



MetPac-SA

Driving Sustainable Metal Packaging

METAL MATTERS

• September 2026 •



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Metals packaging industry: moving towards a circular future

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FROM THE CEO'S DESK

SPRINGING FORWARD: GROWING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY FOR METAL PACKAGING



As spring arrives and we see new life blossoming all around us, it is a fitting time to reflect on growth, renewal and the opportunities that lie ahead. At MetPac-SA, these same principles are at the heart of our ongoing work to build a stronger and more circular economy for metal packaging in South Africa.

A circular economy does not happen by itself. It requires collaboration, investment, reliable information and a willingness to continually identify where improvements can be made. Most importantly, it requires us to look beyond the numbers and understand what they are telling us.

Our latest industry data provides encouraging evidence of progress. In 2025, approximately 106,000 tonnes of metal packaging were placed on the South African market, with aluminium beverage cans achieving an impressive 81% collection rate and tinplate and steel cans reaching 64%. These results demonstrate the strength of established collection networks and the impact of collaboration across the value chain.

At the same time, the data highlights areas where more work is needed. Rather than viewing below-target performance as a setback, we see it as an opportunity to understand the barriers more clearly and develop targeted solutions. This is why MetPac-SA is supporting initiatives such as our partnership with a dedicated aerosol remelter, aimed at improving the recovery of other aluminium packaging.

Reliable data is also essential to ensuring that our interventions deliver meaningful results. Through our R10.4 million Buyback Centre 200 Project, we are investing in the digitisation of 200 buy-back centres and the registration of 100,000 waste pickers nationally. With 51 centres already digitised, we are laying the foundation for improved traceability, better data and greater visibility of the vital contribution made by waste pickers to South Africa's recycling system.

Like spring, a circular economy is about renewal – materials that might otherwise be discarded are given another opportunity to become valuable resources. Every can collected, every kilogram recovered and every partnership established contributes to that cycle.

As we enter this new season, MetPac-SA remains committed to nurturing the systems, partnerships and opportunities that will allow South Africa's metal packaging value chain to flourish. There is still much work to be done, but with collaboration, informed action and continued investment, we can turn today's progress into tomorrow's stronger, more resilient circular economy. Here's to a season of new growth, renewed commitment and a future where metal packaging continues to have value – again and again.

We hope you enjoy reading the latest news about our projects and how we are driving metal packaging recycling!

Dr Kishan Singh
CEO: MetPac-SA



METPAC-SA CELEBRATES EXCELLENCE IN METAL PACKAGING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

MetPac-SA is proud to announce the winners of its inaugural 2026 Metal Packaging Environmental Sustainability Competition - an initiative designed to recognise and celebrate outstanding environmental sustainability projects that are advancing South Africa's metal packaging circular economy

The competition invited submissions from metal packaging stakeholders, including raw material suppliers, converters, brand owners, retailers, buy-back centres, aggregators and remelters, showcasing innovative initiatives that support the objectives of South Africa's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The response to the competition demonstrated significant progress being made across the metal packaging value chain. Entries showcased innovative approaches to sustainable packaging design, material recovery, recycling technologies, waste diversion, community development and circular economy solutions.

Independent judges representing academia, industry, and the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) independently evaluated each submission against five weighted criteria: relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), innovation, measurable impact, contribution to metal packaging circularity, and scalability.

The individual scores were subsequently consolidated to determine the overall rankings, ensuring a fair, transparent, and objective assessment process. The overall standard of submissions was exceptionally high, reflecting the industry's commitment to environmental stewardship and continuous improvement.



(Look out for our next newsletter in which more information about each winner will be shared.)



Sustainable Innovation Award

- **1st Prize: GeT Alloys (Pty) Ltd**
Transforming Waste into Value: Fossil Fuel Displacement Through Waste-Derived Energy in Aluminium Packaging Recycling
- **2nd Prize: Hulamin**
UBC Cleaning Line (UBCCL) Expansion Project
- **3rd Prize: Ferrous Metal Processors**
Closing the Loop on Aluminium Aerosol Packaging

Community Sustainability Award

- **1st Prize: Jola Family Solutions**
Schools Green Programme
- **2nd Prize: Mashigo's Recycling**
Youth-Led Community - Recycling for a Sustainable Future
- **3rd Prize: Litha Waste Man**
Empowering Rural Communities Through Recycling and Circular Economy

MetPac-SA congratulates all the winners and participants for demonstrating how collaboration, innovation, and environmental leadership can create meaningful change.

