire takes care of burn victims by supplying medical help and education. Some of the children are also housed at the charity while receiving treatment. One of their well-known cases is Seiso Ratswana (4), who was burnt in an attempted murder by two teenagers when he was a baby.

In court documents the charity claimed that during the nationally-viewed programme, *3rd Degree* alleged that Jones was not distributing donations to children in the

charity's care. The programme also alleged that Jones handed out expired food.

Patta started the programme, saying: "With blankets, food or money, South Africans are known for their generosity. A generosity, in the case of tonight's story, that was sadly abused (by Jones and/or Children of Fire)."

The presenter continued that while some saw Jones as a saint, others accused her of "hoarding donations meant for the needy". Patta said *3rd Degree* uncovered "shocking evidence that blankets and donations meant for burn victims are collecting dust" in Jones's house.

Former employees were also quoted as saying the children were cold and hungry.

During the programme Patta

asked Jones why 1 200 victims of fires in Johannesburg that year did not receive blankets. Jones replied that they were not asked for 1 200 blankets.

The court papers quoted Patta: "That is a complete bald-faced lie. You were supposed to distribute them", and, later in the programme: "You are lying again. You collected blankets, you pretended to be this saint..."

Jones again said emergency services did not ask them for aid.

The charity stated that the programme was wrongful and defamatory to Jones and the trust. It argued that the context of the programmes was intended to mean, and was understood by viewers, that the Trust and/or Jones were guilty of fraud, engaged in wrongful conduct,

neglected children and exploited the goodwill and generosity of the public for personal gain.

In addition, it feared that the public would believe Children of Fire was lying and collected charitable donations under false pretence.

The additional "sting" was that the charity was inefficient, could not be trusted and that the public should not co-operate with the organisation.

The charity said in a press release that it first went to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa but was informed that if it pursued that route, it would have to sign a waiver not to pursue a civil claim.

"The Trust decided in the interest of justice, that a civil action would be lodged," it said.



Bronwen Jones is suing e.tv for damages to her reputation.

Fresh call for calm as swine flu tightens grip

BARRY BATEMAN

HEALTH practitioners and experts have reiterated their call for calm as swine flu continues to sweep across the country.

Only two people have been confirmed casualties of the H1N1 virus, while the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) is investigating two more.

Ruan Muller, a 22-year-old Stellenbosch University student, was the first death directly linked to the H1N1 virus based on laboratory confirmation by the NICD.

Symptoms of the disease are a high fever - 38°C and over - body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, fast breathing or trouble breathing, sudden dizziness, and pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen.

It was reported last week that at least four Pretoria public schools had about 16 cases of swine flu.

A general practitioner in Hatfield said he had ordered tests on six patients suspected to be infected with swine flu, but only three tested positive. The doctor said they were not testing all patients for the H1N1 virus, but only those who showed severe symptoms. All other cases were treated like seasonal flu.

NICD director Lucille Blumberg said the institute was recommending that not all patients be tested for the virus, saying: "This is a mild illness that should be treated like seasonal flu."

TWO'S COMPANY...



For most residents, the Women's Day long weekend was a quiet, lazy affair. This couple enjoyed an afternoon chat by the lake at Irene Country Club, while others enjoyed free music at concerts held at various venues in the city. A handful ventured out to the council's resorts, which were trouble-free, according to authorities.

PICTURE: MASI LOSI

Numeracy, literacy level shock at varsities

JO-ANNE SMETHERHAM

SHOCKING new tests results show most first-year students at universities across the country do not have the literacy skills, and only a tiny proportion have the mathematical skills required in higher education.

The final pilot phase of the National Benchmark Tests Project (NBTP) is a damning indictment of the implementation of Outcomes Based Education, and raises questions about the validity of National Senior Certificate results.

It also explains the high failure rate at tertiary institutions. Previous research has shown that fewer than one in three of students at all technikons and universities graduate after five years.

The principal investigator of the NBTP, Professor Nan Yeld, dean of higher education development at the University of Cape Town, said the tests showed "the school system is not able, at this stage, to deliver the ambitious new curricula, particularly in mathematics".

She emphasised, however, that "this is not the same as saying that the curriculum is the problem".

The findings largely confirmed what the researchers had known about student competence, she said, although "some have been angry that the National Senior Certificate results gave a different picture".

About 13 000 students wrote the assessments in February. The results of the tests have been distrib-

uted to universities in recent weeks.

The participating universities were Cape Town, Western Cape, Stellenbosch, Witwatersrand, KwaZulu-Natal, the Mangosuthu University of Technology, and Rhodes. More than 300 academics participated in the project.

Only about 7% of the students who wrote the maths tests, were found to be proficient, meaning they would not need extra help to pass their first year. The test assessed the skills needed to study first-year maths at university.

About 73% had "intermediate" mathematical skills, and would need to take part in extended or augmented programmes to pass university mathematics. The remaining 20% had only "basic" skills, and would need long-term support.

This finding "provides some support for doubts about the large number of students achieving over 70% in the NSC examination in this subject", the study's authors wrote.

The challenges universities faced regarding mathematics were "enormous", they said, and universities mathematics curricula should adapt to help the struggling students.

About 47% of the students who wrote the tests on academic literacy were proficient, 46% had intermediate skills, and 7% had basic skills. This test assessed ability in English, the medium of instruction.

The student sample was representative in gender and demographics, the project leaders said.



