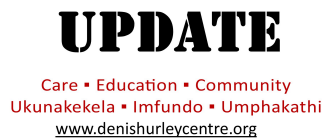


If you cannot see the pictures, use the right-hand mouse click and select 'Download pictures'. If you are still having problems, [email us](#)

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October 2025

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**Honoured at the UKZN Moot Competition**  
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**The cost of  
stocking up with  
insulin**

**GIVING PEOPLE A VOICE ON WORLD HOMELESS DAY**

It seems that this month has been equally divided between the two groups that we are most focused on helping: on the one hand, foreign nationals and on the other homeless people almost all of whom are South African. In both cases, as well as providing practical help, we are also here to be a voice for the voiceless, or even to make sure that the voiceless can speak with their own voice.

We have mentioned before the ill-conceived plan of eThekweni (our local Municipality) to create a shelter for homeless people 37 km (23 miles) outside central Durban, in a place with no services and little chance of work. The location and the scale of this project run contrary to all the shelter models that have proven effective in other countries and, indeed, in other cities in South Africa. Nevertheless, eThekweni is determined to go ahead with it and – gallingly – claim that they consulted homeless people.

We have not found a single homeless person who has been consulted – and we see 300 every day – so we thought we would assist the Municipality by organising a consultation for them. On the eve of World Homeless Day, we gave an opportunity for homeless people to find out about the project and to share their own views. Over 100 people appeared, keen to be heard; they were listened to by us and we hope also by the representative from the office of the Deputy Mayor who also attended.

The project was described to the group by four homeless men who had travelled down to see it with Stuart Talbot, our Empowerment Officer. Their overall feeling was that – no matter how nice the still unfinished building might turn out to be – it was “a dumping ground”. As several commented: “Why would the Municipality spend money constructing a new building in a place where we do not want to be, when they have dozens of empty buildings in the centre of Durban where we do want to be?” A good question indeed.

What is more, even if this project succeeds, it will only address 5% of the homeless people whom the Municipality claims are sleeping in central Durban – so there is no danger of the DHC running out of people to serve!

To give the Municipality the benefit of the doubt, we asked the homeless consultors to brainstorm what would need to be provided at the site in order for the project to work. They came up with a well-thought-through list. Many in fact are the services (such as social services, skills training and counselling) which the Mayor himself promised on national TV will be delivered at this new site. But, as was pointed out by several participants, these (and others) are the same services that they promised – and have consistently failed to deliver – in the Municipal shelters they have been running for the past five years. “If they can’t deliver these when we are here under their noses, why would we believe that they will deliver them when we are so far away? Out of sight, out of mind.”

A fuller write-up of the consultation appeared in the [Independent on Saturday](#).

The voices in the consultation were articulate – but they were also frustrated, angry and disillusioned. The day before, we heard the voices of the homeless in a more gentle way. UKZN’s Poetry Africa festival organised an event outside the DHC. This enabled our homeless guests to listen to poetry and also to share their own.

The renowned South African, Prof Ari Sitas, recited his poem about ‘Lies’ which brought a smile to the homeless people listening (*full text attached*). Huda Fadlelmawla, a Sudanese woman now living in Australia, also performed. She described the experience as “a place where world-class African poets come together, where truth is the only thing spoken, where everyone is felt.” We feel she could have been speaking generally about the DHC.

*Photo: Two homeless men, who had travelled down to visit the proposed new shelter, explaining it to their peers.  
(A short video of the consultation can be viewed [on our Facebook page](#)).*



## TESTING THE COURTS - THE MOCK UP

The spirits of both Archbishop Hurley and Paddy Kearney were palpably in the room at UKZN's annual Moot Competition held earlier this month.

2025 has seen two important legal anniversaries for the DHC. In February, we marked 40 years since the failed attempt by the Apartheid Government to silence Archbishop Hurley by threatening him with a trial. At our AGM, Justice Leona Theron, a DHC Patron and a member of the Constitutional Court (the apex court in SA), gave a moving reflection on the role of the law in protecting human rights.

J. Theron was now back for the Moot Competition where we were honoured to welcome her as the presiding judge. She was especially pleased to be there since Prof Ellie Newman, after whom the competition is named, had been one of her professors at the then University of Natal, and she remembers him fondly. The focus this time was on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Paddy being detained without trial until Archbishop Hurley came to his rescue: he took the Minister to court and established a legal precedent that released Paddy and protected many others.