The competition highlighted initiatives that not only improve recycling and resource efficiency but also generate employment, empower communities, reduce carbon emissions, and strengthen South Africa's transition towards a circular economy.

MetPac-SA also extends its sincere appreciation to the independent judging panel for their professionalism, expertise, and commitment in ensuring a fair, transparent, and credible evaluation process. Their contribution has helped recognise initiatives that exemplify excellence and inspire the broader industry to continue investing in sustainable metal packaging solutions.

INDUSTRY MOVING TOWARDS A CIRCULAR FUTURE

BUSINESS DAY PACKAGING INSIGHT | 27 AUGUST 2026

The imperative to transition from a linear take-make-waste model to a resilient circular economy is starting to change the packaging industry. Once evaluated purely on cost, shelf appeal and barrier protection, modern packaging formats are now scrutinised for their entire life-cycle footprint, ease of mechanical recovery and integration into local recycling streams.

Driving this shift is Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regulation, which compels brand owners, converters and importers to account for the post-consumer fate of their products. At the centre of this transition are producer responsibility organisations (PROs), working alongside municipalities, waste reclaimers and recyclers to build functional, scalable circular value chains.

Achieving true circularity requires leveraging the unique material characteristics of different packaging substrates while overcoming localised end-of-life constraints.

Metal packaging, for example, has an advantage in circular systems due to its infinite recyclability without quality loss, says Dr Kishan Singh, CEO of MetPac-SA, the PRO representing the local metal packaging industry.

"Recycling aluminium requires up to 95% less energy than primary production, while steel recycling yields energy savings of up to 40% compared to virgin material extraction. In South Africa, aluminium beverage cans achieved an impressive 81% collection and recycling rate in 2025."

However, distinct market-driven challenges remain for other metal formats. Lower relative scrap values and limited local demand for post-consumer steel cans provide little incentive for waste pickers. MetPac-SA is engaging government departments to establish differentiated regulatory treatment for verified packaging scrap and expedite export approvals when local processing demand is lacking.



No South African circular strategy can succeed without integrating the informal waste sector, with reclaimers acting as the primary engines of recovery, feeding material recovery facilities, buy-back centres and recyclers.

PROs are pioneering national initiatives to treat reclaimers as essential service providers. MetPac-SA, for instance, is supporting the digitisation of buy-back centres to enable transparent, direct service-fee payments to waste pickers, supplying personal protective equipment, delivering occupational safety training and deploying digital tracking tools to map material flows.

Safety protocols are particularly important for specialised formats. A nationwide MetPac-SA study across seven provinces evaluated post-consumer aerosol can recovery at buy-back centres. While 94.7% of surveyed facility managers recognised the risks associated with residual pressurised gas, only 2.7% of personnel had received formal handling training, leading to hazardous manual puncturing practices.

"Implementing standardised training, clear operating procedures and safer processing infrastructure is essential to establishing viable recovery pathways for small and complex metal formats like aerosol cans, coffee pods and foil trays," says Singh.



BUSINESS DAY PACKAGING INSIGHT (CONT.)

As EPR regulations mature, PROs are calling for synchronised government policy and aligned eco-modulated fee structures, which reward sustainable design with lower fees for easily recyclable formats. Criteria must be aligned across PROs to avoid conflicting market signals, while imported goods should face equivalent compliance standards to protect local converters.

Expanding local testing infrastructure could also accelerate innovation. Converters currently send packaging samples to Europe for substance-migration testing; accredited local facilities would cut turnaround times and let manufacturers build compliance testing into R&D workflows.

Ultimately, the sector's long-term sustainability relies on buying locally manufactured products made with local recycle. Supporting local manufacturing generates a powerful circular multiplier, sustaining domestic industrial capacity, creating predictable markets for waste pickers and reducing reliance on virgin polymer imports.

A holistic approach uniting design standards, government policy, municipal infrastructure and informal waste collectors will enable South Africa to build a fully functioning circular economy that keeps valuable resources out of landfills and in productive use.



