

# ArcelorMittal nurses the sting of Gauteng waste site closure

The Green Scorpions have shut down the company's operations at its Vaal site over the alleged dumping of hazardous waste and continued air and water pollution. **Chris Barron** speaks to chief executive Rick Reato

**What's your excuse for dumping hazardous waste after being told to stop?**

Newspapers have said we're disposing of hazardous waste. This is not correct. The material is basically general waste.

**Do the Green Scorpions not know what they're talking about?**

I'm not suggesting that. They have made their own findings and we've been discussing this with them the whole time. We've basically stopped disposing of waste at this site.

**Why has it taken you so long?**

What you've got to realise is that this site has been in operation for many, many years.

It has a legacy. And the whole issue is that you rehabilitate the site while you continue to dispose of the waste in a manner that leads you to closure. And

Gauteng's department of agriculture, conservation and environment speaks of numerous futile attempts to get you to clean up your act, of continued non-compliance. Is there a misunderstanding between you two?

I'm aware of only the one instance, not of continuous non-compliance. And that one instance occurred while we were interacting with the department. The Green Scorpions took a different view to the other officials of the department. It's something we have to live with. People have different opinions and different approaches to these things, and unfortunately we were caught with that.

**Is there a difference of opinion between the Green Scorpions and the department?**

Well, the Green Scorpions are now part of the department. It is just a change of emphasis. We were interacting the whole time and thinking that we were

You talk about continuing to co-operate with the authorities. If you'd been co-operating with them, would they have shut your operation down and launched a criminal investigation against you?

We've been interacting with them and I think the co-operation has been there. But interaction must come from both sides. I can't interact if they don't allow me to.

**Do they?**

I think there are certain things which they would like to have in place. But these things are not always easy. There's a different *modus operandi* or focus between the Green Scorpions and the department. The Green Scorpions have recently come on the scene and their focus is on compliance. The rest of the department has had more of a focus on interaction and giving us time to comply. It's a different attitude.