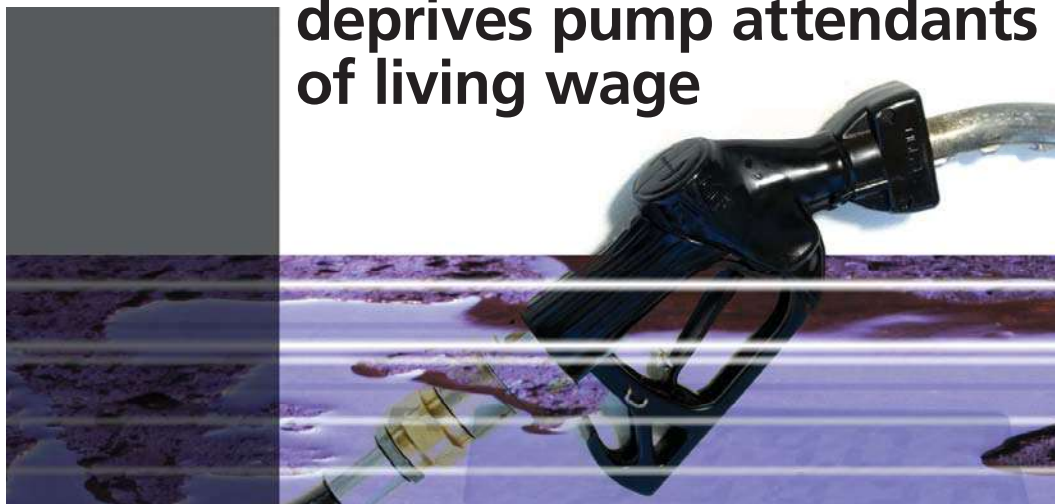


Petrol industry policy deprives pump attendants of living wage



The execution-style killing of five young attendants in June 2002 at a petrol station in Grassy Park, Cape Town, highlighted the problem of security and working conditions at South Africa's 4 000 petrol stations. The HSRC responded by launching an urgent investigation into these issues by the Social Cohesion and Integration (SCI) research programme, in conjunction with the Nelson Mandela Foundation, the Community Chest and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS).

The investigation revealed that at least one violent crime is committed every day at a petrol station, that petrol attendants are amongst the most poorly paid employees in South Africa's formal economy, and that they are frequently subjected to verbal abuse.

A report of the findings and recommendations, *In Terror and In Silence: An investigation into safety levels and standards at petrol stations*, was released in December 2002 at a public launch attended by many dignitaries, including the Minister of Safety and Security for the Western Cape, Mr Leonard Ramatlakane, and representatives of media organisations.

The report revealed that the country's 50 000 petrol attendants have become increasingly vulnerable to violent crime, including robbery and lethal assault. The majority of the 150 petrol attendants interviewed in the study admitted that they lived and worked in constant fear. In one case, a petrol station in Khayelitsha had been hit by armed robbers more than 50 times in the past year – a rate of almost one armed assault per week. Another key finding was that the basic minimum wage set by the industry's bargaining council amounts to R4,65 an hour

excluding tips, which seldom reach R70 per week.

Publication of the report evoked widespread comment. The HSRC was praised for its prompt, constructive response to the killings in Grassy Park, and for exposing the extent of the security problem and working conditions generally within this sector. A Business Day editorial on 17 December 2002 commented that the report 'could finally force government, and the South African liquid fuels industry, to confront the problem of security and working conditions at petrol stations.' The editorial described most of the 26 recommendations as making 'common sense' and urged that they be implemented without delay, including a recommendation that government impose a 1% levy on the price of petrol to fund the urgent implementation of safety measures within the sector.

The CEO of the Fuel Retailers Association, Peter Morgan, praised the HSRC and the SCI

on a superb report, the level of detail and the validity of the recommendations. Morgan said, 'We have a monthly forum meeting with the Department of Minerals and Energy and I will table service station security as issue one in our January meeting and use your recommendations as the core to our requests ... In closing, thank you again – you have contributed to the wellbeing of the lives of pump attendants in South Africa.'

The families of the five murdered Grassy Park attendants – Sazisho Bashe, Julius Mjali, Alfred Nyumbeka, Arthur Ngxumza and Sibongile Same – were actively involved in the study. Each family group was invited to make submissions to the working group and family members participated in the launch by

...at least one violent crime is committed every day at a petrol station...

unveiling a ceremonial plaque in memory of their loved ones. The average age of the victims in Grassy Park was 28. The working group also arranged to assist the families to complete and submit applications for workplace compensation.

The working group, chaired by SCI Executive Director Dr Wilmot James, will reconvene shortly to advise Parliament on the draft of the pending Petroleum Products Amendment Bill. •

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CRIME CATEGORY	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Robbery with aggravating circumstances	2 336	3 361	3 780	4 819	6 201
Other robbery	3 422	4 383	5 171	6 105	7 145
Burglary and attempted burglary: business premises	7 528	8 895	8 645	8 361	8 090
Shoplifting	4 811	4 871	5 175	5 280	5 461
Theft of motor vehicles and motorcycles	4 422	5 497	5 860	5 678	6 130
Theft out of or from motor vehicles	18 446	23 632	23 297	22 765	24 988
Carjacking (accounted for under robbery with aggravating circumstances)	148	183	228	284	333
Hijacking of trucks (accounted for under robbery with aggravating circumstances)	18	34	47	83	92