The advertisement for MetPac-SA features a blue and white color scheme. At the top, the MetPac-SA logo is displayed with the tagline "Driving Sustainable Metal Packaging" and the EPR Number: 19/7/5/P/PRO/20210720/005. The main headline reads "Shaping Tomorrow" in large, bold white letters, followed by "Driving Sustainable Metal Packaging" in smaller white text. Below this, four circular icons represent key benefits: "100% Recyclable Forever" (recycling symbol), "Sustainable by nature" (leaf symbol), "Strong & Safe" (shield symbol), and "Circular Economy" (infinity symbol). Each icon is accompanied by a brief description. At the bottom, the text "Infinitely recyclable. Endlessly valuable." is shown above a collection of various metal packaging items like cans and bottles. The website "www.metpacsa.org.za" is listed at the bottom left of the graphic area.



SA WASTE PICKERS ASSOCIATION (SAWPA) EXPRESS THEIR GRATITUDE TO METPAC-SA

(Letter edited)

**THANK
YOU**

As South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA) we want to express our gratitude to MetPac-SA for holding [the biggest] event ever for our male waste pickers. Men are not well recognized in this country, but you showed them that they are important. We give appreciation to you our partners in what MetPac-SA did for male waste pickers in Durban and will always be remembered in our lives and history as workers.

The way we are grateful, we are running out of ways to show that. All we can say is keep up the good work. In our native language we say "Izandla zedlula ikhanda".

Thank you once again! We are looking forward to do more next time. Our collaboration will put waste pickers on another level. Let's keep the waste pickers' flag as well as the MetPac-SA flag flying high

Sbusiso Swalibana
(SAWPA National Board Member)

METPAC-SA STUDY HIGHLIGHTS PRACTICAL PATH TO SAFER AEROSOL RECYCLING



NATIONAL RESEARCH IDENTIFIES OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE WORKER SAFETY WHILE INCREASING RECOVERY OF VALUABLE ALUMINIUM AND STEEL AEROSOL POST-CONSUMER PACKAGING

Aluminium and steel aerosol cans are fully recyclable, provided they are handled correctly and enter an appropriate recovery stream.

New research by MetPac-SA, the country's Producer Responsibility Organisation for Metal Packaging, has identified practical opportunities to improve the safe recovery and recycling of aluminium and steel aerosol cans across South Africa.

The study, entitled ***An Evaluation of the Safe Handling and Recovery of Post-Consumer Aerosol Cans in South Africa***, was the first of its kind to be undertaken locally. Conducted across seven provinces, it surveyed 272 waste pickers and reclaimers together with 38 Buy-Back Centres to better understand how aluminium and steel aerosol cans are collected, traded and recycled after consumer use.

The aerosol study forms part of a broader programme launched earlier this year to improve the recovery of more technically challenging metal packaging formats, including aluminium aerosols, aluminium foil, pie trays, coffee pods and yoghurt foil closures. The findings will help inform future strategies, partnerships and investments aimed at improving recovery and recycling rates of post-consumer aerosols.

According to Dr Kishan Singh, CEO of MetPac-SA, the comprehensive national study also forms part of MetPac-SA's broader aerosol recovery programme, which includes consumer education, improved safety guidance, capacity-building at Buy-Back Centres and stronger collaboration across the recycling value chain.

Findings showed that while most waste pickers and Buy-Back Centres already understand that aerosol cans can remain pressurised after use, there is a significant gap between recognising the risks and having the training, equipment and systems needed to handle them safely.

Rather than finding a lack of awareness, we have discovered an implementation gap. Almost all Buy-Back Centres recognised that apparently empty aerosol cans may still contain pressurised gas or chemical residues, yet formal training, written handling procedures and consistent PPE provision remain limited. Our research also found that aerosol cans are already a routine part of the recycling stream. More than half of participating Buy-Back Centres receive aerosol cans every day, demonstrating that the sector is already handling these materials on a regular basis," Dr Singh reported.