Professor Thamsanqa Kambule, who was cremated yesterday.

Family honour Maths guru's last wish

BALDWIN NDABA

THE FAMILY of one of South Africa's greatest mathematicians and educationists, Professor Thamsanqa Kambule, fulfilled his last wish by cremating him within 48 hours of his death.

Kambule, 88, succumbed to a lung infection on Friday at Unitas Hospital in Centurion.

Yesterday his family and friends gathered at the Braamfontein Cemetery to pay their last respects before he was cremated.

Family spokesman and grandson Mthunzi Mdwaba said his grandfather had left a written instruction with his lawyers that he had to be cremated within 48 hours of his death. According to the instruction, his children had to

provide proof of his death to his lawyers before his wish could be fulfilled. Mdwaba said his family honoured his wish and he was cremated at 9am yesterday.

"The family will later decide what to do with his ashes," Mdwaba said.

Kambule's son, Lulama, described his father as a "caring person". "He was a people's per-

son," Lulama said.

Kambule's death has saddened his former pupil, musician Siphon "Hot-stix" Mabuse.

Mabuse was a pupil at Orlando High School when Kambule was the principal. "He was a resolute and steadfast man. He was very practical as a principal and that was why most of us enjoyed going to school," Mabuse said.

FIVE-DAY FORECAST FOR PRETORIA

Today 11th	Wed 12th	Thurs 13th	Fri 14th	Sat 15th
8 25	9 26	7 25	3 22	3 24

TOMORROW'S WEATHER

PRETORIA	MAIN CITIES		
Clear skies	Johannesburg 7 23	Polokwane 6 26	Nelspruit 11 27
	Mafikeng 5 25	Bloemfontein 4 20	Kimberley 4 24
	Cape Town 11 24	Port Elizabeth 8 17	Durban 10 25

WORLD TEMPERATURES		Minimum Maximum °C	
Amsterdam 11 20	Clear	Cairo 25 34	PCloudy
Athens 23 30	Clear	Chicago 25 33	PCloudy
Auckland 7 24	PCloudy	Geneva 14 25	Rain
Barcelona 22 29	PCloudy	London 18 27	Clear
Beirut 25 31	Clear	London 15 25	Clear
Berlin 14 27	PCloudy	Mecca 29 44	Clear
Brussels 11 22	Clear	New York 21 26	Rain
		Paris 17 27	Clear
		Perth 11 21	PCloudy
		Rome 21 32	Clear
		Sydney 5 18	Clear
		Taipei 26 29	Rain
		Tel Aviv 26 32	PCloudy
		Tokyo 25 31	PCloudy

VISIT THE WEBSITE AT WWW.WEATHERSA.CO.ZA

Crackdown on illegal taxis under way

BARRY BATEMAN

THE TSHWANE Metro Police have heeded the call by the national Department of Transport to clamp down on converted panel vans illegally being used as taxis.

Last week the department called on provincial and municipal authorities to be on the lookout for the 1 070 or so vehicles it had identified as being converted.

In the market, panel vans are about R45 000 cheaper than taxis. Dealers buy these vehicles, convert them into taxis and then sell them to operators at the same price as a standard specification taxi to cream off large profits.

While these vehicles are not sub-standard, and could be used by non-public operators or for private use, they are not of the standard required for public transport.

Tshwane community safety spokesman Console Teane confirmed that cases of "illegal minibuses" had been picked up by the Tshwane Metro Police.

But, he explained, these cases were usually not easy for the licensing division to identify because the paperwork could be

made to seem legitimate by the owners. However, Teane said the metro police were able to pick up the problem through physical examination by officers on the road. "We are not able to give specific numbers, although these will be made available soon," he said.

A converted vehicle is identified by a number of key characteristics - the side windows towards the rear of the vehicle are separated by a metal panel and the vehicle has a folding "jockey-seat" which has now been outlawed in public transport vehicles.

Teane said officers took several "firm steps" if they came across such an illegal vehicle. "Firstly, the officer would literally strip of the licence disc of the vehicle so that it is rendered immediately unroadworthy."

"Secondly, the officer would issue a fine and order of 'Discontinue of Use'. That is, the vehicle cannot be used in any way until it is fixed," he said.

Teane said the third step was to order all passengers out of the vehicle. "This is because the vehicle is illegal and therefore not certified to carry any passengers, or

to be on the road.

"The last step, to complete the on-the-spot enforcement, is to order that the driver not take the vehicle from the scene."

"Instead, a tow-truck, which must be paid for by the owner or driver, must take the vehicle away. The owner or driver would then, after this on-the-road intervention, have to convert the vehicle to a legal status. This would mean that the vehicle would have to be reconverted properly into a panel van," he said.

Teane said it was only after all the legal stipulations had been fulfilled that the owner could re-apply for the vehicle to be licensed.

Last week SA Taxi Finance (SATF) announced that it had pledged R20 million to assist operators in upgrading their converted vehicles to the standard required for public transport.

SATF executive director Bonisile Makubalo said they estimated it would cost about R25 000 to upgrade a vehicle to the required standard. "About 100 vehicles have been made available to protect the taxi operators' businesses while the upgrades take place," he said.

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Applications should be submitted by 25 August 2009 to: The Headmaster, Christian Brothers' College Mount Edmund, Scholarship, PO Box 912487, Silverton 0127. Alternately handed in to the Admissions Desk at the College, Cnr: Cussonia Ave & Pretoria Street, Weaving Park.

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