These two examples of how legal systems can be used to oppress but also to defend the marginalised were on the minds of the four finalists in the Moot Competition. This was an opportunity for them to demonstrate in an almost-real-life situation their prowess as advocates. The case they were addressing had many rings of familiarity: a certain homeless organisation was suing a certain Municipality for having violated the rights of homeless people by destroying their homes and their belongings.

Appearing for the appellant (the good guys!) were Nilay Sham and Jordan Ward and they presented a good case for what rights had been infringed and how the Municipality had failed to follow the required procedures of Administrative Justice. For the other side, Shreya Bugwandin and Ethan Hann Singh (*pictured at the top*) argued that the Municipality had acted within its mandate and that the appellant had failed to demonstrate that the steps taken were disproportionate.

All four of the young lawyers were put through a gruelling test by J. Theron and her fellow adjudicators, Advocate Vishalan Naidu and Advocate Muhammad Zakaria Suleman. In the real world, both of these distinguished lawyers have been advising the DHC on potential legal actions to protect the vulnerable.

The rest of us 'in the public gallery of the court' were in awe at how calm the aspirant lawyers remained when faced with tough interrogation. All four finalists, who were selected from the 170 final-year law students, received well-deserved praise for their performances; as one judge quipped: "It's quite a feat to be able to think on your feet!".

Though they all did well, in the courts as in life, there are winners and losers. The day was won by the better legal argument, which was not with the good guys but with the fictional Municipality. The overall winner was Ethan Hann Singh (who, by coincidence, is someone already well known to some of the DHC team). He joins a list of winners going back 53 years which, we noticed, includes others who have been involved in various ways in the work of the DHC. (A fuller report appeared [in the Sunday Times](#)).

The Dean of the School of Law, Prof Freddy Mnyongani, expressed his personal delight in the event, recalling his own links with Archbishop Hurley when a younger man. He spoke passionately about the important contribution that the DHC makes to Durban, and the value of our partnership with UKZN in general and with the School of Law in particular. Many distinguished members of the legal profession in Durban were present, including retired Constitutional Court Justice Zak Yacoob, possibly the only blind person to ever sit on the bench of a nation's apex court.

*Photo: Justice Theron sits with her two fellow judges backed by others involved in the Moot Competition. The winner, Ethan Hann Singh, is back row, second from the right.*



## TESTING THE COURTS - THE REAL THING

Only eight days after the Moot Competition, the DHC was back in court, but this time a real one.

The South African Human Rights Commission, supported by Lawyers for Human Rights, was bringing a case to try and end the xenophobic blockade of Addington Hospital. It was the DHC who provided much of the on-the-ground evidence of how people had been refused healthcare, and so we were there as a friend of the court (*amicus curiae*). The legal action was aimed not only at the demonstrators but also at the Minister of Police and the Minister of Health (and others) for failing in their duty to uphold and fulfil the rights promised by the Constitution. And by the oddest of coincidences, the two advocates who had been judges in the Moot were appearing for real in this case – and on opposite sides!

With multiple parties involved in the litigation, there were dozens of robed advocates in the Durban High Court, each taking a different approach to undermine the SAHRC's case. Our lawyers were attempting to prove that there was sufficient evidence, and a

compelling legal reason, for the court to grant an urgent intervention, pending a fuller consideration of the case later. Sadly, they failed to convince the judge of the urgency.

Whilst we can take some comfort that this loss was on a technicality, it still means that our hopes that the courts would defend refugee patients against illegal protesters were dashed. The case can return in the future but not for some time. Meanwhile, the protesters are emboldened to think that what they are doing is legal (which was not proven); and the police and the health officials can keep turning a blind eye (even though their constitutional obligations are still very clear).

Tania Broughton, a friend of the DHC and a well-known court reporter, explains the case in [more detail in the Times](#).

When 'our side' lost in the Moot Competition, it felt like a fair win by our opponents; when our side lost in the High Court – and the plight of defenceless sick refugees was eclipsed by clever well-paid lawyers in a case based on legal technicalities rather than morality – we are left downcast.