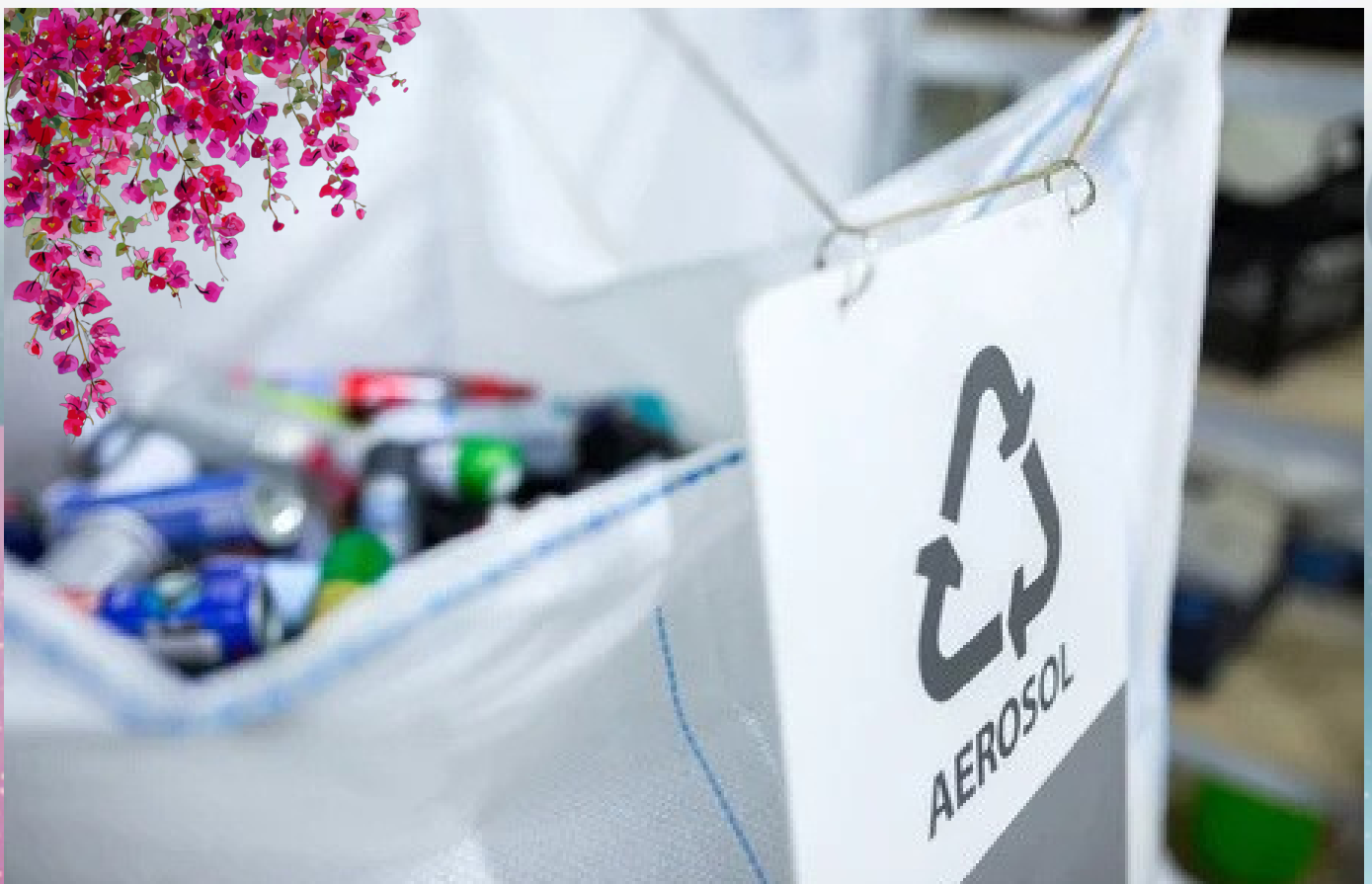
Importantly, the study concludes that improving safety does not require entirely new systems. Instead, practical interventions, such as targeted training, simple handling guidelines, improved PPE, dedicated collection procedures and stronger downstream markets, could significantly improve both worker safety and recycling performance.

“Our research highlights the important role played by South Africa's informal recycling sector. Waste pickers are responsible for recovering large volumes of recyclable material before selling them to Buy-Back Centres, making them an essential part of the country's metal packaging value chain. Strengthening support for these workers is therefore critical to increasing recovery rates while reducing safety risks,” Dr Singh said.

Another key finding is that market conditions influence recovery just as much as safety concerns. Low material prices, inconsistent buyer demand (particularly for steel aerosol cans) and limited market access were repeatedly identified as barriers to improved collection. The study suggests that stronger buyer networks and clearer acceptance criteria could encourage greater recovery while reducing unnecessary disposal to landfill.

