

## INSIDE



Metro  
Snakes alive,  
they're back! | P3



Metro  
Fugitive back to  
face the music | P2

**Tugela Steel**  
S.A.'s LEADING SUPPLIERS

STEEL STRUCTURES

- Best prices anywhere
- All popular sizes in stock
- Engineer's certificate and plan included.
- DELIVERY NATIONWIDE

DURBAN HEAD OFFICE: Tel: 031 566 4601  
Email: sales@tugela.co.za Website: www.tugelasteel.co.za

## LOCKDOWN

# Working at home drives us to drink

Employers warn office rules apply

TANYA WATERWORTH

WORKING from home could lead to a rise in alcohol and drug abuse.

That is the warning from Sanca Durban director Walter Petersen who has highlighted that the home is a very different environment from the office. While working from home has been dubbed "the new normal", he described it as "abnormal".

"Working from home has its own stresses, but it is a more relaxed environment and your attitude is different to when you are in an office structure.

"You are not at your workstation and if, for example, that report is due at 3pm, why not have a beer before getting down to it?" he said.

He added that this type of behaviour, whether alcohol or drugs, could see an increase during work hours, which would impact on employees' productivity and a company's bottom line.

He said employees had to exercise discipline and stick to the routine of their normal working hours.

Petersen added that people were missing their work colleagues.

"Human nature is such that we want to interact with people and not machines. People are missing the interaction at work, which allows for better relationships and work flow. What we are dealing with is not normal," he said, highlighting that virtual meetings such as those via Zoom, do not allow for the same level of interaction.

Anti-Drug Forum SA director Sam Pillay said while many people are enjoying the freedom and reduced travel of the "work from home" structure, "the temptation to have a pint while working is there". As is having a glass of wine or two between Zoom meetings.

"The risk is especially for those who are already regular drinkers, who come home and have a drink after the day. They are not alcoholics, but they may be tempted to have a drink during the day.

"Whether it's a drink or drugs such as dagga, the fridge or the packet is right there. You are not driving and you can indulge in the safety of your home. You are in a safe scenario and there are no immediate consequences.

"The worrying thing is the frequency and quantity can increase.

"Employers are going to have to monitor their employees and if there is any cause for concern, need to quickly intervene and get help for the employee. If you can nip it in the bud, you can avoid a full blown addiction," said Pillay.

Dr Duncan Laurenson, a general medical practitioner and substance use disorder specialist, manages the detoxification programme at Akeso Stepping Stones in Cape Town. He said while it is too early in terms of detailed research of the impacts of the pandemic, anecdotally from the four clinics where he works, he

... the temptation to have a pint while working is still there

Sam Pillay  
DIRECTOR, ANTI-DRUG FORUM SA

said: "We are seeing people relapsing due to lockdown who would not have relapsed and some being pushed into addiction due to lockdown."

He said factors such as isolation and financial worry causing anxiety and stress could trigger an adrenaline response resulting in a person turning to a substance, such as alcohol for relief.

"Working from home also sees a lack of support, such as speaking to other people, which results in a feeling of isolation. There are a multitude of psychological, social and physical factors and a lot of it relates to hopelessness as people are not sure what the future holds," said Laurenson.

Aadil Patel, national head of the Employment Law Practice at Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr, said whether you are working at home or in the office, the same labour laws and policies apply during working hours.

Patel said being drunk at work constitutes misconduct which can result in dismissal, but that employers must have an alcohol (and drug) policy in place which is communicated to all employees.

"Management is responsible for putting policies in place, not just for consumption on the premises. Policies can extend to behaviour off company premises, during working hours in the event that it impacts the employee's ability to do their job," said Patel, adding that this should not be limited to alcohol, but any substance, such as cannabis, which could affect the employee.

He highlighted that should it be a case of an employee having a dependency problem, the employer has an obligation to assist the employee to get treatment. "Alcoholism is an illness, therefore the distinction must be made between incapacity as a result of alcoholism or simple misconduct."

