

## **ARO delivers its petition with close to 3000 signatures to the City of Johannesburg and Pikitup to stop the proposed recycling tariff**

Press Statement by African Reclaimers Organisation

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Johannesburg – African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO) sent its petition to the City of Johannesburg and Pikitup on Friday morning to demand an immediate stop to the City's proposed R50 recycling tariff.

The petition is signed by close to 3000 people who support ARO's call for the City to develop a Separation-at-Source (S@S) recycling system through a participatory process involving both residents and reclaimers. 'Separation at source' means the recyclable materials are separated from the rest of the refuse at the resident's home before it is transported to landfill sites.

According to the City, the R50 recycling fee – which will be paid by residents living in houses worth more than R350 000 – will go towards extending Pikitup's separation at source programme (S@S) that has been piloted by the City in a few Johannesburg suburbs.

Not only will this expansion be another tax on residents, it will also have grave consequences for reclaimers – people who informally collect and sell recyclable materials. According to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), reclaimers collect between 80 – 90% of post consumer packaging collected for recycling, saving municipalities millions of rands in landfill space each year.

Yet the City's programme will ensure that reclaimers are excluded from the recycling system. It will result in reclaimers having less access to recyclable materials which will significantly decrease their income. Reclaimers will be forced to sleep in public spaces to ensure that they get to the bins before Pikitup.

The City's pilot will also disrupt the S@S pilot projects which reclaimers have started on their own. ARO is currently piloting its own S@S programmes in Brixton, Auckland Park and Bordeaux. These pilots see residents working with reclaimers by separating their recyclables and giving it directly to reclaimers.

ARO hopes that the City will take this opportunity to work with reclaimers and residents to develop a S@S system that builds upon the work reclaimers have been doing for decades. It is time the City stops trying to exclude reclaimers and accept that reclaimers are the backbone of the recycling system in the City. There is no recycling system without reclaimers.

*Quotes from people who signed the petition:*

"Reclaimers work hard for their money and help homeowners do a small part for the environment. For years CoJ's PickitUp did nothing and had no interest in recycling. Until it became apparent there was money in some waste! Now everyone must lose to support CoJ greed. CoJ does not care about its residents." - Teresa, D

"It's not fair that jobs that some people are working so hard at to make ends meet [are] slowly going to be taken away from them just so a company can increase its profits at the expense of many others. Greed should have its limitations now and instead we should try

look at how we can embrace these people who are actually doing us a favor by recycling for us instead of kill their means of income” - Collins, M

“Government can't be ignorant to their people. They need to work with reclaimers instead of making impractical solutions that will just benefit the tender carne and not the community” - Adian, T

“The recycling fee will discourage householders to recycle – CoJ should be encouraging recycling by giving householders rebates for doing so not charging them more – more money for them the steal away in their corrupt management of the city” - Ursula, V

*Media enquiries:*

Contact Eli Kodisang to arrange media interviews with ARO spokespeople in English, isiZulu, SeSotho and Afrikaans.

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*This press statement was released by the African Reclaimers Organisation on 7 May 2021.*