The report recommends a coordinated industry approach involving producer responsibility organisations, recyclers, municipalities, Buy-Back Centres and waste pickers. Rather than isolated interventions, MetPac-SA advocates an integrated support package combining training, PPE, operational guidance, improved collection systems and stronger market development to deliver lasting improvements across the recycling value chain.

“Aluminium and steel aerosol cans are fully recyclable, and significant volumes already enter the South African market each year. MetPac-SA's message to consumers remains straightforward: use the product fully, ensure the container is empty, never puncture or expose it to heat, and place it in an appropriate recycling stream. The new research now extends that message further down the value chain by identifying the practical training, equipment, handling procedures and market support required to improve safe recovery. As South Africa continues implementing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), we now have an evidence-based roadmap for improving the recovery of aluminium and steel aerosol packaging, protecting the people who recover it every day, and strengthening South Africa's circular economy,” Dr Singh concludes.



METPAC-SA HOSTS WOMEN'S DAY EVENT

CELEBRATING THE WOMEN DRIVING SOUTH AFRICA'S RECYCLING REVOLUTION

On 7 August 2026, MetPac-SA brought together women and stakeholders from across South Africa's recycling and waste management sector at the Ukhozi Conference Centre in Durban to celebrate the remarkable contribution women make to waste minimisation, environmental sustainability, job creation and community development.

The Women's Day event was more than a celebration. It was an opportunity to recognise the resilience, determination and entrepreneurial spirit of women working throughout the recycling value chain, while reflecting on the support and opportunities needed to enable them to grow and build sustainable businesses.

The event brought together an inspiring mix of industry representatives, waste pickers, Buy-Back Centre owners, eThekweni Municipality officials, educators, community representatives and other stakeholders. Together, they demonstrated the importance of collaboration in creating a stronger, more inclusive and sustainable recycling sector.

Women at the heart of the circular economy

A key highlight of the day was the keynote address by Makgabo Van Niekerk, Executive Director of the PRO Alliance. Her powerful message placed women firmly at the centre of South Africa's recycling and waste management story.

Makgabo highlighted the indispensable role women play throughout the recycling value chain – from waste pickers collecting recyclable materials in their communities to women operating Buy-Back Centres and recycling enterprises. Their work diverts valuable materials from landfill, creates livelihoods, supports families and contributes directly to the development of a circular economy.

Importantly, she stressed that women should not be viewed merely as beneficiaries of development programmes. They are entrepreneurs, job creators, contributors and agents of change.





Recognising the essential role of waste pickers

The event provided an opportunity to recognise the vital contribution of waste pickers to South Africa's recycling system. Waste pickers recover recyclable materials every day that might otherwise end up in landfill. Their work supports recycling, resource recovery and waste diversion, while providing livelihoods for thousands of people.

Makgabo specifically recognised Dr Kishan Singh, CEO of MetPac-SA, for his contribution to the registration and integration of waste pickers into South Africa's waste management system. Her acknowledgement highlighted the importance of initiatives that provide waste pickers with greater visibility, dignity and opportunities to participate in the formal recycling economy.

Inspiring the next generation

The event also demonstrated that building a circular economy begins long before materials reach a recycling facility.

Teachers from Ningizimu Special Needs School attended the event and shared the school's involvement in its Eco Recycling Club. Through the initiative, learners are encouraged to recycle different substrates and practise separation at source. Such programmes demonstrate the value of introducing environmental awareness and responsible waste management at school level, helping young people understand the importance of resource recovery and their own role in creating a more sustainable future.

Collaboration is key

Throughout the day, one message emerged clearly: South Africa's waste management challenges cannot be solved by any one organisation or sector working in isolation. The participation of eThekweni Municipality, waste pickers, Buy-Back Centres, industry organisations, educators and community representatives reinforced the importance of partnerships across the recycling value chain. Strong collaboration between Producer Responsibility Organisations, government, municipalities, businesses, recyclers, waste pickers, schools and community organisations is essential to building an inclusive recycling economy that creates opportunities while addressing South Africa's waste management challenges.

From waste picker to business owner

One of the most powerful moments of the day was the personal story shared by Lindiwe Cele, owner of Manaza Buy-Back Centre.

Lindiwe's journey from working as a waste picker to becoming the owner of a Buy-Back Centre is a remarkable example of what resilience, determination and opportunity can achieve.