Venolan Naidoo, vice-president of the national committee of the South African Society for Labour Law, agreed with Patel, saying regardless of working from the home or at the workplace, the same company rules apply.

He said proving misconduct from substance abuse while the employee was working from home was obviously more difficult than if the employee was on site, but that the employee's performance would be impacted.



THE Sunflower Fund's Durban team, from left, Nockey Mkhize, Xolani Hlongwane and Allison Naidoo show the bright colours for this year's Tope, sales of which raise much needed funds for those with life-threatening blood diseases. The Tope has a multitude of uses, including being used as a Covid mask. | Shelley Kjonstad ANA

## BLOOD CANCER

## Desperate donor search for little Azile

TANYA WATERWORTH

AZILE Ngubane turned 6 on September 5, but there were no balloons or singing as her family is desperately searching for a donor match for an urgent stem cell transplant to save her life.

In 2019, the little girl with the gentle smile started having pain in her joints and losing weight. She was diagnosed with lymphoblastic leukaemia, a life-threatening blood cancer which has shattered her family's world.

Donor matches are based on genetics and there is a 1:100 000 chance of finding a match – and it has to be in the patient's own ethnic group. There is only a 25% chance of a sibling being a match, with the remaining 75% chance based on an unrelated matching donor being found.

Azile's mother, Busiswa, said: "This was something that was very foreign to us as we never believed children could suffer from cancer. We have to be strong and supportive to our daughter.

"We plead with all South Africans



AZILE Ngubane, 6, diagnosed with lymphoblastic leukaemia desperately needs to find a donor match for a stem cell transplant.

who are eligible to come forward and become blood stem cell donors. not only to help our child, but to help other children who have been diagnosed with

life-threatening diseases as well."

And as the Sunflower Fund launched its annual drive to increase its donor database, it has called on all ethnic groups to become donors to give patients, such as Azile, a chance to fight for life.

Patients of colour are at a distinct disadvantage because of the low number of registered donors from black, coloured and Indian population groups in the global donor database.

Chief executive of the Sunflower Fund Alana James said with this year's launch of its annual campaign, now in its 17th year, there remained an "urgent need for donors in South Africa".

"To give patients like Azile the best chance of life, it is vital to grow an ethnically diverse registry of donors in South Africa," she said.

Donor testing is a simple process involving a swab. At no cost to a potential donor, a swab kit is sent to his/her home, a swab is taken from inside the cheek and collected again by a courier.

Individuals between the ages of 18

and 55 with a consistent body weight of more than 50kgs and a BMI of less than 40 can register as donors.

Should you be found to be a matching donor, you would have to give blood which is a straightforward process and could save a patient who has a life-threatening blood disease. These include not only leukaemia, but also sickle cell disease and aplastic anaemia, among others.

Sunflower Day, which has been traditionally held in September, has been moved to November 13 this year because of Covid-19, with the popular Topes (Tube of Hope) being rolled out this week. They are available for R30 in Pick n Pay stores, from online store Zando and independent pharmacies.

The funds raised are used to recruit blood stem cell donors, as well as contributing to the growth of the patient assistance fund which helps patients with the cost of getting to transplant.

For more information, or register as a donor, go to [www.sunflowerfund.org](http://www.sunflowerfund.org)

## BLOOMING MARVELOUS

CLIVIAS have added a dash of orange to wildlife artist Linda Lemon's garden in Gillitts, and with tomorrow being annual Garden Day, she aims to enjoy their beauty.

"They just propagated after I fed the beds and gave them lots of water," said Lemon, who calls her garden "a treat" that she enjoys at weekends after spending many hours in her studio. "Hillcrest is gardening heaven on account of its climate. This spring has been beautiful," she said.

Garden Day is when South Africans across the country celebrate their unique green spaces and gardens in every shape and size. Gardening has been proven to boost both mental and physical well-being and create a sense of belonging and connection. Working in your garden not only burns calories, it reduces stress, and even improves your immune system. It also gives you a chance to express your creativity. So pack an outdoor picnic and celebrate the greenery that brings you joy tomorrow.

| SHELLEY KJONSTAD ANA