However, inspired by +Hurley and Paddy, we fight the good fight. We will continue to draw attention to the ways in which self-appointed vigilantes (and those officials who are complicit with them) are destroying the health and the lives of innocent patients. And we will continue to use the resources we have, to provide healthcare to those who are being blocked.

Happily, later in the month, an event took place to remind us that there are also many good people in our city. A group of dentists and opticians from the Sri Sathya Sai organisation came to celebrate Diwali by providing a free pop-up clinic at the DHC and delivering oral care and spectacles to dozens of poor people, South African and foreign.

The improved eyesight and strengthened teeth that they gave to our patients are exactly what we need for the next round in this on-going fight for justice.

*Photo: Some of the Sri Sathya Sai team setting up the eye-testing equipment.  
For more photos [see our Facebook page](#).*



## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN EXPENSES ARE MORE THAN INCOME?

Describing to people overseas, or even those living in gentler parts of Durban, what we do, the scale at which we do it, and the daily obstacles we face (mostly from Government), they often ask: "How much longer can you carry on?"

We hope the answer is 'a long time' because we do not want to let down the homeless people and refugees who come to us for help; and we also cannot let down Archbishop Hurley and Paddy Kearney who set such a high standard of translating their faith into devotion to the poor. The commitment and resolution of our staff, our volunteers and our partners is exemplary.

But we now have to ask the question in a different way: "How much longer can we carry on?" Because for only the second time since we started 11 years ago, the DHC will not be covering its costs with income raised during this year. Our latest forecast is that we will end with an in-year deficit of \$40,000. This despite the generous donations of many of you, and the fact that some of our regular donors have kindly increased the amount that they give for which we are very grateful.

We know that many people are put off by numbers. If you would like a more detailed 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter report on our finances, [email us](#) and we will send it to you. The top line is that we have done a good job at keeping control of our expenses which will be just over \$350,000 this year. This is still remarkably low given the scale at which we operate – 125,000 meals will be served this year and we carry out over 2,000 clinic consultations each month. That is partly because of the many services that are provided by volunteers and also the generous donations of food that we receive.

But our current expected income for 2025, although 10% higher than last year, will not be enough to cover our costs this year. Of course, any prospect of funding from US-AID is now out of the question which is why we are very grateful that South African grant-maker the Batho Batho Trust has come to our assistance. However, financial donations from parishes and other faith organisations, and also from local businesses, are at an all-time low. We are conscious of the economic pressures on all organisations in Durban, but it is the people we serve who are the ones who feel the pinch more than anyone else. And even in the current environment, it is clear that there should be enough money in Durban to sustain several DHCs.

Our recent emergency appeal to cover extra costs of medicines – which raised \$7,300 in a few weeks – was timely since the impact of the xenophobia means that our monthly pharmacy bill has doubled. That is because we are now buying chronic medications (such as insulin and anti-epileptic syrup for children) which are no longer accessible from Addington Hospital. In fact, we are now seeing 25% more patients each month than we did in the first half of the year, and three times as many refugee patients. Thus, just as our income is under pressure, the need for our services is even more evident.

The expected 2025 shortfall can be covered from our reserves – and that after all is why they are there. But we cannot do that indefinitely. So, without a major shift in funding, the Board has initiated a full-scale review of our operations in preparation for the 2026 Budget to see where we can increase revenue but also how we can cut costs which could mean losing some posts and thus reducing our services. We of course do not want to do that – but we also need to be practical and sustainable.

If you have any suggestions of how we can increase our income then [please contact us](#). And if you are able to make a donation, however large or small, then our [website provides details](#) of different ways of doing that depending on where you are in the world. The next time someone asks: "How much longer can we carry on?" – we hope to be able to give a much more confident reply.

*Photo: Our expenses are kept lower thanks to generous donations of food (such as this windfall from SA Harvest). But we still need cash to pay our bills and our staff - and every year the costs go up!*



Director: Raymond Perrier ([raymond@denishurleycentre.org](mailto:raymond@denishurleycentre.org) )

Bookings: Leanne Banks ([leanne@denishurleycentre.org](mailto:leanne@denishurleycentre.org))

If you wish to support our work, you can donate by EFT:

First National Bank Durban Main branch 221426

Account: Denis Hurley Centre Trust A/C No. 622 0426 1002

For more information, and to donate from outside South Africa, see:

[www.denishurleycentre.org](http://www.denishurleycentre.org)

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