She spoke candidly about the challenges faced by women in the recycling sector and emphasised the important role that Producer Responsibility Organisations and other stakeholders can play in supporting women and creating opportunities for enterprise development.

Her story demonstrated that, with the right support and opportunities, experiences in the informal recycling sector can become the foundation for sustainable enterprises that create livelihoods not only for the entrepreneurs themselves, but for others in their communities.





METPAC-SA STRENGTHENS RECYCLING PARTNERSHIPS & SUPPORTS WASTE PICKERS IN UMZUMBE

MetPac-SA reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening South Africa's recycling value chain through its participation in a Producer Responsibility Organisations (PRO) Workshop hosted by the Department of Social and Community Service's Environmental and Waste Management Unit in Umzumbe Local Municipality.

Held at St Faiths Hall on 20 August 2026 under the theme "Enhancing Recycling and Producer Responsibility Partnerships in Umzumbe Local Municipality," the workshop brought together local and provincial government, PROs, environmental stakeholders and representatives involved in recycling and waste management.

The event provided an important platform for sharing knowledge and exploring practical ways to increase the recovery of recyclable materials, while strengthening cooperation between municipalities, PROs and communities.

Representing MetPac-SA, Project Manager Khosi Mbatha delivered a presentation on metal packaging and its ability to be recycled repeatedly without losing its fundamental properties. She highlighted the importance of recovering post-consumer metal packaging and diverting these valuable materials from landfill back into the recycling value chain.

Her presentation also encouraged greater separation of recyclable materials at source and increased awareness of the value contained in materials often regarded simply as waste. Improved recovery of metal packaging not only reduces pressure on landfill but also supports the recycling industry and creates economic opportunities throughout the value chain.



Other presentations featured contributions from EDTEA, Fibre Circle and Umzumbe Local Municipality. Delegates also heard how local initiatives are turning recovered materials into eco-bricks and artwork, showing how recycling can support environmental education, creativity and community participation.

Practical support for waste pickers

A particular highlight of MetPac-SA's involvement was the handover of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to local waste pickers. The initiative recognised the essential contribution waste pickers make by recovering valuable materials, diverting waste from landfill and returning recyclables to the circular economy.

By combining education and industry expertise with practical support on the ground, MetPac-SA continues to demonstrate the important role PROs can play in building stronger local recycling systems. The Umzumbe workshop reinforced a central message: meaningful progress in waste management depends on partnerships between government, municipalities, industry, communities and the waste pickers who perform vital work at the frontline of material recovery.



TURNING MANDELA'S LEGACY INTO ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

METPAC-SA PARTNERS WITH ININGIZIMU SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOL TO LAUNCH RECYCLING INITIATIVE

The spirit of Nelson Mandela Day came alive recently at Iningizimu Special Needs School in Montclair, Durban, when approximately 600 learners and 100 stakeholders came together for a day dedicated to community service, environmental education and practical action.

Hosted in association with MetPac-SA, the Mandela Day Commemoration and Recycling Launch brought together the school community, eThekweni Municipality, WESSA, the Parks Department, the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA), and other environmental stakeholders.



As part of the programme, MetPac-SA Project Manager, Khosi Mbatha, introduced learners to the importance and infinite recyclability of metal, encouraging them to collect and recycle used beverage cans and food cans. MetPac-SA also donated recycling bins to the school, providing practical infrastructure to support the implementation of separation at source and establish recycling as an ongoing school activity.



eThekweni Municipality further encouraged the school to participate in the city's Schools Recycling Competition and donated gardening equipment to support the school's gardening and beautification activities.



The educational programme was followed by hands-on environmental action. Learners and stakeholders participated in a school clean-up campaign and planted trees sponsored by the Parks Department. The tree planting served as a powerful symbol of growth, sustainability and collective responsibility for the environment and future generations.

For MetPac-SA, the initiative demonstrates the important role that partnerships between industry, government, environmental organisations and schools can play in building environmental awareness and encouraging sustainable behaviour.

The event not only commemorated Nelson Mandela's legacy—it translated that legacy into meaningful action. By equipping learners with knowledge, practical resources and opportunities to participate, the initiative has laid the foundation for continued recycling and environmental education at Iningizimu Special Needs School.

Mandela's legacy can be honoured through service, education, environmental stewardship and community development — values that were clearly brought to life on the day.





MetPac-SA
Driving Sustainable Metal Packaging

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