



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Municipal Manager slams detractors**

Greater Knysna residents were still reeling from the 7 June, 2017 fires when the next devastation swept through the region on 30 October.

According to Garden Route District Municipality, Head of disaster management, Gerard Otto, this fire formed part of a fire that “is by far the country’s biggest fire in populated area to have occurred”. The fire burnt a width of 35kms and along 180kms.

Knysna Acting Municipal Manager, Johnny Douglas, expressed his extreme gratitude to all who raced to once again, give of themselves to assist those who suffered as a result of this inferno. “We are once again humbled by the selflessness of our residents and other stakeholders who didn’t hesitate for one moment in offering their much-needed assistance.

“Our thanks must go to so many organisations who stepped in to assist. There are far too many to name by name, but Rebuild Eden in Sedgefield, Gift of the Givers, and KAWS spring to mind. I must commend them and everyone else who have been such a tremendous help in assisting the traumatised victims, firefighting personnel, animals and, not forgetting our bees.”

The Gift of the Givers’ team taking care of threatened bees visited various sites in the Greater Knysna corridor on 30 October and relocated 27 beehives to the Gift of the Givers Bee Rehabilitation Centre in Knysna. They alone rescued around two million bees that were already under threat.

Douglas expressed his dismay at the political opportunism that has reared its ugly head during this crisis. “I am sickened by the accusations of racism by several members of the public, especially from people who do not even live within the borders of Greater Knysna and have no idea of what residents have been offering and doing to help those in need.

“An alleged statement on social media and/or actions of an individual cannot erode the selfless work and support of hundreds of volunteers from all sectors of society.

“I have only witnessed kindness and concern by all the volunteers, no matter their colour or creed, and for uninvolved people to stand on the perimeter, with their hands in their pockets doing absolutely nothing to help, but making racist allegations leaves me saddened and sick to the stomach,” said Douglas.

In closing he invites those detractors to roll up their sleeves, step up to the plate and offer help, instead of making false allegations. “I will leave you to contemplate the words of Mahatma Gandhi: ‘The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others’. So I challenge you to offer your assistance where most needed and experience the exhilaration of giving of yourself to help others.”

**ENDS**

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